BARNARD LITERARY MAGAZINE

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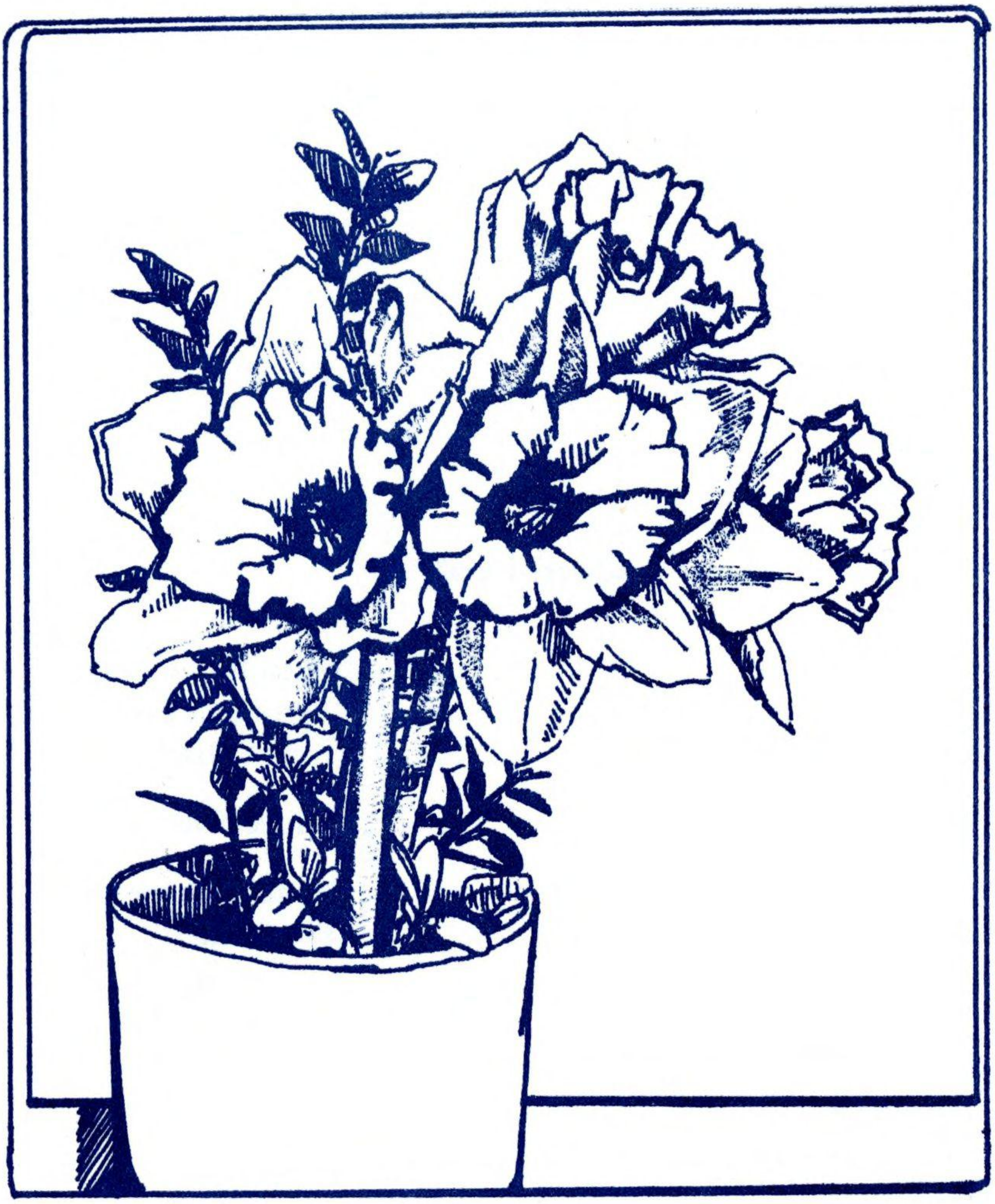
SPRING 1982



E.B.

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SOUNDNESS

Raise your hand
if your father never threw
a t.v. set out the window.

Even the minority
can imagine the sound:
The sound geese make
flying over houses
is the only truly extraordinary
sound I've heard this season.

Raise the other hand
if someone
replaced the set before
the year was out.

No one should
have both hands raised
unless the set
was not plugged in.

And if it didn't break?
Should you raise a foot?
Perhaps to raise the window is enough.

Those without parents
or hands
will please see me.

Lynn Dougherty

LETTER

Write a letter.
(You owed him one before)
send it now
to the flat fields
slicing on to mobile homes,
palm trees, quiet.
Or call.
Imagine the words
flying too low
to catch the whole view
of coastline scribbles.
Or just squint hard
and you can still see him standing,
waving.

Lynn Dougherty

My father told me
that when they moved
from Pelham
to Eastchester
he was told to clean out
the attic

As he pushed the broken rocking chair
and dragged
the rusted trunk
(It had crossed
the Atlantic
during the potato famine)
he found boxes
and bags
and sacks
of cash.

Anne Moore

THE JERSEY SHORE

On the four-lane main drag
there are no Vespas
or mini-skirts
or gold leaf hip belts

There are no exotic
birds
for sale
on the boardwalk.

The Jersey Shore
is not Europe is
America is
The Jersey Shore is
a woman tanning
by the pool
by the sea
listening to a too
loud radio
sun shining
off the chrome.

Anne Moore

TUBES

Working on another poem, she makes Richard keep quiet, and this becomes his major endeavor of the day. He thinks of potentially noisy things to do and executes them in a brittle silence, making certain she notices how carefully each operation is performed. He washes the dishes with a hesitant trickle of water. All he will eat for lunch is a cube of jello, off a paper plate. Later he wanders about the yard, softly brushing at weeds with a rusty scythe, stopping occasionally to gaze inside like a locked out dog.

She spends the entire day at the kitchen table. She has been captured by two new order forms, one from the back of a box of cereal they finished that morning, the other from an ad in an outdoor magazine.

These two forms are unusually taxing. She could fall back on some easier ones she's saved ("never sit down to write out an order form and not do it," she frequently announces to Richard. "If you put it off just once you'll never write again.") but she tries to continue. Most of what she has written looks foreign across the thin, straight lines. She reads over each carefully, frowning and nodding or smiling and shaking her head.

Friendly Pine Products, Inc.
P.O. Box 12209 Penn Station, New York NY 10016

Sirs:

I have enclosed a check or money order for $19.95. Please send me an Amazing Alonso Hagen Hopper immediately. I will allow three to four weeks delivery.

Please send me a catalog of the complete Alonso Hagen Fishing Tackle line. I'll probably end up buying something sooner or later.

Name we felt like such scampini
Signature falling to the sky but
(I am over six years old)
Address never home, and
City _____ State throughout ZIP forever

General Co., Inc.
501 South Grand Avenue
Los Angeles, California
86009

Yes, I want to join General Sweet Tooth's Peppermint, Syrup Spy Force! Send me a secret encoder ring, official spy handbook, linear alpha thought processor, and one Battle of the Forbidden Planets spoon IMMEDIATELY!!!!!!!! I have enclosed $4.95 and three Everyman Sugar Puff box tops.

Mr.
Mrs.
Ms. he's afraid of chicken skin
Address wig-men growing colors Apt.____
City _____ State anomie ZIP _____

_____Master Charge
_____Visa _____

She wonders what happened to her rhyming dictionary. Time for a break. She takes out her mother's latest letter and tears it open, reads through it. She corrects spelling and punctuation errors with a red pencil and writes a short critique at the bottom:

> You are still not using good structure. Think in paragraphs to help your organization. Some of your ideas are interesting, but their poor development leaves the reader uncertain of your meaning.
>
> You have become more conscious of word choice, and that is helping your writing considerably. I can almost see you "hot tears of unwanted motherhood." Very moving!
>
> One note: Replacing "very" with a "!" does not help. These days you really need both.
>
> B–

Some people cry a lot. Richard makes special fittings for them, carefully constructed tubes which channel the tears unobtrusively into small reservoirs which can be emptied later. This way people can cry anywhere and not be embarrassed: while jogging, at restaurants, during movies everyone said were funny.

The tubes are little rubber capillaries Richard makes under a magnifying glass. He started his business with some needle nose pliers and an inner tube, trying out prototypes on their allergic poodle.

The tubes must be fitted perfectly or they will irritate the wearer's eyes.

Rumors about whom he has fitted populate all the gossip magazines. *Newsweek* calls from time to time, interested in doing a story about him.

"And my clients," he says, hanging up the phone.

"And your what?" She blinks at him across the table. She has put away the order forms, to be polished later, and is trying to arrange a haiku fairy tale into a double crosstic.

"That was *Newsweek* again. They still want to do a story. They want to do a story 'Real bad.'"

"And what about your clients?"

"That's who the story would really be about. They just want to know who I've fitted."

And you said 'No' again."

"Of course. I don't want that sort of advertising."

"I don't see why not. You're just an artist, you know, doing your thing. What's the problem?"

"I'm an artist?" He laughs in alarm. "*You're* the artist. Maybe they should be doing stories about you. Hey, did you finish those poems?"

"No, not really, but I know what I need to say, so it's not like I gave up."

"Well, don't give up. You might make us famous one of these days." He stands and leans across the table to kiss her.

"Oops. I hope we have more sugar."

"Clean it up," she says, leaving the room. "I'm going to bed."

The blanket has fallen off the bed, leaving the sheet knotted somewhere around her ankles. She wonders how one person could be so cold. She gets up and spreads everything neatly, *We're going to fall asleep now,* slides underneath with stiff clamness.

In a few minutes her thighs are damp. She sticks out a leg. It is immediately too cold. She kicks everything off with a whirl.

"Richard." He breathes slowly beside her, crumpled up in the blanket.

"Richard."

"Uh."

"Wake up. I can't sleep."

He blinks at the ceiling.

"Richard."

"Okay."

"I need to get on the subway."

"Yeah. Okay. Just a minute."

While she dresses he stumbles into another room, turns on the rotating lights. They flash past a small dirty window with a spider web crack across it. He starts a motor to sway

and jolt the plastic slab they will sit on. He then crowds manikins around the seat and starts the tape: a deafening clatter above what sounds like automobiles being torn in two, several greasy voices arguing in Spanish and an older, helpful man explaining race results to a nervous girl during the quiet interludes.

She is there now, dressed far too warmly, trying to handle several boxes that are falling open and some sacks that have torn to let things, embarrassing things, creep out. She sits down on the seat and stares above the unadorned heads quivering randomly about her, half-lit by the passing lights. She studies a Bide a Wee ad, comparing it to Where a Man Belongs.

Richard sits next to her, gritting his jaw against the noise. He waits. She starts to say something.

"What?" he shouts.

"I said we need some grafitti."

"What? Tahiti?"

"No, *grafitti.*" She points vaguely to the general interior of the car to further confuse him.

He shakes his head. "Right, Tahiti. They probably can't advertise on the subway. We could get pamphlets they hand out on the street, though. That'd be good. I'll look for some Monday."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"*Tahiti.* What did you say?"

"Nothing."

"What?"

"Forget it."

She looks away. He tries to put his arm around her but gets it caught on a metal flange. He twists carefully, trying not to tear the shirt. Suddenly she leans heavily against him.

He stops to hold her. He takes the boxes from her lap and puts them on the floor. Gathering her carefully around himself he lets the shirt tear from the flange. After laying her gently on the bed he sits beside her and stares down at her. He touches his fingertips to her face, soft and still, like a small child's.

Burt Clouse

A COW SPEAKS

The rays of the sun above are softened
as waves of warm air weave over the pasture.
Slowly, soothed, succumbing,
we ease ourselves
down to the warm earth
to bask,
like soft bread resting
in a bowl of beaten eggs.

COWS

Cows lying
In a golden field
Like soft bread resting
In a bowl of beaten eggs.

David Levingston

THE GALLERY

What are you dreaming about or whom blue-pantalooned Marie-Therese are you thinking of the book clasped between your pasha's thighs

Or could it be your profile in the mirror you admire Red-beaded necklace breasts swelling from behind a black lace

mantilla like a Spanish dancer Ay que linda Splash of purple orange green and blue Lips dyed red as

an oriental carpet only one face in a gallery of thousands Along the corridor empty echoes eyes stare sounds and

smells of the place make you feel real sexy lighting is so romantic makes you want to duck into a quiet corner somewhere

touch all the things they never let you touch too much oil on your fingers once I touched a painting left my finger-prints

on it forever mine and Picasso's

Andrea Rabb

David Ritchie

BELLBOY

It was him, bleedin him, Skipper in a bell boy suit carrying Dave's Mum's bleedin bags. He tipped his cap right over his face cause he knew that I knew and after Mr. Anderson gave him his perk he slipped so fast that all I saw was a shiny blue streak. My mate didn't believe it, kept shakin his head and telling me I'm a nutter. "No way would Skipper ever be a friggin bellboy." he keeps saying. It's real strange cause I was just thinking about skipper the other day. I was real down about the Mod Scene cause now it's so forced and all these kids who don't even know where the hell Brighton is are buying clothes at Selfridges and other fine department stores. I don't want to sound soppy but Skipper was what we all looked for in the mirror each morning. He was the Ace, the Face, driving a G-S scooter the color of green glass wearing the sharpest jacket cut slim and checked. His bird was sharp too, Melody, and you couldn't help but hum the way she twitched beneath that oh so short skirt. Jesus, we used to play forever games of pinball just to watch Dave get a piece in long sweaty sessions over the pool table. All we were to Skipper were probably some other spotty geezer but once he gave me fifty pence and told me to guy a Guiness cause it would help me grow. There wasn't much to do then but drive your bike up and down the beach and wait for rockers and you always knew where a good collection of bottles were just in case. Things don't change much cause there's still nothing to do but everyone's gone. Either the rockers drove them out with their Harleys or the Skinheads bashed them (and everyone else for that matter) or it just may be, as my mum says, "a new era" which means it's time I start wearing ordinary clothes and get a job. Yet people like Skipper kept you thinking it could all come back and now he's a bleedin bell boy and I just want to throw myself down on that too nice lobby carpet and just puke or cry or God knows what.

Dave's Mum looks at me and I know what's she's thinking, why did we ever bring that Simmons boy? It was real nice of Dave's folks to take me out to Brighton ever since my Dad

was nabbed by the coppers. "Poor lad" his mum once loudly whispered and she's too fond of patting me on the head. She's always cold and wears lots of sweaters and is so white she looks like a sort of pastry. Mr. Anderson is alright for an old geezer. He tried out for Manchester united when he was barely a bloke and even though he didn't make it I still think that's bloody impressive. He stays fit and plans to run down the beach every day. "Just feel this," and he grabs my hand and pounds it into his belly, "Hard as a fuckin rock." He's good for a few pints but when he gets pissed there's no end of his abuse. Dave can't wear his hair too short like the mods cause his Dad once clubbed him real rough across the ear and there's still a big nasty scar. But I guess everyone's got to be a little cruel to be kind. My Mum says people would scatter like rice thrown to the wind if there wasn't any discipline. Mr. Anderson lifts the bag over his head and softly groans.

"You should have let the bellboy carry it," Dave's Mum whines.

"I'm strong as an ox, so I can carry my own bleedin bags. C'mon boys." We climb this fancy winding stair-case that looks like it belongs more on a wedding cake. I watch the bellboy who is busy with a fussy old pair who claim there is very delicate valuables in their bag and "that any damage would be absolutely irreparable." I wish he had just thrown down the bag and friggin stomp on it.

"Come off it, Ian." Dave says. "If anything, Skipper's dead. Remember that fight he had with the Rocker from Mersey-side?"

"Yeah, the greasy wanker with the cut-off pants?"

"Right and Skipper picked up the geezer's bike and threw it in the window of the Southend Elephant and Castle. What a bloody ruckus! Some bird was screaming all over the place cause her elbow was caught in the wheel." Dave is laughing so hard that he falls down in a heap. His mum pats me on the head and tells us to go to the beach and fetch some jellied eels before the shops close. I'm glad to leave this fancy hotel, it makes me feel sick like I just ate too many sweets. I like the beach, it's the only place where you can see for miles and

miles and there's no tube station and everyone knows you're IT cause your bike is all revved up and your war-time coat has got a piece of the Union Jack right near the collar and you're a mod and pretty birds ask if they can touch your engine and the sky is blue and the beach is white and there's no one who's ever gong to ask if you picked up your dole check. We revolve around these stupid swinging doors and there is the bellboy smoking a cigarette behind the desk.

"It's Skipper," I whisper, "Just look at the way he drags on that filter, so slow and . . ."

"Aw shut up already." Dave snaps. He walks ahead with his head down. If it's Skipper, he doesn't want to know. I can understand his feelings. There's got to be certain rules in this world and when one breaks it cuts you like glass.

The beach is deserted except for a few geezers frolicking in the waves not because they want to but they want to make damn sure they get their money's worth. I once read that the English have more fun planning their holiday than going on holiday. Well these blokes are trying bloody hard to have fun. One spits water into his mate's face while some chuckling fat cow, probably someone's mum, tries to take pictures of the whole scene. I don't understand women, if they don't have the goods they shouldn't deliver. This can is all sunburnt and bulges out of her straps like an overripe tomato. The sand is a dingy grey that comes from too many cigarettes. People have no respect, they grind their butts into the beach like it was some type of giant ash try. We look around for some rockers but there aren't even any regular blokes, much less birds to mess around with.

"Bloody hell," Dave muttres. "In '66 there had to be at least a thousand mods driving up and down the promenade. If you were a rocker you were good as dead. Everyone was a mod then, I used to feel like I was in the friggin army." He runs toward me and kicks a wad of sand in my face.

"Hey watch it!" I yell.

"Ah piss off. Let's go to the arcade." It's getting dark and I'm scared the shops will close but I don't want to say anything that will get Dave mad. He was always so keen on being a Mod even though he was a bit too funny looking to make

it. You have to have the right suit, the right hair, always neat and sleek and Dave had a cowlick that stuck up even though he combed it down a thousand times and his shirt always crept out of his belt and drooped like a tattered flag. Yet he went to every WHO concert at the Odeon, every dance at the Goldhawk, and he was the first one to copy every new step of Skipper's at the Aquarium ballroom. When the whole scene died he kind of died too. He never goes out much but sits with his Dad and watches old rugby matches on the telly. His mum worries about him and I think this trip to Brighton is intended to bring the Ol' Dave back.

There are quite a few people on the promenade, mostly Americans I think cause they all wear Levis and sunglasses and buy absolutely everything. I like American girls, they're so golden and rosy and giggle between every other word but they would probably think me and my mates dress strange. Dave is noisily kicking a bottle around and a few old geezers turn around and give us a leery gaze. Back in '65 we used to mow everyone down with our bikes, there was not a single person over eighteen. The coppers used to line up at the tube station but it was useless, we broke through, as my mum says, like rats gnawing through a wall.

"Would you look at that . . ." Dave whistles, "Brighton Pier is empty." I get this really creepy feeling and couldn't help but shiver. The last time we were at Brighton Pier you couldn't move without headbutting some Rocker. Although someone's fist was always in your face it was good just to finally feel something. Come to think of it, I don't think anyone really hated Rockers. I mean, they're just blokes in different clothes. But if everyone got along I bet life would be pretty dull. Just the word "Rocker" charged through us like an electrical bolt. Now the only thing to hope for is that your dole check comes through and you have a few pence at the end of the day to buy yourself a round. Dave rubs his eyes and I can't blame him for feeling like crying.

At least the arcade hasn't changed. The same dirty windows with the hearts and initials smeared in the dust. The jukebox still blares but it's not mod music but some soppy trash crooned by a fat middle aged geezer who my mum is

all swoony over. A couple of skinheads hang out by the door. They wear the usual gear, heavy Doc Martin boots, rolled up bleached jeans. One, who couldn't be a day older than ten, has a huge swastika on his t-shirt. I look at their boots again and they got red laces. National Front. They hate everybody, including Mods. I can see Dave's fists clench and my own throat hurts. If they fuckin say or do anything someone's going back to dinner with not a pretty face. Dave shoves his hands in his pockets and tries to look tough. When we walk past I feel like my head's been underwater too long and I try to swim up but someone's still holding me down. Nothing happens. The skinheads don't even look at us. Being a Mod don't seem to mean a damn anymore. I wish I still had my bike so I could run it over their measly limbs.

Inside it's so smoky that it takes you awhile to figure out where everything is. A couple of school lads are playing with the poolcues, some ol geezer fidgeting with the fruit machine, an old lady sleeping by the sweets stand and there by the pinballs is the bellboy. Skipper. he is still wearing his uniform 'cept his shirt is unbuttoned and the sleeves rolled up and his cap tipped off at the side of his head. Dave and I can only stagger like he was some brilliant ball of light too bright to see.

"No" Dave whispers. "Maybe it's his brother or cousin or just some bloke that looks like 'im. But it can't be Skipper." The bellboy puts another pence in and shakes the machine up. I realize he'll never see us no matter how long we stand there. It's not as if Skipper ever saw us before but now I want to be noticed. I want to be the Face. The old lady by the sweets snores loudly. The school lads exit singing a West-Ham football song. The floor feels sticky as I slowly walk toward him. His eyes never leave the machine as I begin to speak.

"I don't suppose you remember me . . ." A silver ball curves round a bumper and the bells ring, "but I used to follow back in '63." Bright numbers flash above. The bellboy continues playing. This can't be Skipper and this can't be Brighton and I wish all of bloody England would just crumble away. Dave is gone and I'm tired of looking for him and I'm tired of looking for myself. If it's Scooter, fuck him, fuck all

the Mods, Skinheads, Rockers, Punks, Teds, and all the other fucked-up kids who can't get work and live to dress and dress to live and the only way to make it each day is with a handful of leapers and when your Mum and Dad lecture on morality they can't even bleedin stand from all the pints they just downed at the pub. I walk out of the arcade into the blinding sun. I really didn't want to but I glanced over my shoulder. The bellboy was still playing that friggin game but now his shoulders were hunched forward in that stiff but broken way like someone just dealt him a blow in the middle. Dave is sitting on a bench with his hands clasped behind his head, staring at the beach.

"It ain't him." I tell him, "You were right, mate, it ain't Skipper." Dave doesn't say anything but his eyes are wide open and shiny. "Did you hear me Dave?" For some reason I start screaming. "Skipper's far, far away from here, maybe at Southend driving his G-S scooter down the promenade and I bet he's still got that sawed off shotgun under his jacket and if he ever saw this pissin hotel he'd smash both doors down with just the heel of his boot." Dave leans back and stretches his arms.

"God, the sea is gorgeous." he says softly. "Kind of makes you want to jump in it and sink forever. You know what it looks like Ian," he turns to me and smiles, "like a smooth sheet of green glass but it's glass that would never cut you." We sit there and watch the waves break and the birds fly overhead. I feel really drowsy and high like I just mixed pills with booze but it's better cause it's real, just floating with the clouds and I realize that whatever changes there'll always be the sea and there'll always be the sand. Dave is humming to himself softly and had got that idiotic but nice grin on his face. It's almost completely dark before we realize we forgot the bleedin eels and tear off to the shops with the sun sinking fast behind.

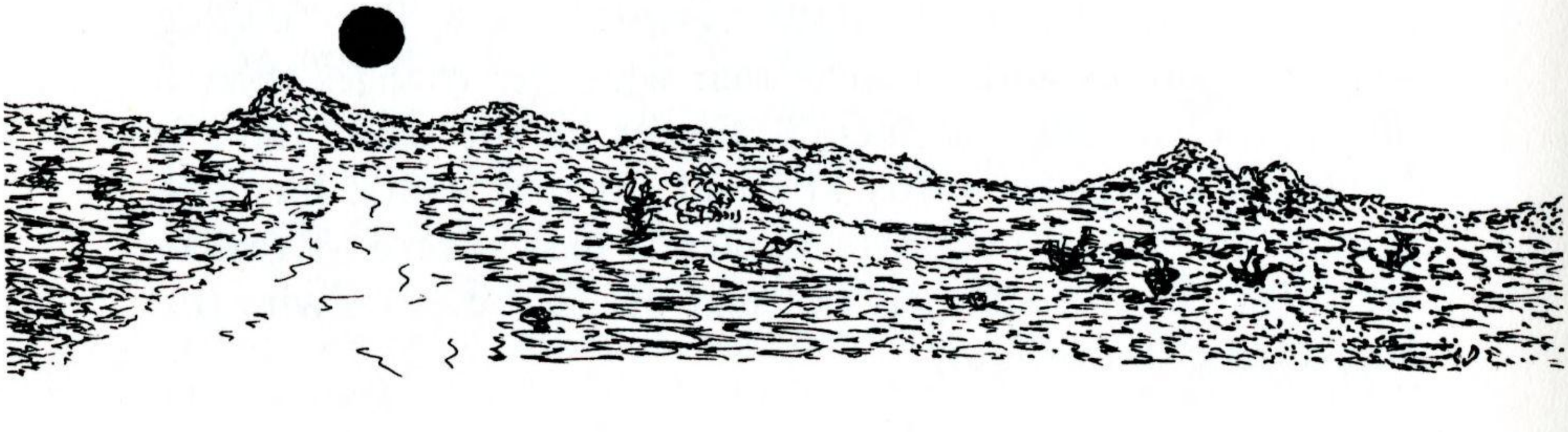
Pamela Brandt

TIME IN TANDEM

Shot from a darkened oyster,
a pearl broke the water's quiet
and sunk to the sandy depth;
swallowed in the shore's mist.

The wind shot down through a coarse
tunnel and popped out as light loops
through a bridge's arch. The pearl rolled
down the shore's pleated side and fell
back in, as darkness followed like
a big, black engine.

Elizabeth Conn



Robert Lampietti

I follow the undertone of celebrate
while tracing curves of soft tossed sighs.

Meditation. Elixir. The extremes cannot argue
The aesthetic. It's all the same. Sublime.

Look at the girl not sleeping in the corner
Or the man part puzzled by the street.
One left, leaving early, and he tells me this landscape
is not secret, that the poet did not lie.

My salad days are over.
Our heady pessimists will to fly the ridge
Formation or finality.

But picture them above the bed
there is a vacancy
In bed. Around bed.
Morning.
Recumbent women of all sorts
Circling.

Formation or finality.

The composure of his smile
Is calmer than my half felt heart.

Shana Olsen

IN FEBRUARY SHE DISCOVERED THERE WAS A WAR ON WHERE SHE WAS LIVING

In February she discovered there was a war on where she was living. It was six days before her twelfth birthday and Natalie was sitting on the red stoop in front of the house. The stoop, polished every morning by Kingston on hands and knees, in khaki apron and starched white tackies, was her favourite spot in the whole world. But at lunch time it got too hot. Natalie thrummed the single piece of paper balancing on her lap with the end of her pencil. It was a list of people she was going to invite to her birthday party on Saturday. So far she had eleven. Last year in February they'd been at a ski resort in Switzerland so she didn't have any friends at her party. Her mother had hired the private Fondue Room, (there was also a Cocktail Room and a Buffet Room, but those had already been taken.) A photographer took pictures of them sitting up straight, their shoulders pulled backwards. This year Natalie wanted musical chairs and icecream.

The stoop started to burn her bottom and the backs of her legs, so she got up and read the list out loud to Penny, her cocker spaniel. With a flourish of her hand Natalie pretended it was an important document and that Penelope was a wise and respected dignitary with a long flowing wig. Her audience was lying next to the pot of African Violets, paws stretched out on the red stone, head on one side, one ear pricked up.

The wind knocking against the front gate woke Penny up from her midday doze. The gate was attached to a hollow pole by a loose piece of wire and the wind made it jiggle and rattle. Natalie's mother said it was "positively precarious," and that it was her father's job to get the boy to fix it. It wasn't up to her she said. She had enough to supervise around the house as it was. Her father kept saying that he would "get to it," that he would do it himself, that it really wasn't necessary to get Kingston to do it, since it was such a small thing. Still, he hadn't done it yet. Her mother con-

tinued to nag and say, "I can see I'll have to supervise the boy myself." Her father hated it when her mother called the servants 'boys', or when she called the nanny, Rachel, 'the girl'. Rachel didn't look like a girl at all; she was big and fat, her face smooth and polished like the stoop. Her blue and white apron gaped in front and she had safety pins to do it up because the buttons kept popping off. She had a white cap, (the kind that nurses wore) and it was lost on her head which was covered with hair braided and weaved like a seisel shopping bag. Natalie thought it sounded funny when her mom said, "the girl never makes the bed properly."

Sometimes Natalie overheard her mother talking on the phone,

" . . . So I tell him, Mamie, 'pull out weeds', so you know what he does, he pulls out the bulbs of the African Violets I planted in February. He's slow and he doesn't speak a word of English, and what's more he's positively sullen. He nods his head, you know the way they do that, 'yes medem, yes medem'. I know my dear, I know, I should get rid of him, but at least he's an honest boy."

Once, when Natalie heard the bell of the icecream van ringing down Rhodes Avenue, she ran inside from the stoop to ask her father for ten cents for a vanilla cone,

"The icecream boy, the icecream boy is here!" Her father had said that he was not a boy but a man, just like him. He'd not been angry with her, but looked up from his newspaper (he was always reading it) with sad eyes. She remembered the eyebrows lifted and the way he'd said,

"Natalie, he's a grown man. He's not a boy. I don't want to hear you say that again please."

Her father had that worried look more than usual lately. He knitted his eyebrows and his eyes were dreamy. It reminded her of the way Penny looked at her; head cocked to one side. She couldn't understand what the warm brown eyes said. She wished Penny could talk, but her father did and she didn't understand what his eyes said either.

The wind stopped blowing and the gate stopped rattling. Natalie wondered if she should invite Lara to her party. Lara

hadn't asked her to hers. She shrugged and put the list down on the second step of the stoop, that way she could sit down again without burning her bottom. Natalie was thinking of how, lately, her parents had been staying up until past midnight. She knew they were because she could see the crack of white light under their door opposite hers. When she was smaller she could never fall asleep until she was sure that her parents were upstairs in the bedroom wing.

For a while she had insisted that they leave the door to their room wide open. The sound of their voices, the tap water running, the toilet chain being pulled, would send her to sleep in her bed overcrowded with stuffed animal friends. She hardly ever awoke in the middle of the night, and when she did, when the clothes hanging on the chair became fiery monsters, or the wind rustling through the drying bouganvillia outside her window was a gang of thieves come to carry her away, the weight of her mother's body on the edge of the bed telling her in a voice which always stayed the same, all the wonderful things that a lucky girl had to look forward to, or her father flicking on the light with his thumb, reassuring her that there was no hunchback laughing meanly near the cupboard, only her school uniform on a wooden hanger with her felt hat propped on top. And next to the hanger, for in the light it really was a hanger and stayed a hanger even when she closed her eyes, was a square brown suitcase which her mother had labelled in black neo-magic, and inside the suitcase was her math workbook, her pencil case with sharpened HB pencils, and a cheese and tomato sandwich, the crust trimmed off the edges of the bread, that Rachel had wrapped up in silver paper. And when she had been quite sure that everything was exactly where she had left it, that everything was in its right place ready for the next day, stacked together like red and blue plastic boxes in different sizes, she would sink her head happily back onto the soft pillow, pull the cool sheets up to her chin, and, feeling the weight of the blankets on her feet just right, she would allow herself to be carried off to sleep.

Now the door was closed. She didn't remember a particu-

lar night when they had first started shutting it. It was almost as if it had happened gradually; the strip of space between the door and the hall wall getting narrower and narrower until there wasn't a space at all—just white wall. The band of light under the door was not soft and did not make her feel warm inside, like the light which once gave dark frightening shapes familiar outlines. It was bright and it hurt her eyes. The voices, instead of being part of a humming lullabye of slippers flopping on edge to edge carpet, water filling up a tub, and newspaper rustling sending her to sleep with the thought that the world was where it should be, and would be in the morning when the light streamed in through the thin curtains hanging on rods,—the voices kept her awake. She had to keep awake to hear what was going on. If she fell asleep she would miss something important, she just knew it.

They spoke in whispers, but every now and again, in little spurts and rising waves, the voices would grow louder, until they were speaking quite clearly and she didn't have to strain to listen. She was always afraid that her parents would hear her bed creak when she sat up and leaned towards the door. Sometimes she lifted her head just a few inches above the pillow and that didn't make much noise.

Some of the things she heard from her bed her parents spoke about at dinner, too. There was a lot of talk about money, about 'shares', and 'investing', when the voices would become much louder. Her father would shout and thump the bed with his hand, and say to her mother, "You're incredible" over and over again, "You're incredible, just incredible, you know that? You never get it straight." And then sometimes they would both talk at the same time and their voices would sound as if they were on top of each other.

Natalie felt sorry for her mother when her father got angry. Her mother just kept on talking in a gay voice, the same chatty tone she used when she spoke to Mamie on the telephone. Maybe it wasn't what she said that was gay, maybe it was just the way she said it, just as Natalie sometimes, playing with Penny, said in a cross voice,

"Come here you loveable dog!," and Penny would run away and hide.

Some of the families they knew were leaving, like the Goldins and the cousins of the Harrises. Her mom said they were leaving because they had eighteen year old sons and they were going to 'study abroad', (her mom wiggled her fingers in the air whenever she said 'study abroad', she said it was verbal quotation marks. Natalie didn't know what she meant by that.) But other peoples' sons leaving didn't seem especially important. She thought perhaps it made her parents nervous that everybody was going places and they weren't. For the past four weeks her mother had been giving old clothes to the colored rag man who came to the kitchen door with a wheel barrow.

One night her mother's voice had gotten all shrieky in her "remove your things from the den INSTANTLY" tone. Her father was talking about a new hard covered book that he'd bought that day in his lunch break at the stationery shop in the foyer of his building, and she'd started to yell:

"I thought we were trying to get rid of things. You keep on buying more and more books. There are just too many things."

Natalie had crept into the bathroom so that she could hear better. The walls were thinner there. Her mother's voice just kept getting louder and louder until she was screaming. Natalie had felt bad about being in the bathroom. Her mother was screaming so loudly she could have heard every word from the T.V. Room downstairs. Her mother was picking up books and throwing them on the floor. They must have been the new hard covered ones from her father's bedside table, because they thumped when they hit the floor. Her mother would throw a book and then cry a bit, and then scream something and throw another book. Natalie had thought that if she opened the bathroom door her parents would hear her, so she had sat on the toilet seat, watching the water forming little dribblets on the cold water tap, counting the black hairs in the wash basin, where Rachel had helped her wash her hair before dinner. After a long long time, when

the voices had stopped completely, she had gone back to her room on tiptoes, making sure that she got into her bed without letting it creak.

Some of the names that Natalie heard as she listened to the voices on the other side of the door were familiar from things she'd learned at school. Every week in Mrs. Munroe's class for current affairs they had to cut out an article from the 'Rhodesia Herald', and read it to the class. Last week she had found one about a little boy named Dirk Van Emden who was blown up by a landmine on a farm. There was a picture of him with his dog. It must have been before he died. He looked nice. He had white hair like Orly's and his eyes were blue and smiling. At first when she'd looked at the picture she'd thought it was a boy whose dog had won a competition, but then she'd read the words that went with the picture—there were only six lines—and said he was dead. She didn't know what a landmine was and her father had explained it was a kind of bomb in the ground that went off when you walked over it. You didn't know it was there so you couldn't even be careful to dodge it. When she'd read it to the class she'd cried and some of the class had too, but then Orly read about a bear who had escaped from the Salisbury Zoo, and how someone's maid had found it eating the laundry on the washing line in their back garden, and everyone had laughed. Natalie had wanted to know more about the bomb in the ground. She'd asked Mrs. Munroe who had put it there. Mrs. Munroe said that black people who didn't like Rhodesia did it. They wanted to hurt people. They were called 'gorillas'. Natalie thought perhaps they dressed up in gorilla furs to scare people, like in the pantomimes, but she didn't know for sure. She kept thinking of Dirk Emden and how he wasn't there any more. After a while she had to stop thinking about it, because it made her eyes sore trying to imagine someone not being there. Natalie wondered if Dirk's mother had any other children. Sometimes it might be a good thing if you had a lot of children.

Rachel had lots of children. Natalie sometimes saw them at the back of the house, but whenever she went near the

kayah, that was the name for the servants quarters, the children ran away. They didn't speak any English and she didn't speak Shona. Once Rachel had brought one of the children into the kitchen scullery when Natalie's mother was out. The little girl's name was Mabel, and she was eleven—the same age as Natalie. She was bare footed, and she had skinny legs, and a round stomach that stuck out in the middle of her body. She was wearing a dress that Natalie had worn when she was six. It was miles too small. She was very shy and when Natalie had smiled she buried her head in Rachel's blue and white apron.

Yesterday Natalie had come back from school early. Thursday was always an early day but yesterday was especially early because the teachers had a meeting. As usual Orly called her mother to pick them up, she was the mother who usually came when they were let off early. She had a new car. It was a big, red shiny Mercedes that Orly's father had given her for her birthday, and all the way through the avenues she showed them the different gadgets in the car. It was a new model and it had all the latest 'tricks'. You could open the windows by pressing some buttons on a panel up front in the drivers seat, or each person could open his own window since at every window there was a private button. The windows slid down really fast when you pressed the button, into a little groove in the door, as if they were being swallowed up. Orly's mom kept playing with the buttons and saying, "mind fingers," as the windows glided up and down. There was also a handle on the roof; the kind you would normally open a window with, and it peeled back the roof of the car so that you could stand on the seats and pretend you were out on a game safari looking for animals.

Orly's mother dropped her off at the gate of her house because it was too hard to reverse her new car and she wasn't insured yet. As Natalie walked up from the gate with her brown suitcase in one hand and her felt hat in the other, she saw her father's low white sports car parked behind the Alfa. Her father never came home for lunch. He was at the hospital all day and saw patients in his surgery over the lunch hour.

He took a cheese and tomato sandwich with the crust trimmed off that Rachel wrapped in silver paper. As Natalie got nearer the cars she heard a funny wailing sound. It wasn't crying exactly, it was like two or three people chanting some prayer, all starting a few seconds after each other. It was coming from the kayah. Natalie walked around the cars, the indicator of her father's car was flicking. She peered inside the car for a minute and then made her way to the back of the house. She passed the little vegetable garden, and the patch of mealies that Kingston was growing. They were dry and looked dead.

Rachel was standing just outside the kayah, her big arms stretched upwards. The safety pins of her blue and white apron had burst open and there was no cap on her head. She was wailing and moaning, pulling the skin on her scalp, and banging her fists against her head. The noises which were coming from her throat were the kind of long whining sounds that an animal would make. Her eyes were stretched wide open and Natalie could see the white part. It was horrible. Kingston was crouching in the doorway of the kayah, on his haunches. Both his hands were in the front pocket of his kahki apron and he was making clicking sounds with his tongue on the roof of his mouth and muttering things in Shona in a mournful voice.

Her mother and father were standing in front of Rachel with their backs to Natalie. Her mother had her hands on her hips, but Natalie could see that it was not because she was impatient or angry, because her head was stooped downwards. Neither of them was saying anything but it looked like her father was about to lean forward and take Rachel's arm. He turned around. He just stared in front of him for a few seconds, away from the kayah, from Rachel and Kingston and the dying mealies, to the red stoop in the front of the house, and the driveway where his white car was parked. He didn't tell Natalie to go away. He turned around again.

This morning Natalie's father explained to her why Rachel had been crying and then he told her to go outside

and plan her list for her birthday party. Rachel's eldest son had been taken away by 'gorillas'. A group of them had gone to the African township in Harari in the middle of the night and had taken Justin away. They wanted him to fight with them. Justin didn't want to fight. He was twenty. He wanted to stay in Harari and work in the city. They said if he didn't go they would kill his wife and baby girl. So he went. And then they killed him.

Sitting on the stoop, Natalie could not push out the pictures that kept flashing through her head. She saw the whites of Rachel's eyes looking up to the sky, and the smiling blue eyes of Dirk Van Emden who was not there anymore, she saw Rachel's big breasts that heaved up and down, up and down as she pulled at her scalp and wailed like an animal that had been hurt.

Penny barked and Natalie looked up. The gate clicked and this time it was not the wind that made the noise. Natalie got up from the stoop. The party list which she had been sitting on was crumpled and she didn't bother to pick it up. She walked down the drive, not at all like an expectant birthday girl waiting for birthday cards from the postman. It was, in fact, not the postman but the newspaper boy. Natalie pulled out the curled up newspaper that was crammed into a hole in the barbed wire fence. It flopped open. She saw the big block capital letters on the top of the front page;

"BRITISH INTERVENE IN RHODESIAN GUERILLA WAR – DEATH TOLL MOUNTS."

Natalie read the headline twice, and then whispered the word 'War' under her breath, again and again. It was a strange word. She walked back to the stoop with the newspaper and sat down on the second step. She picked up the party list and with her pencil slowly wrote in large block letters the word 'WAR' on the back of the crumpled list.

Judy Clain

FIRST SNOW

if if
looking up
from a book I see
few if white flecks
if drifting on the wind
outside my window if
between my window
and other outside windows
if I see
some if flakes
flitting
airy down
down the street
criss-crossing
even if the sun sets red hot wires at the sky's edge
if and birds
and if airplanes
traipse
if swift gray clouds
even if if powdery
chance by pink
to leave no trace
then — was it?
it was
the First Snow
if if if if if if if ifififififif if if
it were.

Katherine Stern

IMAGE

Amaryllis, belladonna lily, voluptuously rests her head on the long green neck, the stem that supports her. This last of the blooms yawns widely with the langour befitting a courtesan. The blush of fruitfulness has spread throughout the six-white petals tinting them pink and freckling them red. They glisten, the droplets of sweat, as light rays reach her petals which are arched over backwards with studied carelessness. From the center, the heart of the blossom, comes all: the moistness, the leaf-size petals, the tuberous pistil and the many stamen, craving for satiation. The act of blooming has an innocent, but coy sexual essence; undeniably elegant. When the stamen first lifted themselves in wakefulness, at their tips dangled oblong flesh of a dusky but pale maroon. Now they have burst and split their golden treasure in their effort to reach maidenhead first. While these frantic showers of pollen rained, the delicate pistil had brought herself to echoing the arch of the petals. Spent, the belladonna—beautiful lady—must wrinkle, fold, and die, leaving a brown and wrinkled bulb to carry on.

Ritchie

COLOR AND MOVEMENT

I have been gathering wood for a fire. There is a townhouse on Grove Street that is being torn down. The wood is covered with pale green paint, but it burns. I can carry only a small bundle, so I must make many trips. The shopping bags are ripping. Soon I will have to carry the jagged wood in my arms. There are rusty nails.

I don't need to keep a fire burning. My apartment is well heated. Despite the drafts, I keep the windows open. In the evening, I like to sit in front of the fire and watch the flames. Color and movement, he says. Like the ocean, it is transfixing. I am skeptical. He has always lived in the city.

Peter visits often. He has never offered to help me collect the wood. He sits in the leather armchair and drinks Irish whiskey. When he talks about commodities, I pretend to listen. I rarely look at him. I watch the fire. He looks down at his drink and tells me to save my pennies. Copper is going up. When he comes, he spends the night. We are not in love. It is just movement. No color.

On Thanksgiving, I go to my parents' home in the country. My father builds a great fire with oak logs, hot and long burning. He sits in his armchair and keeps his tumbler filled. Wards off colds, he says, better than Vitamin C. My mother complains that none of her children have married. She mumbles about one too many. Drinks or children? I fill my glass and watch the fire.

In my absence, someone has been in my apartment. The wood pile is low and the door is smudged with soot. A thief? Nothing is missing. Peter? It is unlikely, but I will confront him.

Peter comes over the night after my return. I show him the door, the wood pile. He says he's been out of town. I don't believe him, of course, but how can I prove that it was he? Instead of watching the fire, I watch him. I am suspicious. As usual, he drinks and talks. Tonight it is pork bellies.

In the middle of the night, I get up to build a fire. I am glad to go for more wood. When I return, I wake him up and say out. Get out of my house.

Later, I am sorry, but not worried.

THANK-YOU NOTE

A gentle nausea like sobbing:
I am called upon to drink tea.
and write thank-you notes to

I have not seen my mother's
Uncle Bob in so many years
It is a soothing feeling
that stinging when I close my eyes:

And I did not like him then.

When I was five I got a
scarf and hat
set: this year the gloves

that also did not fit. Thank you
so much for the thoughtful

careful sob like beer burps
I'll write them, I'll write them
My eyes are wet from exhaustion
see the words I'm writing

gift you sent from North Carolina
They are
There is nothing more
absurd
perfect.

Lynn Dougherty

ON CHICKEN KILLING

On such days as when the scorching sun would send children to seek shadows of trees and even their own homes with mothers glued to the forbidden places and china vases, a hair-raising chicken killing would rescue them. The more daring ones like big Moon-young with a baseball cap or In-jae, the freckled monkey of a kid, stepped forward closer to the site of the murder. The more timid ones like Jay and Soon-mee peeked out between the others' shoulders. Everything was ready.

The big bosomed woman with too many hairs on her eyebrow mole carried out a bucket full of boiling water, a dull knife, and some newspaper that had been yellowed by Bonzo, the exclusive German Scottish Alaskan mutt. Then the victim. The plump white chicken with oh-so-red wobbley hat looked like someone going to church on Sunday. The hypnotized children just watched and no mothers had to chase any of them with wooden spoons white with flour. Every pair of eyes followed the fat hands of the woman who now began to fight with some visiting flies.

"Shoo, you darn flies!" she said fanning her guests away. And they did. They flew away like a firecracker exploding and then again, like a firecracker, came down.

Despite the tortuous dance of the chicken while she twisted its neck, she never flinched once. The screwed-up faces of the children announced the slit of the victim and then their slow swallows accentuated the bleeding of the animal. The fat arms lifted the lifeless chicken and dipped it into the boiling water, making the plucking stage easier. The sweaty hands in dirty jeans began to itch with desire to just pluck one feather for keeps, for souvenir. Yet the feathers seemed too alive to approach, so even when the big bosomed woman went into the kitchen leaving the smell of blood and hot chicken feather water, the children just watched.

Lucy Kim

SERVANT GIRLS

On the streets, narrow and winding, were those who sat gabbing away into the night until the forbidden hour of twelve struck, reminding them of the curfew. Usually, the country girls with their own dialect would sit and amuse each other with their did-you-hear-about stories. Other than Sundays when they put on their only other outfit to worship God, they remained with soiled clothes. Everyday they would wait to finish doing the dishes and setting out bedmats for their "masters" so that they could be comforted by the others with the same pitiful lives: not enough food in the countryside where their families barely survived; sent to be maids so that at least they were fed; no money with which to go back; so on and on.

At nights when the fruit stands had been brought inside and live chickens were no longer needed to be killed for dinner, the girls would come out and sit on braided straw mats eating fruit that they borrowed from the well-to-do families' baskets. Sometimes the poorer people who could not afford servant girls joined them and entertained each other. On hot summer nights when even the fire flies were hard to see and the humid air stuck on to their muscular arms, the older women sat topless and fanned themselves with worn down paper fans. And always in the distance a baby would be crying or a mother would be scolding her son. Yet the soothing sound of fuzzy music trickled out from one of the houses down the street, letting them forget about the baby crying.

The talks consisted of the latest cabbage prices or of abuse from their masters, and sometimes they even glistened with tears talking of their families whom they had not seen for years. They gossiped of the town doctor's eldest daughter who was seen at the bus stop with a man, or they gossiped of their movie star idols whose faces were plastered on the walls. They never minded that they could not read; one of the smarter ones, who could, would read them stories about their favorite male singer. They did not mind their illiteracy unless

a child's naivete brought about questions of their ignorance. The children would ask why, if *they* could read the big girls could not. Then the embarrassed girls would try to explain that they have never set foot in a school. Or sometimes they cried.

The "knowledgeable" and "helpful" owners of such girls arranged matches for them with delivery men from the rice store, or drivers of their cars. There would be no chioce, no questions asked, no dates; just a quiet wedding that gave the rest of the girls something to gossip about. When the married girl left, another would come. First, she would be timid and stay in her cubby hole sewing, but then soon the night life invited her out on to the comfortable straw mats and fruits.

But that was not all that the girls did. Once a craze hit them and every night one girl would disappear into a small house, under the amateur hands of a man who operated on their eyes to make them look bigger. He would slit across their eyelids to give them a crease and then they thought, they wanted to believe, that they were prettier. Every penny saved for presents to send on Christmas was sacrificed to give the girls hope and dream of beauty. When the house was empty, they would sneak into the bedrooms where red lipsticks lured them and they would put it on their chapped lips. The daring ones even dressed up in pretty clothes neatly stacked in the dressers and walked around feeling special.

Sometimes though, if the girls were slow and not quick enough to change before their masters returned, they would be caught only to be scolded or even beaten. They would then close their doors and bury their heads in blankets full of holes, to weep.

Lucy Kim

EXCERPT FROM AN UNTITLED WORK

I

In the still of the afternoon, two children crept into a sleeping room. Into the room with the curtains pulled, the mother on the bed, the medicine on the side, the keys tied to her sari slip. They asked for the paisas for the ice cream in the mad heat of the afternoon; she rose to unlock the cupboard in the cool room with the silver key she turned clockwise to a circle like the moon, and then had to pull the cupboard hard because of the air it locked in; the sound of the keys with the dull creak of her wooden leg in its metal hinges; with a limp, now, the rattle of the coins in the cadbury tin; out into the green of the roses, into the white light, into the albino light, to the man on his bicycle six toes on each foot; the grey chocolate of the ice cream; delighted; delighted, into the dust of the street, past the glazed quiet dog, past the servant asleep on the moondya, in a wordless, secretive race to the park; home to the two hearted doors, through the two hearted doors, to the roof; miniature japanese trees, and the puddles after the rain. They danced naked, the sun upon the brown and white flesh in the madness of the heat in the warm wet cool water near the tank, near the scissors which the gardener would use when the curtains were drawn. Those, the children's hours, so mad and lovely, before the time for tea and grown-ups.

After tea, the ironing woman came early to press with coals the clothes Maya would wear, a green and purple and gold silk kurta. In to Mama, to button her, to comb her; she stood half-dressed before the mirror, folding the sari, tucking the sari, Bawa's sari before she died, into the slip; the room, yellow in the dusk light, smelled of Pond's powder, reminded of the oval Ivory soap and the lipstick, as she put the perfume on Maya, with smooth ivory fingers, like the Ganesh on the mantelpiece, behind the ears; Abba from the bathroom after a shower, hair before his face, glowing with lines like rivers at the fine sight of his only "monkey," at once neat

and smelling like a child after a bath in the evening, so like flowers, the shampoo and silk; Mama warned not to soil the clothes, they would leave in a few moments, pile sari and perfume into the car. The driver puffed once and, finally, let fall the cigarette to the dust, then straightened the collar in a movement.

Maya sang miles through the windows slightly open, not to mess the hair, a comb brought anyway, through buffalo and sweat and burning hay, along the land where women had hung the cloth they dyed, past the frame of a building called school, so small in the darker light, stopped once for a cow, then the hedges carved like animals; from Defense Colony to the Old Red Fort, orange in the sunset to Number Three for the party in the garden, to the children and relatives who pinched her cheeks not unthinkingly, and the tales of cats, sparrows and men; like spies now, slinking through the night images in the moonlight, adults distanced by drink, drunken to drown out the orange in the green.

II

Seven crows sat on a telephone line. Children, listen, put that down. Do you know what happens when you pick up a crow's feather? Qua he? Qua he? Do you want to have two thumbs like the icecream man? Do you want to look like him?

Snake, snake, under your bed, in your sleep he'll cut off your head.

The German man has a gun he uses for hunting and sometimes he hunts children so don't you go annoying him, or you'll see what comes.

Maya, under the bed. Put the cloth in your mouth. Why the cloth? So you'll keep your teeth if there's a bomb.

Where did De Puck's father go?
Will there be a bomb? From Pakistan?
Why do the men dig S's in the mud?

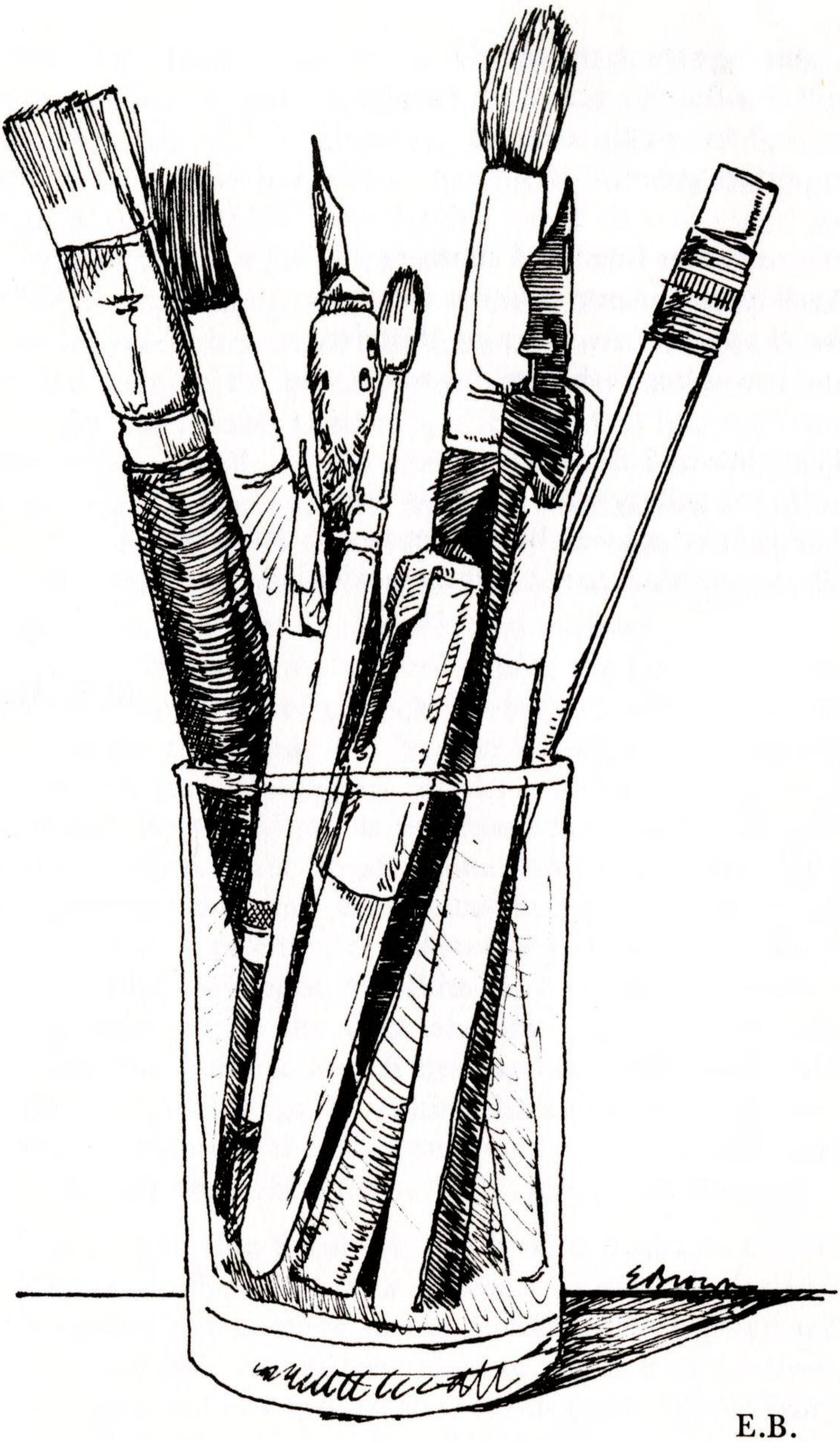
I can't sleep. Don't make me sleep. I'm going to die because DePuck threw a stone at me in the park. It hit my throat, see the mark? I'll wake up and find I'm dead.

III

It was late in August when the raging monsoon descended upon the city. Delhi was never more cruel nor more lovely. After the morning rain, Maya ran through the wet grass and disturbed the lengthening shadow in a puddle. Singing women cradled fruit like sleeping children; servants spoke green words along the waking gutters; mother stroked oil and light into hair where men clustered like ants. Inside, the books were opened, the sheets changed. Now and then, a cow mooed from some distant aching city.

Somewhere, a tomcat fought with a siamese. Women swept where four men slept in the orange dust of a cylinder. A fly hit the screen, then the window pane.

Zia Jaffrey



E.B.

STAINED GLASS

Lightning struck the orchid
and saw the sky where the comets
danced among the clouds,
in perfect green.

Prisms gather fingers of sunshine
Awakening memories under the snow;
He disappears into morning thunder,
and leaves her with a yellow rose.

The maze of Soho streets
hides the gallery with the glass vase.
The painted subway brings her to the chilly bed,
where sunshine, roses, and memories lie.

Ellen Ritchie

DISAPPEARING IN CLARA'S HOUSE

The first change Clara found was her father's hat. It had always smelled of him: pipes and wool. On nights when her parents left her with a babysitter, Clara would go to the hall closet to take down her father's hat and breathe in this smell. About a month after he died she tried this but the hat smelled empty like a hat in a store.

The second change was her mother's disappearing. Clara was never sure when the actual discovery came. It could have been the time at the grocery store when her mother's hand resting on the Danish Dessert box had looked like the hand of the chinese doll on the shelf at home: too white and nearly clear. Or it could have been that afternoon when her mother stood in her apron by the picture window looking out and drying her hands on a dishtowel. Her profile seemed for a moment to waver like a reflection in water.

Clara's mother went to work typing for a school so she could be home at three o'clock when Clara arrived, but she wasn't really there—just her outline moved around, setting the water for tea, breaking off chunks of lettuce to eat. "Must need iron," she would say as she rinsed the leaves in the sink and shook them three sharp times. And Clara, who liked early mornings and late afternoons better than any other parts of the day, resented this disturbing element of a disappearing mother. Sitting at the white kitchen table, Clara liked the long shadows on the floor and the sound of the clock humming. She liked to watch her mother make dinner, the way she chopped things by rocking the knife back and forth, and moved through the kitchen quietly until it was dark enough to turn the light on. But lately, things had changed.

"I hope you like Salisbury Steak with peas and carrots and I see that there is a new blueberry muffin included." Clara's mother would stand in the middle of the kitchen and read from the box, her glasses fallen to the end of her nose, and her apron tied on lopsided so that one pocket faced front and one lay completely out of reach behind.

"I hate TV dinners," Clara would say.

"But they're QUICK AND EASY," was her mother's consistent response, and she lobbed the cardboard boxes into the garbage and slid the iced-over silver dinners into the stove. This is when Clara began to suspect that her mother's imagination had fallen prey to the mysterious fading disease, too.

This was the worst because Clara's mother had always been the kind of mother that kids really liked. She had ideas. Like the time she hauled an enormous cardboard barrel out into the backyard and squatted in the grass carving a door with the scissors. Clara and her friends played with that until it was a shredded flap of paper. She used to make dolls out of empty spools. Once she even sat down and played the part of a guest at Clara's tea party. She looked funny, squashed up in the little chair and hunched over the table. She had to keep brushing her skirt out of the cookies. Once, when Clara's mother had climbed up in a neighbor's tree-house to deliver lunch to a bunch of kids, Clara heard another mother under the tree say, "Someday Jane Westmoreland will grow up." Clara thought this sounded pretty silly. All mothers were grown up by definition.

Now she waited for Clara in the car when she picked her up from ballet class. The other mothers bustled around, helping their daughters dress, discussing the merits of ballet pink against theatrical white. These mothers moved noisily, bumping into each other, saying: "My God, Theresa, more holes in your tights?" But Clara's mother kept the motor running and waited for Clara to put her coat on. Clara was so afraid that someone would ask her why her mother was disappearing that she ran to the door of the car and didn't look up until they were out on the highway.

Clara was terrified. What if, some morning, her mother's alarm would continue to ring until Clara went in to see that nobody was in the bed at all—only a bundle of blankets and a pillow with hardly a dent? Clara began walking very quietly around the house. She figured that a sudden start might speed up mother's disintegration. Clara left her shoes in the foyer everytime she came inside.

"What did you step in?" Her mother asked one day as Clara slipped up the stairs in her socks.

"Nothing," Clara said. She also felt that if her mother knew that Clara was aware she was disappearing, that would be the end. Her mother's hold on the world would no longer seem necessary. She would simply fade out as Clara watched. Clara had pictured this scene a hundred times: her mother becoming more and more transparent, like a cheshire cat, leaving behind not her smile, but her right hand waving goodbye.

"Clara, I don't really relish the sight of your shoes parked by the front door every time I walk by. I don't know where you picked up the habit, but it's got to go."

Clara began wearing sneakers.

"From where did this olympic spirit spring?" Asked her mother, looking up from her nightly study of cooking directions.

"Me and Amy Kruger practice tennis at lunch time."

"That's nice. But 'Amy Kruger and I' sounds better. Would you take the hamburger out of the fridge for me?"

Clara's mother dumped the box of dried macaroni and tomato powder into a skillet and poked it around with her finger. "How does this look for a change, Clara?"

"Looks great, Mom," Clara said because lately she had come to think that misbehaving might hasten the disappearing process.

At night, Clara, lying awake in the bedroom across the hall from her mother, would hold her breath and bend out of bed to listen for signs that her mother remained solid: a rustle of book pages, the clatter of eyeglasses dropped on the table, the windowshade being run up.

"If you go grocery shopping with me, it gets done twice as fast," Clara's mother said to her. She was seated on the living room floor leaning like someone riding side-saddle. This was her favorite working position: in the middle of the living room floor, her feet tucked under her. Clara clung to the wall thinking of all the people they would see at the Safeway, thinking of mouths popping open and fingers pointing. "I can see the dog food through that woman!"

"Do I have to go?"

"You look like a fly over there, Clara. What on earth is the matter with you?" Clara's mother ripped the shopping list in half between cling peaches and toilet paper. "This is your half of the list. Come on, let's move."

On weeknights everybody stopped at the Safeway on his way home from work. Clara and her mother had to push past two boys at the coke machine who were on their knees reaching their arms up into the machine through the dispenser openings. Clara looked down at them, but they were too involved in trying to get a free soda to notice anything else.

"I'm going to start at the meat aisle so just bring me things as you find them," Clara's mother said. She swung a shopping basket out from behind the bread shelves. It was scattered with squashed rusty-looking spinach leaves, and as she plucked them out, Clara's mother continued, "Don't forget to get the right kind of milk—two percent—and pick out any kind of breakfast cereal you want—"

"Jane! Jane, you look so well!"

Clara recognized the voice calling across the store as belonging to Winnie Prugh, the wife of the minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church where Clara's family had always belonged. Clara saw a funny twitch in her mother's face as she waved her arm at Mrs. Prugh.

"Hello, Clara. We miss you in the choir this year. One less little angel. Maybe next year, hm?"

Clara found herself lost in the endless blue bosom that came suddenly upon her.

Shortly after Clara's father died, Dr. and Mrs. Prugh had come to the house to show her mother flashcards with words on them like SPIRIT and LOVE. Clara remembered her mother seated uncomfortably on the sofa, her hand at her throat. She shook her head and rubbed her eyes a lot and ignored Clara watching from the kitchen. The Prughs were very patient. Once, Dr. Prugh laid down all the flashcards on the coffee table and said, "What we can touch is only the tip of a fathomless iceburg." Clara remembered the sentence because "fathomless" had something to do with submarines, and she could picture a long grey submarine running into an iceburg and getting locked there. Clara's mother didn't seem

to buy Dr. Prugh's words of wisdom. Dr. Prugh was fat and purple-faced and Mrs. Prugh blew on her tea and held the extra flashcards in her lap. "Dear," she said too many times, with her hand on Dr. Prugh's arm.

"Clara is busy being Pavlova this year," Clara's mother said, and brushed the last of the spinach out of the basket.

"How are things GOING?" Mrs. Prugh asked with great gravity, her blue bosom rising like a wave against Clara's face. When Clara pulled away and looked at her mother, the disappearing was so obvious that she almost said out loud: "Come back!" It was a good thing she didn't though. Mr. Prugh seemed not to notice what was going on.

"Well," said Clara's mother. "Quite well." Her face let in the light from the Wonder Bread sign behind her. "Clara, let's get this show on the road."

Clara took two steps backward. She was afraid to let her mother out of her sight. She would lose track of her altogether.

"Start in the back at the dairy and work up again," Jane instructed her, and shooed her, as if she were a pigeon.

Clara walked very fast to the back of the store where she picked up the milk and the margarine. Then she raced back to the front. Mrs. Prugh and her mother spoke quietly over the empty basket. Clara's mother stood blinking, her throat arched slightly and her hair growing invisible over the beefy blue shoulder of the minister's wife. Clara retreated into the frozen food section. The two boys who had been sticking their arms into the coke machine were now eating the frost off of the boxes in the refrigerator cases, running their blackened fingertips along the boxtops and then sucking their fingers. They made noises like bomber planes: "NEEEOWWW—" as they swooped their fingers down into the refrigerator. Clara picked up macaroni and cheese and rice pilaf and two cans of orange juice before she felt something cold sting the back of her neck.

"Cut it out," she said, turning to the boys. They seemed younger and considerably less intelligent, with bristly black hair and wide mouths turned red from the ice they were eating, so alike they had to be brothers. The shorter of the two

had a yellow kerchief stuffed into his back pocket the way older kids did, and it hung down to his knee, frayed and dirty. This one flung a whole handful of ice at Clara, catching her in the face. The ice dripped down her neck and into her shirt, raising the hair on the back of her head with its sudden cold. At first she only dropped the box of margarine with a slap, but then everything fell—the milk, the macaroni and cheese, and one can of orange juice which cracked open, oozing orange slush out onto the floor and onto the cracks in the linoleum.

When Clara wiped the ice out of her left eye, the boys were gone—only the squeal of their sneakers remained as they ran away, probably dodging shopping baskets and knocking vague-minded shoppers into the shelves. Clara stepped away from the orange mess and looked around to see if some angry manager in a blood-stained butcher's coat were coming after her. She left the groceries on the floor, and holding the second can of orange juice, she ran for the safety of her mother. When she got to the front of the store, Mrs. Prugh and her mother were no longer there, so Clara turned down the meat aisle. She stopped halfway—a little past the veal and not quite into the hamburger. Her mother drifted along on the handle of the shopping basket, her purse riding on her shoulder. She was passing through the other shoppers like a ghost.

When it was beginning to be October Clara and her mother took down the summer curtains from all the windows in the house. This was a yearly activity, removing all the white cotton curtains and dumping them into the center of the living room where they made a huge fluffy mound like snow. Then when all the windows were bald and the sun blared through the house, Clara's mother brought the dark winter drapes out of the closet, peeling the cleaner's plastic off as she came. Clara stood on the floor and handed the drapes fold by fold up to her mother who balanced on a chair and hooked on the brass rings and slid the drapes along the curtain rod. Gradually, each room grew dim as the winter drapes snaked over the windows.

"None of my friends' mothers change curtains from summer to winter," Clara said, tired of holding up her arms.

Clara's mother spoke at the ceiling as she scrabbled the rings around smoothing out the drapes. "When I was a little girl, I always loved the summer curtains, the way they brightened up the house, and the outside came in. And then with the winter drapes, the house turned inward—" She reached way out to the side sending the first brass ring sliding across the rod. "—and cozy."

Through the heavy brown drape Clara could see outside where a group of neighborhood kids was tramping across the lawn, about four, maybe five, of them. Clara felt a leap in her arms and legs as they banged around the front porch and then rang the doorbell.

Her mother bent her head in the sunlight and squinted down at Clara. "Hand me up the rest of that one."

Clara flew off down the stairs to the door and pulled it open. The air smelled smokey and the group on the porch rustling in its jackets made her think of short afternoons when dinner comes early and everyone plays softball under the streetlights.

"We're playing cavemen," Tracy Wiggers announced, sticking her fingers through the grating on the screen door.

"I'll ask her." It was Lisa McKinney who whispered loudly and then said directly to Clara, "Bring those wooden salad bowls. They're good."

Clara opened the screen door and the group pushed in like a flood of courduroy and wool. "I need someone to help me carry them."

Lisa, whose freckles crawled over the top of her lip, thrust her hands in her pockets and shrugged her shoulders. "Can't we all come?"

Faces squirmed anxiously behind her. There was something about ferreting around in other kids' houses. Different smells, different textures were irresistable. Clara once saw Mrs. Wiggers' nylon-stockinged feet pad across their green carpet and it filled her with such overwhelming strangeness that she felt she had crossed into another world.

Clara led the group up the stairs to the living room where her mother still stood on the chair moving brass rings and darkening the room. When she turned around she had a look on her face as if she had tasted bad milk. Her hands raised above her head with the drapes bunched in them were spider thin. A barely visible ripple of curiosity moved along the group of kids and Clara fumbled past the kitchen door in her rush to get the bowls and herd the group outside and away from her fading mother.

Clara's mother said, "Hello girls," and returned to the drapes.

As Clara kneeled on the counter to take down the wooden salad bowls, she could hear Lisa describing her older sister's cheerleading jumps in enthusiastic detail and the squeals from the rest of the group as they scrambled over one another to prove they could contort themselves too.

"You look RETARDED," Lisa said, screeching with laughter. It began to sound like a rumble as Clara climbed down with the stack of bowls. "You look like a bunch of RETARDS!"

When Clara came out of the kitchen, there was a crooked sort of kick line lying on its backs on the edge of the living room rug. Feet seemed to be up everywhere. Clara's chin was hooked over the rim of the top bowl, but her eyes could move, and she looked up at her mother. Clara's mother stood on her chair holding her skirt against her legs like someone with fire lapping at her feet. The drape, almost hung, fell over the window in a flap.

"Clara, I am seeing red," she said.

"Come on you guys." Clara shuffled everybody down the stairs in a storm of footsteps. When she got out to the front lawn, she looked up at the picture window, but her mother had finished hanging the drapes. No one would be able to see inside until next April.

Lisa pushed up shoulder to shoulder with Clara and said, "What's the matter with your mother?"

The others hung behind a few steps conspiratorily.

Clara looked back over her shoulder at them and said, "Nothing."

Lisa shifted her flabby freckled face into Clara's. "She used to be so nice. Now she's mean."

"She is not mean. You were acting stupid." Clara heard herself breathing hard as if she had run a long distance. She shoved the bowls at Lisa. "Here, you're the one who wanted these."

"What's your problem?" Lisa yelled. She had to catch the top bowl with her mouth, and yelling was the only way to get the words out.

"Your ugly face," said Clara. But she was relieved that they hadn't noticed the real problem.

Clara came home around dinner time with her nose tingling from the cool air that had blown in during the afternoon. She paused on the porch, partly to count the wooden bowls, and partly because she had been plagued all day by the fear that the ruckus on the living room floor had accelerated her mother's unravelling.

Inside the house it was dark except for a wedge of light at the end of the hall. When Clara put the bowls into the kitchen sink she heard the squeaky slurping sound of someon taking a bath. This was odd because her mother's bathtime was in the morning before work. Out in the dark living room the mound of summer curtains glowed like the moon.

"Clara?" Her mother called.

Clara went down the hall and opened the door to the bathroom. She smelled her mother's gardenia bath oil as pungent as a garden. For a minute she thought her mother had turned yellow but then she realized it was the wall tile showing through her body as she lay there in the steaming water, fading.

I'm saying goodbye to the summer," she said, smiling crookedly. She reached for a glass on the side of the tub and stirred the ice with one finger: clink, like crystal goblets being collected from the table. "Doesn't it make you sad to take down the summer curtains?"

Clara nodded. Her mother was watching the faucet drip.

Clara couldn't see her legs below the knee. She stood on tip-toe, trying to look, to make sure they were still there.

"Dear, you're letting the cold air in," Clara's mother said, and waved Clara out. There was gooseflesh on one of her transparent arms. Clara was glued to the door.

"Mom?"

"Make it fast," her mother said and slid down further into the water.

"If you were going somewhere, would you tell me before you went?"

"What?" Clara's mother craned her neck around and stared at Clara. She held her glass in close like a flower under her nose. She blinked. "Do you think I'm going somewhere?"

"No," said Clara. "It was just a question."

Clara's mother sank back down in the tub with a loud slurp. "It's freezing in here, she said.

Shortly after this, Clara noticed that her mother had winked out of everyone's sight but hers. It was at the class picnic right before Halloween. The class moved out to a park near the school and kids went wild, running all over the place and climbing trees and all the mothers were supposed to bring food. It was one of those days as bright as glass, cold enough to make fingers red. Clara's mother had stayed up late the night before making homemade macaroni salad, the radio playing softly in the kitchen. From her room Clara had heard the sound of the music and the macaroni bubbling in a large pot on the stove. It had made her sleepy just listening.

Clara's mother was late to the picnic because she had to come from work, and, Clara told herself, some stupid kid probably ate staples or something and her mother had to sit in the health room and feed him corn bread so his stomach wouldn't bleed. Clara was playing kickball, standing in line behind a boy who was so excited by the day and the game that he bobbed up and down like a carnival duck. She saw her mother coming across the park, carrying the macaroni salad, and every time this kid came down, Clara's mother had moved closer to the crowd of parents, smiling. She walked with neat steps, watching her feet and smiling. She moved

past a group of mothers, her skirt fluttering, her wrists looking white between the heavily sweatered women. She sat by herself at one of the picnic tables, hugging the tupperware bowl. She looked back and forth at other parents, jiggled one leg up and down over the other one. The hem of her skirt seemed to brush the grass, but Clara wasn't really close enough to see. She wasn't even sure if her mother cast a shadow. Clara looked around to see if any of the other kids had seen her ghost-mother come in, but nobody looked in that direction. Then Clara's mother finally looked up, saw Clara, and waved, one hand gripped around the macaroni salad, one hand drifting up into the air like a balloon, up so high that Clara thought she saw it disappear into the trees.

Clara and her mother ate lunch alone that day, sitting at a picnic table where nobody else joined them. Maybe the others could catch a glimpse now and then of a ghostly hand coming out of nowhere. Maybe they thought Clara was crazy, talking to the air.

Once, the scarf Clara's mother had taken off and laid on the table was picked up by a gust of wind and deposited on the grass a few yards away. Clara and her mother both watched it as it flew like a magic carpet across the air. One of the boys grabbed it up, and not knowing who it belonged to, tied it around his head to the loud enjoyment of his friends. His face was pinched long by the silky material.

Feeling somehow terribly intruded upon, Clara said, "Don't you want me to get it from him?"

But her mother shook her head quickly. Her mouth was full of chicken and turned down at the corners in a sort of frown. "Let him have it. It's a dime store scarf anyway."

Clara saw the scarf being tugged in all directions. She was surprised that nobody, not even her mother seemed to realize that it was a relic from a lost place. She watched it go.

Laura E. King

UNTITLED.

The Panasonic rigged to the tennis court
Plays Bulgarian Folk tunes.
We eye each other's feet
In a circle made by lightly touching fingertips,
Stretch the fingers of our hands
And try to breach the gap
that summer made:
The hole in the net, once taut, fallen
limply.

I learned the ART,
(you say the skill)
Of Bulgarian Folk dance
this summer,
in a loft – stripped floors –
Every evening from six till nine.

My palm is not meeting yours.
I catch your eye
which you toss at me.
We throw glances
back and forth
back and forth
Until what is passing between us is lost.
Still,
You cannot place your palm against mine:
Flat lined hand pressed on flat lined hand.
Your movements are poised, deliberate,
Like someone who has been stamping library books,
Your body is like a rubber stamp
bringing itself down firmly
on a white card.

Judy Clain

LOST MEMORIES

I have ceased to remember them anymore. The only thing left of that kind of memory are the voices. A dull undercurrent of murmurmurmur with an occasional fragment rising to consciousness. Almost, almost I have joined the great anesthetized. Lobotomized by necessity.

There is a living to be made. Food in the stomach. A place to sleep. "Christ died for your sins. What have you done for him?" Well, it was nice of him, but I didn't ask for any favors. I walk with my head bent, watching the ground. Repenting. Forgive me father, for I have sinned. Avoiding the eyes of the people I pass. Look, a penny. I stoop down, swoop down quickly and palm the coin. A penny saved, a penny earned. I take the penny home. Hoarding my pennies in the applesauce jars, in the ashtrays. Then every six months I sit at the once white kitchen table with my little red wrappers begrudgingly handed over by the wisp of a man behind the bullet proof glass in the bank. One, two, three. Counting quietly to myself while waiting for the train. Ten. Close my eyes and count backwards from ten and I'll be able to hear it then. No, no train yet. Shit, lost count. One, two, three. The limp little paper sleeves becoming rigidly erect. Neatly hard tubes that feel calming when held in the hand. Fifty. Sixteen rolls, eight dollars. Three pounds. Wonder what a pint costs? Cold guinness for home consumption. Ship that watery stuff, nobody here will drink it. Call it Export Quality. Half of the rolls in my front right pocket, half in the left. The weight makes my pants bulge. Money in my pockets a good feeling. Then her face leering at me. "Money burns a hole in his pocket." Holes in my socks. Surrounded by walls with holes in the cracking plaster. Saving every penny on the street for months. "Money burns a hole in his pocket." I have triumphed. The wisp, with his clean, flaccid, neatly manicured fingers picks up the rolls, one by one. "That will help solve the national shortage." He grimaces and pushes eight green bills to me. Worn, tired bills that do not make the trip from the bank back to my mouse-

hole. Six quarts of. The King? The Campagne? Six quarts of Schlitz. Danny's Inn. Famous for its fine food and decor. Greasy steaks on stale rolls covered with liquid plastic cheese. Red tables, a video projection screen unwatched at one corner and the crowd of neighborhood junkies playing electronic games with stolen money. I am careful with my bundle. The first one, that's dedicated to you, Mother. You always wanted something dedicated to you. It's a living. Selling my body to science. First to the highest bidder, then crossing the street and selling it a second time. Selling my soul for a free meal in the church's outreach program. Renting out my penis to any woman who will give me a place to sleep. I'm glad I won't be around when they come for a final accounting. Collecting the remains. She'll be there Starting every sentence with, "My only regret is." Then proceeding to fill up a volume. A tome of regrets to be buried with her old corpse. I am her only regret. Old Mr. Jopkins. A mere ghost of himself. Not even a ghost of the once proud 220 pounds. Only a hundred kilos he would declare while opening another beer. The bottles so large in my hand looked like toys in his. Your move. Once was City Champ. Honey, can I have a match? He would sit there, buddah with cigarette smoke wreathing his head, the beer bottle resting on his stomach. Not I alone. Help was needed to bring about his fall. Every night for months we would play chess. Every night for months we lost at chess while learning his style. A man revealing himself in his moves. Each one seemingly innocuous, innocent. The pattern revealing. The gestalt. The magic day came. A blunder on his part, no special intelligence from us. I capitalized on it. We should have lost. Youth has no mercy. Usurpers. Now he lies in his deathbed, the cancer speading from the lung out. Metastasis. I cannot bring myself to see him. I don't know how to speak to the living dead. He'll go to heaven, he will. If only he would stop cursing. Fuck. the last words on his lips. The Father said it was "Faaah." Fuck a trooper to the end. Poor Missus, alone in the house. With the youngest to care for. The other two ran away to live their own lives. Married now, ready to replicate

the pattern. A xerox family. We're taking up a collection for cancer research, to be donated in his memory. It is much better to die in a nuclear holocaust, but put me down for ten dollars anyway. In memory of. Then I am free to forget. To forget Jackie and the false accusation. Brought in front of the principal. Did you say that? Not exactly. I only said that she looked pregnant. Do you know what you said? That she looked pregnant. A little girl's round belly sticking out. Sixth grade, how would I know what I meant. No Sir. I bend down in false penitence. She did look pregnant. Hail Mary. You looked pretty bloated there yourself, eh Mary? What did Joseph say about that when he came home from a hard day of begging around town? The biblical cuckold. Forgive me god, for I hate you for taking my wife. Why, I hardly knew her. I wink at the statue. Immaculate Contraceptive. Oh Virgin Mother, there is so much I want to ask you. Did Jesus play with himself when he was a child? I open the next bottle and dedicate it to our Savoir. There. To my better who can turn water into wine. I drink this bottle to you and perform the opposite miracle.

There is a hush, the voice has quieted down again. Rejoined the rest of the murmurmurmur. Another portion of the cortex burnt away. Lost memories.

Randall C. Ringer III

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