

AURORA



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Imprisonment — L. Kinney

Ice-Trapped

I.

*POETRY AWARD WINNER

No sunlight slips through the skull-dull sky
To prick the brickish earth to life.
Acorn-spiced grass and dun-toned leaves
Are caught in crystal, sealed from wind-strife.

No sunlight seeps through the skull-dull sky
To free the hoary-armored trees.
With worn limbs wrenched by water-weight,
They droop like brooding amputees.

All below and all above
Are caught in cataleptic calm,
Corpse-still and stiff-shrouded
In gelid winter's rigid balm.

II.

We move in rusty steps
across the milky mosaic,
the disgraced trees creaking
overhead,
the glass-glazed
shrubs rattling
woodenly against our sleeves,
the sun leaking
no light.
Our skin draws tight.

III.

The bleak soul sleeps, a
Chrysalis calloused in flesh,
Waiting for the light.

— Marta D. Powell



Photograph — Mary Praytor

No where, Now

— Bennie C. Hammonds, Jr.

1

Captain Fitzgerald pulled off his oxygen mask and let the bottle fall to the floor. He wouldn't need it at that altitude and it was stuffy, the rubber made him sick. It was better feelin' that cool, crisp wind blowin' like all getout in his face. And with half the canopy shot to Satan's Incinerator, the air conditioning was just fiiiine. Yeah, Number 4 had put up a good fight. That was one thing, they may be short, but they sure were hellions in them Zeros. One more, baby, one more and he'd be an ace. He kinda let that thought stretch out comfy cozy in his mind while he checked his instruments again: fuel mixture — rich; oil pressure — normal; controls — functioning, except for radio, out; hydraulics — good; engine — functioning. Yeah, he was doin' all right. Didn't even get hit himself, for a change. Doc Simpson was gonna be glad not to see his mug today. Yeah, he was doin' fine.

The F-4U Corsair nicknamed "Pope's Hope" thundered alone over the wide, blue Pacific away from sunset. A few bullet holes were the only other signs that it had been in battle besides the widely punctured canopy. Now there was only that primeval urge to get home, the escort carrier John O. Tate somewhere ahead.

He had a passing thought that maybe he might need his radio after all, but . . . Naw, he'd made that run on Subaru more than he could count; it was like he could follow the sea like a roadmap, he knew where the flattop was. He just wished he hadn't gotten separated from the rest, especially Carl. That character was the worse wingman . . .

That was when he saw the traces of smoke in the distance. He watched silently as he came up to it after a few minutes.

All that was left was a wide oil slick, floating debris, a few barely perceptible corpses, and a tall fading column of smoke marking the grave. Hit by submarine probably. No survivors.

Jerry Fitzgerald felt very lost and alone. He hadn't even thought about fuel before, can't contact anyone else, what if they didn't . . . sharks below . . . nowhere else . . . how could he . . . ?

He crossed himself and whispered, "Hail, Mary, Mother of Grace . . ."

2

" . . . This is just beautiful, beautiful . . . I can see all the way across to the other rim. . . . It must be a hundred miles away. . . . Hey, Jerry, come look at this . . ."

"(SQUAA-A-A-KKK)"

"I didn't read you, man. Try it again."

"(CRACKLE —) Sorry, but this generator must have been interfering with transmission . . . I said I'll be there in seven steps. . . . Watch this . . ."

The bulky, white-suited astronaut bounded up the crater's slope like a clumsy kangaroo raising dust at each step. It took nine.

"You were two off, partner."

"So who's counting? . . . Hey, this view is . . . fantastic. . . . Did you bring your camera, Randy?"

"I got it right here. . . . It'll take a second to power up . . . Mission Control, get ready for a video transmission on Frequency 751 . . ."

"Roger, and incidentally . . . All major channels will be picking it up live . . . No commercial interruptions."

"Right . . . I could have told you that . . . All right, here it is . . ."

The two astronauts took turns filming the newly-discovered crater officially named Peace. Lt. Jerry Goldstone took a moment to marvel at all the accomplishments the space program had made since the slowdown in the seventies. For a while it had seemed like nothing of much importance was going to happen, what with all the furor about The War and domestic problems. But the Turner Report about the population explosion had set the ball in motion again. The Fourth Wave of space exploration had begun, and he was riding it right up front. A childhood dream come true.

"You're kind of quiet over there, Jerry . . . How about a word?"

"Baloopadip."

"This is Mission Control . . . Repeat transmission."

"Hahaha . . . That's all right."

They finished filming the crater and started back to the Mooncoupe.

"You know, Jerry, if this were my old neighborhood, somebody would've ripped off that ten million

dollar buggy."

"Don't worry now, but in a few decades, after the moon's become another country, it'll be all over."

Halfway down the rim they received a strange transmission.

"PATHWAY-PATHWAY! STANDBY . . . !"

"What was that, Mission Control?" Randy asked, somewhat alarmed.

"Captain, that sounded serious."

They stopped and waited.

"This is Pathway One to Mission Control . . . We are standing by."

They didn't have to wait long for the next transmission.

"PATHWAY ONE! THIS IS IT! THE PRESIDENT (Screaming in the background, muffled thunder, many voices yelling at once) ALL-OUT! I REPEAT, ALL-OUT! THEY DID IT (Sirens, thunder, screams) — CLEAR . . . !"

Then the radio suddenly, abruptly went dead.

"Where's . . . the . . . earth . . . ?" Captain Porter asked slowly, a cold, damp feeling in his gut. He turned to his right where Jerry was looking up over the crater's rim at the earth. They could see the Atlantic and parts of four continents bordering it, and in two minutes almost every section of land had become covered with sparks of blindingly intense white light.

"TURN AWAY, MAN!" Randy yelled, throwing himself at his partner and pushing him over on his stomach. It was too late.

"I . . . CAN'T . . . SEE . . . I . . . CAN'T . . . SEE . . . !" Jerry cried.

Randy blinked the spots out of his eyes. Another second and there'd have been two blind astronauts up there; Christ, can you dig that? Phil up in the command module would be in the blind spot by now, wouldn't know what happened yet.

"Easy, baby, easy. Be cool. Take it easy . . ." he told Jerry the same instant he realized earth wouldn't be fit to return to, what was left of it, and their oxygen had to run out.

"Don't leave me, Randy . . . Please . . ."

"Naw, man. We're all three of us in this together."

When he cautiously looked up again, the earth was gone, hidden under an enormous cloud of dust and debris.

"OH, GOD! THE CRAZY . . . THEY DID IT ALL RIGHT! THE STUPID MOTHERS!"

That was the third time he'd ever wept in his life. The first was when they knocked off his mama and the second was when he ran away from home.

He finally reached the eighth floor. There was the door in the middle of the hall, just as he'd pictured it for four years. He approached it trembling. At last. It was dark. He could see something sticking in the mail slot. It had . . . his name on it? It was too dark to read it there. He could do that inside . . . Something bothered him about that. She'd never written. His last letter told her when he'd get out. He looked down the hall. There was a light at the end. He walked toward it opening up the note. His steps sounded so loud. He looked at it:

DON'T YOU COME IN HERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
YOU DISCRACED THIS FAMLY ENOUF!!!!!!!!
I FORGOT I HAD A SON THE DAY
THEY TOLD ME WHAT YOU WERE
AND AFTER I FINISH THIS I'LL
FORGET YOU AGAIN! I'M JUST
GLAD YOUR PAPA DIED BEFOR THAT
DAY! YOU NEVER SHOW YOUR FACE
IN THIS DECENT HOME AGAIN!
NEVER EVER AGAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!

It struck him like a bolt of lightning. He'd suspected as much, but never like THIS! He felt sick. It was like he was drowning. It was like his whole world had blown up in his face.

He dropped the note and ran for the stairs, not knowing where he was going.

There was really nowhere to go now anyway.

People at a Bar

Sounds of squeaking seats speak through a mumbled hush.

Heavy calves dangle impotently off a stool,
 Proudly possessed by the woman whose powder
 Almost hides her flacid face.

("Susan! How've you been, my dear?!")

Humorless laughs emerge from the masks of
 Empty souls,
 Rumpled suits hanging on pliantly bloated bodies.

A viking warrior dances joyfully on the mug
 Over the mirror,
 As if to compensate.

This bar has a double chin.

— Timothy Weigle Askeu

Creativity

— Alice Faulkner

The black, grained leather portfolio seemed out of place on the dull grey finish of her desk top. The young woman sat directly behind it thumbing the corners of the papers that hung out of the bottom of the folder. Her long tapered fingers pulled at her dark brown curls.

"What time will Mr. Johnson be in?" she asked, turning to a young man on her left.

"Any minute now I'd think," he said, looking over his shoulder at the large black and white clock on the wall. His hair was a dull, light brown of Jr. executive length — touching the tops of his large protruding ears.

She turned back to her desk and carefully untied the string that held the portfolio shut. Then she waited to hear the brisk one-two of Mr. Johnson as he'd swing through the office doors and march back to office 'B' saluting as he went.

"How do you stop an ROTC General?" she thought to herself with an uneasy smile.

And the stiff black pants kept time with a narrow grey tie sitting on a white button-down shirt above them.

"Mr. Johnson . . . Could I see you for a minute?"

His eyes darted to see who had spoken, but then peered around to read her name from the plate on her desk.

"Mrs. Blount," he began with a boom. "Well, I suppose I have a few minutes."

She carefully placed a chair beside her drawing board in the hopes that he would relax, but he seemed intent upon standing.

"Mr. Johnson — I received a memo from your office a few days ago . . ."

"Yes," his voice broke in.

She pulled at the cuffs of her blouse.

"And you suggested I do some sketches of that Country Club."

"Yes."

"I didn't know what the sketches would be used for," she paused briefly, and glancing at Mr. Johnson, realized he was about to interrupt and so went on quickly.

"I took the initiative to do some work on interesting locations around the city that I thought might lend variety to the . . ."

"Mrs. Blount . . . Your assignment was . . ."

"Mr. Johnson . . . I did do the Country Club sketches, but last weekend I also went ahead with these others."

"Well, all right . . . let's see them," he said, folding his arms across his full stomach.

She carefully placed a deep brown and gold watercolor of an old building surrounded by evergreens on the board.

"This is the Old Medical College. . . . It was founded in 1893." She reached for the next painting that depicted grey-blue water rushing under a pine bridge. "And this is the canal . . . It's been here since the founding . . ."

"Mrs. Blount . . . Didn't the memo say what the sketches were for . . . that secretary . . . Those won't do . . ." he squinted, puzzling over the blending greens of the trees.

"The sketches are for the backs of sugar packages . . . in turquoise or chartreuse . . . it'll only be a half-inch high."

She looked at Mr. Johnson's hand as he held it in front of her. She looked at this thumb with its nail chewed to the quick and his fourth finger heavily weighted with a high school ring that he brought together to form the half-inch and then to the wide sweeping strokes of her paintings.

"They have to be in India ink for printing. . . . Have you worked with that?"

"Very little, sir."

"Well . . . we can't have pastels."

"These are watercolors."

"It's all the same . . . We can't use them . . . Let's see the Country Club . . . It's not pastel too?"

She held the paintings in front of her, taking in the patterns of hot and cool colors before placing them back in the portfolio. She then began to rummage through a stack of papers in one of her desk drawers from which she produced three charcoal etchings of a split-level brick building.

He took in a breath and stuffed his hands into his pockets and leaned back from the papers.

"Let's see . . . hum . . . Clear up the lines . . . we don't need these pines . . . make them bushes so we can see the building. You'll have to do it in ink . . . to save time . . . why don't you take them on up to fourth floor printing as soon as you finish them?"

He resumed his march toward his office and left

her looking over the sketches.

"Without the trees . . . there's nothing but red bricks . . ."

As she picked up the watercolors, the man on her left gave a cough that meant "Don't waste time."

The revisions were elementary and she finished them in twenty-five minutes and then called to request the paper and India ink for the final draft.

Soon a fat red-haired woman appeared with her supplies.

"Good morning, Kath . . . I brought your check on up with the other things. . . . Thank goodness it's Friday and payday!"

"Thank you Bernice."

She took the envelope and placed it on the desk face down while she copied the sketches from charcoal to ink, drawing deftly and quickly with even strokes of the pen. The architectural dimensions emerged in ten lines. A few details were added and it was done. She carried it up to Printing then as Mr. Johnson had told her to do. The machines were shiny steel and clicked away quickly and noisily.

"I have some sketches."

"You'll have to see Mr. Bowes . . . he's out . . . have a seat . . ." a uniformed man shouted at her over the noise of the machines.

She waited in his office, but the clicks and chops of the machinery made her nervous and she was anxious to return to her own office. Finally Mr. Bowes's secretary came in and took her sketches.

She returned to her desk and put her check in the inside flap of her shoulder bag. From the same flap she drew out an index card she had filled out her first day at work.

"Check number one was supposed to go toward canvases, check number two for new brushes, check number three — pastels, check number four — toward the silk screen . . ."

She took her pen and crossed through "silk screen" as she had crossed through the other items. Beside them she had scribbled instead "utilities," "telephone bill," and "TV repair."

"This one will have to pay for the water colors I charged . . . I can't ask Mr. Johnson to reimburse me for something he won't use."

Her thoughts were interrupted by the ringing of her phone.

"Hello."

"Kath . . . honey . . . I've got good news . . ."

"Hello, Michael."

"But first you can ask your husband how his day

has been . . ."

"How's your day been?"

"Well . . . now that you mention it . . . Super . . . I've sold three Frigidaire deluxe freezers and one avocado dish washer."

"What's an avocado dish?"

"The color . . . But that's not all . . . I think I found us a one-bedroom apartment right on the interstate. . . . I talked to the resident manager this morning. The rent's only \$150.00 a month. We can even have a "Towne House" apartment like we have now."

"It's not the same thing, honey . . . we practically have our own home now."

"Well . . . we'd still have an upstairs and it has a dishwasher . . . I really think it would be best . . . Hon . . . I know you like having your own place to paint, but it's just not worth having to eat hamburger instead of roast beef. We'll put your easel in the living room or in our bedroom . . . a customer just came in . . . Mike is back to work . . . I'll have to hang up . . . We'll talk about this tonight . . . Bye."

Tonight she had planned to work on a painting for her husband. Their anniversary would be in two weeks and she was anxious to see if her husband would recognize the seascape from their honeymoon.

"Mrs. Blount." She looked up to see Mr. Johnson's secretary pause in front of her desk.

"After lunch . . . Mr. Johnson wants you to work up an emblem for Houck Interiors . . . and he said to keep it simple."

She got out a sketch pad and pencil and doodled Victorian style, two-story houses with front porches and screen doors.

She didn't think though that Mr. Houck would be impressed with the front of Mrs. O'Leary's house even if he knew she lived in half of it. She decided to go on to lunch, taking her sketch pad with her.

She seated herself on the steps in front of the four-story grey concrete building beside a lighted sign that said "Graphic Arts, Inc. We print our own." She found herself drawing the clouds instead of working on the emblem.

After lunch she finished a rectangular house with small square windows and a tall red front door. The roof was shingled and had a chimney. She added the decorator's name to the right of the house in a straight block print.

Mr. Johnson liked it. "Keep up the good work."

The day wore on quietly. The man next to her was intently reading *The Modern Use of Symbols — The Art of Emblem Making*.

"You know, this is fascinating . . . just to see what will attract people's attention."

She was silent though, wondering if her husband really was determined to move. Perhaps not if he knew how much the house meant to her.

"Young men and women, I have exciting news," Mr. Johnson stepped up to her desk and shouted, even though she and the other man were the only people in this office.

"I've gotten a call from a new client . . . who wants us to work up a bill-board. . . . If he likes the design he may even have it worked up in neon tubing for signs."

He placed a plastic-coated folder on each of their desks. "Here's the literature on the product . . . Both of you start to work on it . . . This might be our first plunge into advertising. Who knows!"

Katherine took in the cover with a glance — a large bag of potato chips done up in glaring red and gold with the name "Cracky O's" plastered across the cellophane.

"I know it's Friday, but you can come up with something by Monday!"

Both of their faces were set in subtle frowns.

"In fact, I'll be out the rest of the afternoon . . . Shriners . . . Civic duty and all that . . . Why don't ya'll beat the rush . . . and go home early . . . an hour . . . that'll give you time to work on this . . . take whatever you need from the office . . . Good luck."

Obviously exhilarated by his own pep talk, he stalked through the swinging doors and onto the down elevator.

She gathered her portfolio and potato chip material and left the office.

"Joe's Burgers" signs blinked at her as she pulled out of the parking lot.

"I never thought I'd be working in neon!" The ride was fairly long. The traffic was bad even at 4:00. She pulled into the right lane behind a city bus that stopped at every corner and shot out black fumes as it went. Across the back of the bus was a red, white, and blue package of "Lay's Potato Chips." She found herself noticing the layout and almost winced. The interstate was slow, but she had left the bus behind. She turned off the interstate onto curving, narrow open roads. The leaves of the trees she passed now were turning color in the crisp air. The golden leaves of the ginkgos mixed with the glowing red of the maples beside them.

She drove past a group of small houses — white and wooden with interesting wood carvings on the

posts. She turned in the driveway of one of these houses. She could see the lights inside their apartment through the dark green shuttered windows. Mrs. O'Leary's puppy was jumping down the grey steps barking as she drove in.

Her husband met her at the back door.

"You're home early," he kissed her in passing.

"Um-hum."

"I got off at 3:00 . . . since I have to work till 9:00 tomorrow night."

The radiator made the room warm after the cool air. The rich colors of the dark hard wood floor shone around the scatter rug.

"I thought we'd celebrate tonight . . . my sales . . . finding the . . ." He looked at her quickly — long enough to see he should wait.

"I stopped on the way home and picked up some paper plates so we wouldn't have to do the dishes . . ." he paused and looked for her absent smile. "You're awfully quiet, honey."

"I'm just tired."

"We'll just have a quiet evening. There's a great war flick coming on in a few minutes. Why don't you let me bring your easel and stuff down and you can paint while we watch TV just like we'll do in the new apartment . . . What ya say?"

"Just let me take these things upstairs."

The steps creaked as she walked up. She paused mid-way to notice the haggard man and wife of Picasso's black and white etching of "The Frugal Repast."

"Art 340," she said to herself.

The starkness of the man gazing in shadow away from his wife whose eyes look out into the light — their elbows resting on the folds of a table cloth with an empty plate before them . . . Katherine looked hard at the woman's eyes that peered into nothingness, and then proceeded up the stairs with no notice of the brilliant blue, flat pattern of Matisse's "Lady in Blue" with her laced collar and held beads.

At the top of the stairs she turned toward their bedroom, but then, taking her hand from the door knob, entered the room directly across from it. She closed the door behind her quietly. The later afternoon sun shone through gingham curtains onto a small mahogany secretary before the window. She laid the folio against the wall and put the folder from the office on the secretary beside a collection of Wordsworth. The brown amber backing of the books blended into the darker mahogany of the desk, but the yellows and reds of the potato chip package

glared out.

Her eyes moved from the harsh tint of the folder around the room to a large canvas on an easel beside a fireplace. The waves in the painting were rich and deep in blacks, greens, greys, with the cream of foam topping them. The sky was not complete. The moon was sketched and there were the suggestions of attempts at cloud formations. Large trees filled with Spanish moss stood to the right of the seascape.

"I don't even have a drawing board." She lifted the large painting and placed it in front of the fireplace as she heard the click of the TV — "an MGM production."

"Hon . . . Hurry up! The movie's starting."

She took one of the photographs of the package from the folder and placed it on the easel and stood before it for a moment. She went to the closet and brought out several tubes of paint. She seated herself some distance from the easel and began mixing the colors. She saw the stains of green and brown that hadn't washed clean from the tray and looked at the gaudy, unnatural red she was working to produce.

The tray slid from her lap, crashing onto the floor.

"Kath . . . Come on down . . . I want to hear about your day . . . Oh . . . look . . . It's John Wayne."



Cityscape — Clare Smith

Wings

Another asked me: "What does it
do for you? Why does it turn
you inside for days?
make you pace the walls distant gazed?
Then burst open and spread everywhere
like a dandelion
in the wind?"

I can only answer: "They are
my wings on the mend.
For the time being,
my wings are wet
and the page stays white,
I roost introspectively,
confused by my failure
to take flight.
But a fresh wind
will dry my wings,
and the page will fill,
Then I will spread, and soar,
and shake this death the calm reveals."

— David Darracott

The Resurrection

My picture is tombed in an obscure yearbook: green
t-shirt, levis, cropped hair, tennis shoes, no socks,
pinning my audience with pointed finger.

The crowd: confused, tired, and hungry,
trying hard to conjure up the horrors
of warfare: disease, destruction, death,
in the time between classes.

Led by a young ex-marine cheerleader,
they chant "kill the commies." He
wasn't a combat soldier, but played taps
at Arlington's upturned graves, and

in the picture stands in front of me,
his temples throbbing, his fingers tapping
against his leg, sweat globed on his forehead,
his crowd creeping back in awe of one who
has seen *The Dead* (if only second hand).

— Tom Lewis

Fall

a solitary poplar
golden in a broom-sage sea
and up
near the top
one black crow
with sun-shined wings.

— *Liz Hornsby*

The Butterfly

Fluttering in the cool gray dawn
The butterfly blinks
His wings
And the silken sheen reflects the dying stars

Dim, now, laborious lumberings
And bitter green meals

Dimmer still and farther away
Impossibly away
The shell of nothingness

Now the newness of flashing prisms
Releasing fountains of light.

Jean Williams



Young Boys — *Mary Praytor*

White Doll

— Blue Argo

When Jessica woke up the first thing she saw was the one fierce eye of the waterspot plaster polar bear on the ceiling that had made her cry when she was little because no matter where she went in the room it was always watching, and it never blinked. She was nine now and it didn't scare her any more — although she still couldn't look at it for long at a time. There was a darkened plaster patch on the polar bear's back that looked like a fuzzy, furry little cub of some kind and Jessica liked it. Her teacher at school said that she had a maternal instinct.

Then she remembered. It was Christmas morning and maybe Santa Claus had brought her the doll. Santa Claus was a white man and her cousin John Cleveland Harris — who was twelve years old and should know about such things — said that Santa Claus only brought presents to white folks. John Cleveland was light-skinned and had kinky, close-cropped black hair and amber colored eyes. He was very proud of his tawny eyes and said that he got them from his father — but Jessica knew better — John Cleveland never had any father.

Jessica yawned and stretched her thin dark brown arm across the pillow, accidentally brushing her little sister Ena's bushy head. Ena looked like a fat brown elf. She opened one eye and blinked at Jessica, then bounded up so suddenly that the bed shook.

"Jussica," she whispered, "Get up! It's Christmas!" Jessica's knees bunched together the short hand-me-down cotton nightshirt that Mrs. Simpson — the lady her mother worked for — had given them, and she sat up facing her sister. The neck was hanging open exposing the facing. Ena started giggling until both the mattress and the innertubes around her stomach were shaking.

"Maybe Sanny Claus come last night, Jussica! Maybe he done brung us them things we ast him for. Maybe he . . . ooh!" she squealed, rolling her eye-whites and thrusting her pudgy black feet floorward. "It's cold." Like a chill of premonition, a cool draft blew through the room — causing a rabbit to run over Jessica's grave. The newspapers and cardboard from corrugated boxes that had been pasted over the cracks and holes in the thin plasterboard walls didn't keep much wind out. Ena's bare feet pounded across the floorboards over to the cot by the north window

where Bertha lay sleeping. Bertha was wrapped in a cast-off green army blanket of Mrs. Simpson's and was snoring with her mouth hung open.

Ena's quick little paws pulled at the blanket.

"It's Christmas morning, get up!" she said. "We gone go see what Sanny Claus done brought us!"

"Go way and lemme be," mumbled Bertha, trying to hold onto the blanket. "Ain't no such thing as Sanny Claus."

"There is too!" cried Ena, "And you know it 'cause we seen him in Atlanta!"

Bertha relinquished the blanket to Ena and sat up. "All right," she smiled, rubbing her eyes with the back of her hand. "I'm just too old to believe in him. He don't come to see no sixteen-year-olds."

Two weeks ago her Uncle Atticus had driven down in his shiny green car with the white top. It had tires with white rings on the insides and hubcaps that reflected a distorted world like a fish-eye. He had packed Jessica, Ena, Bertha, John Cleveland, the baby, and her mother into the car and had driven them all to Atlanta where he worked as a custodian in an institute of higher education. It was there in Atlanta in the department store with the big tree on top that Jessica had seen Santa Claus and the doll. It was a beautiful doll with long blond curls and pink cheeks and big blue eyes, and Jessica thought that she would just die if she couldn't have it. She had climbed right up on Santa Claus's red knee against his fat squishy belly and had told him so herself. His white beard tickled and his belly shook almost the same way little Ena's did. He had chuckled her under the chin and had told her that he'd do his best to remember to bring her that very doll.

"Bertha," said Ena, "maybe since you don't believe in him's the reason he don't bring you nothing no more."

"Maybe so," said Bertha. "I'd hate to disillusion you children."

"What's dis-lusion?" asked Ena suspiciously. Bertha languidly raised one arm above the child's head and pointed at the ceiling. "It's over your head." Ena didn't think this was very funny but she looked at the ceiling anyway. She didn't see anything, not even the polar bear.

"Well, I believe in him," she said, "and Jussica

does too, don't you, Jussica?"

Jessica nodded her head slowly as if she were listening to distant music. "Yeah, I s'pose so. But he dudn't look the same every time . . ." She looked up defiantly at her older sister who was slowly disentangling her feet from the army blanket. "Yeah. I believes in him."

Bertha's slow smile spread across the full red-brown lips. "Well, honey," she said, "if you believes in him, then I reckon he exists for you. Just so long as you believes!" She paused for a moment; then resumed in a more sermon-like tone. "That's what Jesus the Christ in the Bible says, but he wutn't talking about no Sanny Claus. I s'pects you could apply it to this particular sichiashun, however." Bertha helped teach Sunday School at the Mount Olive Baptist Church.

Jessica decided it was sacrilegious to even think of doubting Santa Claus on Christmas morning. He might get mad and take back whatever he had brought. She decided it would be safer to wait and see if he had come before committing herself.

She stretched again and let the cream colored bottoms of her feet dangle over the bare floorboards a second before standing up. Then she padded across the sag of the floor in the center of the room over to the old cherry washstand where she and her sisters kept most of their clothes and started to get dressed. Ena and Bertha began to do the same. Jessica kept thinking about the doll and how angry John Cleveland had been when she had told him what Santa Claus said. They had been standing on the brightly decorated fifth floor of the department store in a section labeled "TOY DEPARTMENT" in front of the fishing equipment. Uncle Atticus had just taken them for a ride on the "Pink Pig," which was a funny roller coaster sort of thing that ran on tracks hung from the roof. It was painted pink all over and had a pig's face and snout outlined in black on the front. There were several compartments in the pig and they had gotten in the middle belly one. Jessica had wanted to sit in the front seat, but Uncle Atticus wouldn't let her. They sat in the next to the last seat on the left hand side across from two giggling little Negro girls and a large, heavy black woman with a lavender hat topped by an ostrich plume. The seat in front of them remained vacant, but the rest of the Pig was filled with noisy and excited white children. The woman in the lavender hat sat rigidly staring at the floor — her mouth set in a firm, hard line. Jessica hadn't paid any attention to her — just to the two little girls. One of them was about her own age; the other one

looked about six. Then the Pig had started moving and Jessica forgot about them. John Cleveland moved to the seat in front to get a better view out the little round portholes that served as windows.

"Lookit them dolls down there, John Cleveland. That's what I want me for Christmas," said Jessica. John Cleveland wasn't interested, but he glanced over at the doll display.

"Which one?" he asked.

"See that pole in the center? Well, she's the one-two-three-four — the fifth doll this side of it."

John Cleveland didn't bother to answer. His full attention was now focused on the B-B guns and fishing reels and toy trains that moved in a slow panorama beneath them.

When they got off the Pig, John Cleveland had taken her hand and pulled her along with him over to the boys' section. He stopped in front of the fishing rods. They were lined across ten feet of wall, standing by way of racks along the top and bottom. John Cleveland pointed at the longest one and reached out tentatively to stroke the handle. It was a hideous ochre yellow with large red circles fitted like trout eyes at intervals along the rod.

"Ain't it pretty," said John Cleveland in a hushed whisper. "That's what I want me real bad."

"That one there?" asked Jessica. John Cleveland was sometimes hard to understand.

"Yeah!" he said. "It's the biggest, prettiest one they got."

"You right about it being the biggest one," said Jessica, "but it sure itn't the prettiest."

"Where you see one prettier?" asked John Cleveland.

"Well, this here little green and cream colored one's nice," said Jessica. "I bet the fish would just love to get caught on it. If I was a fish I know I would."

"That's 'cause you're a girl and girls don't know nothing about fishing. That one just itn't big enough," he explained. He was really very smart and could draw pictures well, too.

"Well, John Cleveland," said Jessica, "that yellow one's twice the size you are. You too little to handle something that big."

John Cleveland whirled angrily around and stared straight at her, his tawny eyes blazing. "Am not, you sissy girl. You too big to want one of them dolls over yonder. White doll no less. You think Sanny Claus gonna fetch it home to you come Christmas, too, doncha? Sanny Claus is a white man and he don't bring no presents to niggers. You think a white man's gon-

na bring you a white baby?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, he won't. There ain't no such thing as a Sanny Claus. It's just a white man dressed up to look like him. Get's paid money to do it, too."

"No he dudn't!" Jessica had said. Santa Claus was one of the nicest white men she'd ever met. John Cleveland was right on just about everything else, but in this matter he was dead wrong. It kept bothering her, though. John Cleveland knew a lot.

"What you thinking about, Jessica?" asked Ena, standing on her tiptoes and looking up into her face. "You look like you don't know where you at. You wall-eyed!"

"Oh!" Jessica jumped. "Nothing. Just about when we went to Atlanta."

"What about it?" asked Ena. "What about Atlanta?"

"Nothing. Just about the trip."

"That sure was fun, wutn't it?" said Ena. She sat down on the floor and began putting on her socks and shoes.

"Let's go tell everybody good morning and see if Sanny Claus come," said Jessica. She turned and walked toward the door.

* * * * *

Jessica got the doll just as Santa Claus had promised, and she loved it. The clear blue eyes of the doll had black sunbursts in the center of each almost like real eyes, and they closed when she held the doll flat or laid her down. The doll smelled of soft, fresh plastic and new material. Jessica named it Phoebe.

John Cleveland and his mother, Jessica's aunt, were coming for dinner. Jessica pressed her nose against the screen door and looked down the road for them. The day had warmed up considerably for December, and she figured that they would walk. She pushed the screen open with her nose and smelled the sharp tang of the rusted metal. Her nose was a checkerboard of small indentations from the steel. She let her eyes close for a moment and rocked the doll in her arms while swaying her thin hips and humming "Silent Night" softly. She sat in the faded grey rocking chair and allowed its soft creaking to accompany her lullaby.

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace.

That was the only verse she knew, so she sang it again for the doll's benefit. She held the doll flat on her lap and occasionally peeked to see if the doll's eyes were still closed. They were.

The December sun was almost directly overhead in an almost cloudless blue sky. Through the stems of the withered geraniums in the flower box along the railing of the front porch Jessica could see the naked blood red earth of the yard which merged dustily into the grey-white asphalt highway. Underneath the flower box railing was some yellowed grass; and the azalea bushes which framed the house started on one side of the wooden steps and ended on the other. Jessica rocked until one of the rockers slipped partially into a crack between the floorboards and made her movement uneven. She balanced the doll carefully in her arms as she had seen her mother carry the baby, and carefully — so as not to wake her up — stepped down the plank steps into the front yard. The house was pretty, she thought, although it had never been painted — at least not in her lifetime. The house was balanced upon several large sandy colored flint rocks with the imprints of seashells in them. There was a little wooden well to the left and it had a green tile roof just like the house. Jessica settled herself on the bottom step and decided to count all the blue cars that passed on the highway until John Cleveland and his mother appeared around the curve of the road.

The Upper River Road was never very busy. While she waited, Jessica counted ten cars — but only three of them were blue. Then she saw them — they were half way between the curve and the house. John Cleveland had on a black Sunday suit that was too big and a white shirt. The suit looked new. His mother was slim and dark and tall. She had on a nice cotton print with a pleated skirt that swirled around her long legs to just below the knees. She was smiling and Jessica could see the white of her slightly protruding teeth flash against the dark background of skin. Jessica jumped up and waved, almost waking the doll — so she set the doll down on the middle step and ran to meet them.

John Cleveland looked terribly sullen and uncomfortable in his black suit. Up close Jessica saw that it wasn't a solid color — it was a tiny black, grey, and olive green plaid that looked black from a distance.

"Christmus gift! Christmus gift!" she shouted.

The aunt smiled again and said good-naturedly, "I told John Cleveland that he better be quick about saying that, else you gonna beat him to it. Ain't that right, John Cleveland? I done told him but he don't always listen."

John Cleveland scuffed the right toe of his Sunday shoes in the pebbly red clay and weeds by the highway and gave a small stone a furious kick, sending it out to the center yellow line.

"Stop that, John Cleveland," said the aunt. "You just better straighten up and fly right, else I'm gone do the straightening for you when we gets back home. He been in a foul mood all day," she announced half to herself and half to Jessica. "When it's Christmus morning and he done got him such a nice suit. And him not grateful — not one bit. I ain't never seen such an ungrateful child."

"Is that what you got for Christmus?" asked Jessica. "You mean you didn't get that fishing rod?"

John Cleveland scowled at her. "Naw." He flashed his tawny eyes at his mother with a look that seemed to burn as deeply as hell-fire. "It ain't prac-ti-cal, so I have to keep on using that stupid old cane pole I got. Sit on a bank and catch little baby fish." He mumbled something else under his breath while his mother shook her head and made a noise like a drop of water hitting a hot burner. "Ungrateful child if I ever seen one," she said.

"That's too bad, John Cleveland," said Jessica. She couldn't help but feel a slight sense of superiority though, since she had gotten the doll. Anyway, it served him right, she thought, because he didn't believe in Santa Claus.

"Did Sanny Claus bring you the suit?" she asked brightly, knowing full well what his answer would be.

"No!" he hissed, and glared at her for a moment. "It's from Momma."

"Too bad you don't believe in Sanny Claus," Jessica chanted, triumphantly goading him on. "Maybe if you believed in him you would of gotten that fishing rod and reel you wanted. You should see what he brought me — just exactly what I wanted. He promised me he'd bring me that doll and he did. You can see her from here, too. She's lying there asleep on the steps." She turned toward the aunt. "She's real pretty, too. We'll wake her up and I'll show you..."

John Cleveland was off like a hound dog hot on a trail running with all his might towards the steps. "I'll wake her up, all right!" he screamed. His light skinned face was dark and his feet hammered like pistons against the hard, blood-red clay.

A sudden terror seized Jessica as if her heart had been dropped into a vacuum, and she couldn't move. Then she started running while the aunt called, "John Cleveland! Let that doll be!" Her words were drowned out by the terrible drums that reverberated in Jessica's head. She tripped on her shoelace and fell sprawling in a patch of weeds. She got up in time to see that it was too late. John Cleveland already had the doll and was swinging it up and down against the packed clay in front of the steps.

He didn't have time to do much damage because Uncle Atticus had just come out on the porch to see what the commotion was about and to greet them. He grabbed John Cleveland by the shoulders and snatched the doll away from him; but not before the boy's thumb had pressed a little too hard against the clear blue open eye of the doll, leaving a dark hollow hole where it had been.

The orderly red plowed earth of the dead fields stretched away on either side of the house and behind to the woods that ran to the Macon Road. Uncle Atticus took John Cleveland out back for awhile, and when they came back in the boy's face was streaked as if he'd been crying. He apologized to Jessica, yet there was a hard sheen about his face like he'd just thrown up something that hadn't agreed with him and now felt much better.

Jessica cried too, and was righteously angry at John Cleveland; yet every time she looked at the empty space in the doll's head, it seemed as if she could see the doll's thoughts. For some reason now the doll's eye wouldn't blink, and the vacant stare seemed to blame her alone for its misfortune.

* * * * *

The meal was tense and quiet except for the clatter of the forks against the plates and the clinking ice cubes in the glasses. The sun shone brightly through the kitchen window onto the crumbling linoleum top of the table and against the stained once-red wall paper. The kitchen was the only room that had real wall paper. The rest were of patched plasterboard. John Cleveland stared at his plate the whole meal as if this food was the most interesting he'd ever seen in his life — but he didn't eat much. His coat was hung neatly on the back of his chair. He couldn't eat with it on because the sleeves were too long and got in his food, and the coat had to be dry-cleaned.

"Wonder what them Simpson children got themselves for Christmus this year," said the aunt to the

table in general.

"Oh, I s'pect they got some doll babies like Jussica here, or some nice new clothes like John Cleveland and Bertha did," said Jessica's mother.

"Or a cook set like me," fat little Ena giggled.

"I imagines they appreciates what they gets more than one person in present company I could name," said the aunt. John Cleveland didn't say anything and continued to stare at his mashed potatoes.

"Such a nice suit — fine quality — and him not even thankful."

"When we gone go Chrismus-giften?" asked Ena. "I cain't hardly wait for them candies and fruits Mrs. Simpson always gives us." She smacked her lips in anticipation.

"What you doing thinking about all that when you ain't hardly even finished with your dinner, yet?" asked her mother. "Lord, child. You gone get fat as a pig, keep on like you do."

"I don't care," said Ena. "What we got for dessert?"

* * * * *

The afternoon sun burned clear and cold through a metallic blue sky as the four of them trudged back from Mrs. Simpson's house loaded with goodies. There was a tenseness in the silent air that was echoed each time one of their feet ground against loose pieces of gravel in the tall Johnson grass along the highway. Jessica had brought the doll along with her even though her mother had told her to leave it at home.

John Cleveland was carrying a splintery pine-white half-bushel basket with red trim and the kind of wire handles that cut hands in two. It was full of apples. The cream colored palms of his hands each had several reddish creases across them from the handles. He now had the basket pressed against his white shirt and new coat. He was leaning slightly backwards so that the bottom of the basket bumped against his narrow hip bones as he walked. He didn't say very much, but his head was tipped back and glistened with little beads of sweat.

"He just full of himself," Jessica thought. "He ain't half as smart as he makes out to be. Wish he'd get a splinter in his hand or else fall down and hurt hisself."

Ena bounded along beside him through the scraggly weeds on the side of the highway and munched on the butterscotch candies which Mrs. Simpson had offered them before they left. She had snatched a

handful.

Jessica and Bertha walked behind them in single file. Bertha was bringing up the rear of the small procession and she was holding a cellophane wrapped yellow box about the size of a large Bible that had "Whitman's Assorted Chocolates with Nuts" written across the top and sides. Jessica clutched the doll tightly against the buttons of her blue sweater. She had to step over a broken beer bottle that someone had busted against the yellow 'curve' sign. They were almost home, but coming from the opposite direction from John Cleveland's house. Jessica could see her house now and everything seemed quiet. There was a line of trees in the west — just across the highway and past the red plowed fields that ran to meet them. Somewhere, far-off, a quail whistled "bob-bob white" and another one answered it. John Cleveland lifted his head and whistled back. Both birds answered him.

"You can always tell when a covey of quails been scattered," said John Cleveland, "'cause they whistle 'bob-bob white' 'stead of just plain 'bob white'." He waited a second and whistled again.

"You sure do know an awful lot, John Cleveland," said Ena. He grinned and shifted the basket.

"Even I knew that," mumbled Jessica.

John Cleveland had been in a better mood since they had left the house, but now he was beginning to look rather peaked after carrying the heavy basket for over a quarter of a mile. He had insisted on carrying it since he was the only man in the procession.

"You want any help toting them apples, John Cleveland?" asked Ena.

"Naw," he said. "I can do it. They ain't heavy."

"That's a mighty big basket," said Jessica, "and you sweating like nobody's business. You better let somebody help you if you tired. Momma'll get mad if you spill and bruise any them."

"He ain't gonna drop them," said Ena. "John Cleveland's strong."

"He's a show-off," thought Jessica, but she didn't say it.

They had heard the motor of an approaching automobile for a couple of minutes as it wound around the curves and patches of pine trees — first soft, then not at all, then louder, then soft again like a cat's purr — and with each added reverberation the back of Jessica's neck prickled like padded claws were being slowly unsheathed there. They had almost reached the yard when the car rounded the last curve.

John Cleveland shifted the basket to one arm by balancing it for a moment on his raised knee so that he could wave at the car. Without even thinking,

Jessica stepped down on John Cleveland's heel just as he was about to take a step. He fell forward, losing his grip on the basket, and spread-eagled into the red clay as the car roared past.

John Cleveland picked himself up and stared at the half-bushel's worth of apples scattered along the roadside. His hands were clenched at his sides and there was a large vessel in his neck that stood out throbbing. His amber eyes blazed. He wheeled about towards Jessica.

"You done that," he said. His voice was low and deadly.

Jessica stared at him innocently. "Did what?" she asked, and gave a nervous giggle.

"You made me spill them apples and you done it on purpose!"

"Didn't either," said Jessica. "Your foot was in the way. Don't you go blaming me just 'cause you cain't hold on to a little basket of apples, cry baby!"

"Don't nobody call me that," said John Cleveland. "You take that back!"

"Cry baby, cry baby, John Cleveland dropped the apples," chanted Jessica.

"I'm warning you," he hissed.

Jessica was scared now, really scared; but she couldn't stop. "Too little to get a fishing pole and too big for his britches. John Cleveland dropped the apples. You're a cry baby, John Cleveland!"

John Cleveland took a deliberate step forward. "Take it back," he said.

Jessica wagged her finger in his face. "Cry baby!"

He lunged forward and grabbed at her hand so suddenly that Jessica only had time to hit at his face. Her right forefinger sank with a horrible softness into the moist, buoyant pulp of his eyeball which gave inwardly like a lump of jello. She screamed at the horror of his yielding flesh.

John Cleveland gave a yelp of surprised pain and staggered backwards away from her, clutching his eye.

"I'm blind! I'm blind!" he shrieked, his face screwing up tightly in an effort not to cry. He bent over almost double and held his eye.

"I didn't mean to, John Cleveland," cried Jessica. "Please don't be blind! Please, please don't be blind!"

Bertha grabbed John Cleveland and pulled him upright. "Open that eye, boy. Lemme see it."

"I cain't," moaned John Cleveland. "I'm blind!"

Bertha held him and spread the lid open. His dazed, watering eye stared back at her, more red than amber.

"Quit it!" He pulled away from her and started crying, his thin shoulders heaving under the new coat.

"Stop that sniffing," said Bertha. "You all right."

"It's okay, Jussica," he said. "I ain't blind."

Jessica saw the doll on the ground by her feet, and a funny look of recognition passed over her face. It was lying there, stupidly staring at her with one eye vacant and the other eye closed. She looked as if she were about to get sick. Jessica rubbed at her finger, but the feeling of the soft, sinking eyeball wouldn't come off.





Sculpture — *Clare Smith*

AUTUMN LOOSE

The leaves are turning,
Loos'ning their hold on the trees
And jumping to earth.

THE CONDEMNED DANCE PROUDLY

No buffalo now,
There is only Great Spirit.
WE dance the ghost dance.

A TREND IN WIND

Not pleasing, not fresh
To my nose or to my flesh;
A recycled breeze.

RED FRIDAY

Red in Friday's Dawn
A sparrow coloured morning
Flaunts his wings at me.

— *Thomas Hicks*

Nocturne

Again the mists will fall on Samarkand,
 and clouds obscure the golden minarets;
 once more the snows shall drift across Kashmir,
 and rains assail the coasts of Zanzibar.
 The season of the lotus now is past;
 our golden wine has darkened in the bowl,
 and nightingales no longer serenade
 the amber moon. No evening star appears
 to scatter silver through the jasmine leaves
 and make strange shadows on our balcony.
 My heart has felt the chill of autumn winds,
 and even now your hand in mine grows cold.

– Dorothy W. Worth

**The Defloration of
Our Youth's Goddess**

Open upon the day
 like a morning-thriving flower.
 With the initial hours of your keep
 of the holy heart
 a heat will start to shroud you
 in a strangest swelter,
 and seeking a staunch shelter from
 the waves of fire humidus,
 in vain you'll try to bid us
 that you're well
 and living on.
 But we will see the blossom filled in you
 until we see you break,
 then wilt, in unashamed but
 intolerable guilt.

– Kirby Malone



Landscape — Margaret Pittenger

And, Having Writ

— James Matlock

For Dave
Who hatched the egg

His pen dropped back, his hand with it, and he sat blindly staring at the two lonely lines which, suddenly materialized, stared blindly back. *Who hatched the egg*; Who hatched the egg. Something was wrong; somewhere in his mind's maze a logic connection declined to connect: either in premise or conclusion, the syllogism was flawed. He sat staring at the two lines.

Not premise — conclusion! In conception maybe it was David's baby — but in fertilization, incubation, and execution it was to be all his. At the stroke of a wand, a click in the brain, it became *For Dave*; nothing more. Then the moving fingers added *Whose egg I hatched*;

For Dave
Whose egg I hatched.

Better. (thoughtfully:) Better. Not great, but *Whose egg I hatched Who lay the egg!* I hatched? No:

For Dave *For Dave*
Who lay the egg? Who hatched the egg
Whose egg I hatched
Who lay the egg.

Or: so: *For Dave*
— *who lay the egg.* Fine, good:

He sat staring at the final two lines scribbled beneath the mountain of scrawl, thinking; set the page aside and stared at the now new blank sheet before him, thinking.

What now? he thought. To write a nonsense novel, a novel that meant nothing: Where would one begin? With anything.

Like the title. — *Gnihton*, he could call it. But that might evoke Butler, and this book was not to mean anything — so much the better: it would suggest everything. "*Gnihton*," he tasted it tentatively. Nothing. *Gnihton*: he liked the sound; sat staring at it, satisfied. "*Gnihton*," meaning nothing.

Reflexively reaching for the aside-set sheet, he

resaw the last lines he had written, eyes lingering blindly on the final *egg*. At the signal from Zeus, his hand began to dance, an electrocardiograph needle across the page resetting itself when it neared the margin at the head of the succeeding line, dancing rocking swaying out of the past into the future like a ballerina afraid to stop twirling lest she tumble like a top: then the thought slowed, dissipated, died, and he sat again staring at the page.

pen *hand*
His hand fell back, his pen with it, and he sat staring at the two lines which, stark and naked in a drift of snow, had not been there five seconds before.

Shorter than he had hoped, imagined. Not really much at all; only one sentence. Although the theme itself was novel enough — a novel about himself writing the novel being written, and should not take much more than a clear head to put down in blue and white. Trouble was, in order to write about himself writing it, it first had to be written. At least part of it.

With a shake of the head, lowering musing fingertips from pursed lips, eyes from a plane on which they could have been considering a crack in a distant wall, he went to work. Two strikes and scrawls and his pen became his hand and his hand his pen, so that the pen now fell back, bearing with it the hand; another, and the lines were stark naked. *in a drift of snow* bothered him; the phrase failed; yet he liked the image, so he placed around it a pair of parentheses, sat back sighing in his seat and surveyed his work.

His pen fell back, his hand with it, and he sat staring at the two lonely

lines which, stark and naked (in a drift of snow) had not been there five seconds before.

Within another five, the final clause had become *had abruptly suddenly materialized*, and he was left with only the drift of snow with which to contend.

Dropping the pen decisively to the desk, the paper, the scrawl, raising himself with a piston-push of the arms, he stared down silently at the scramble heap in which he had been buried. (gratefully:) Time for a

break.

Quietly he trotted around his chamber: "loosening up," as they said.

They.

Surprised to suddenly find himself standing still, he jogged to his narrow slit of a window and ran in place, facing, staring down at the greengrayscale claustrophobic world below. Birth gives Life means Death: dats all dey is, and dey ain't no mo. So with a stretch and a sigh he returned to his quiet desk, his papers, his scrawl, and lifted his pen:

Impulsively scrapping all from *stark* through *snow*, he copied, on a blank sheet, the reworked version of his sentence.

Flat; lacked vitality. The beginning was fine, nothing wrong there; it was the end that died. He sat staring at it. Then the had and the period became commas, and he appended the phrase *stared back. stared blindly back.*

Recopying the sentence, he blinded himself as well, so that it read *His pen – dropped – back, his hand with it, and he sat blindly staring at the two lonely lines which, suddenly materialized, stared blindly back.*

His pen dropped back, his hand with it, and he sat blindly staring at the two lonely lines which, suddenly materialized, stared blindly back.

At last satisfied, he straightened in his seat and, flexing weary arms, yawning, persisted.

Why?

Why what? he thought, sitting staring at the insane sheet, thinking: *Why what??* No, just *Why?*

No – not *Why?*! Why meant something; why ask-

ed why?, and he wanted not to say anything, merely to suggest everything. And *Why?* didn't do that; *Why?* . . .

This was absurd. But why, if why asked a question, did not nothing make a statement. A statement of nothing. Nothing is anything; everything is Nothing.

But if nothing meant something – meant nothing – how could one write something about nothing and not have it mean anything?

This was absurd: he was trying to say nothing, but saying nothing he said something. He said nothing.

– his mind rushing like a river on, rushing the rapids so fast he was forgetting thoughts even as he was thinking them, slipping like salmon between the steady stones of the Star Gate from one logical semantic paradox to the next so fast he was still dizzily spinning when he reached, finally, the stillwater vortex of the source –

How was it possible to write something meaning nothing, agree with Addie that words were useless, when while in saying so one said what one was saying? Through words alone could the uselessness of words be proven, yet by their very use one proved their usefulness. That was Catch-22, and he was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of the logic: it was impossible to signify nothing, for merely in the act of so doing that thought itself was signified!

Dumbstruck by the wonder, the Nabakovian transparency, of his Cartesian realization; knowing now that Addie too was wrong; he rose, and, shoving his myriad sheets of scribbled scrawl into the incinerator, walked away and forgot about it.

A SONNET TO LAURA LEE ON WHAT A POEM OUGHT TO BE

or

DYNAMIC VERSE SHOULD DEPICT A VIEW WITH GRACE, STYLE;
AND INTENSE COLOUR THAT IS PERFECT IN PROPORTION

No verse could capture her more matchless look
That should – by brilliance – gild a pageless book
Which would depict a fleet and mordant glimpse,
A view that has no end, – much as the brook
Influx'd until within our sight she primps
No more – nor flaunts her grace for us, the imps,
Her coterie which lifts that train like style
Above our earth, intense, but still as bile
Which rots and stinks so drearily of colour
Beneath her light and purely perfect smile
Adorned inviolably with gems galore
As stars atop the night's espoused amour
In harmony of flecks of white
Effulgent all ways with proportions bright.

– A. J. Marin

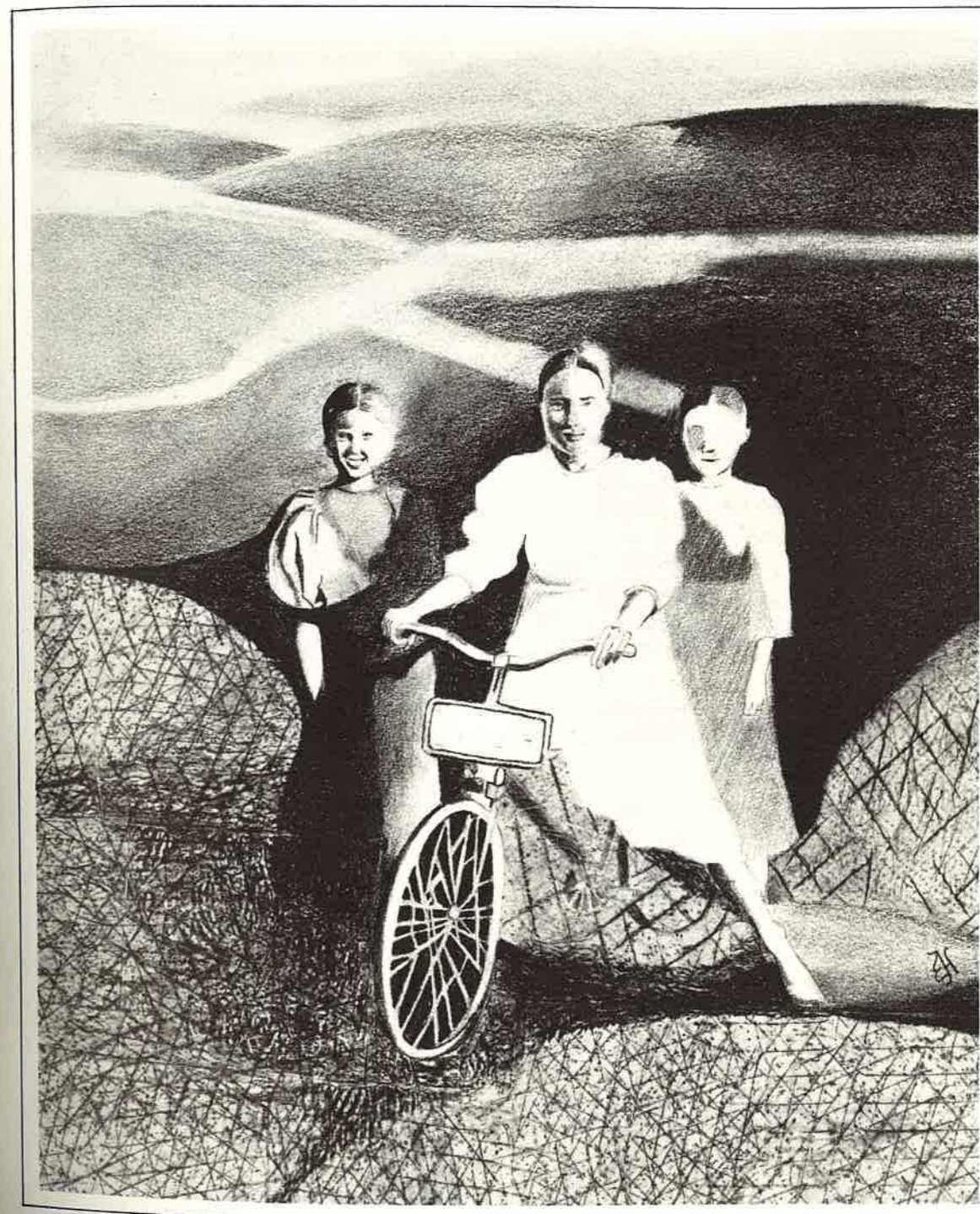
Palimpsest – I love her and I know I'm right.



Poem

JUST before the ending began, but didn't
 in the night that morning forgot to close
 (coming instead undone as sundown rose)
 the star unlit
 remembering too late to make the dawn,
 We set ourselves in, hand out of hand
 (as we planned to touch not much)
 and began to walk away.
 Coming to it still dark
 we thought, ourselves, a candle
 (for handling the night) would be nice;
 and twice before the first we found
 a match and striking it
 (as such)
 without effect apparent, remained
 matchless, in the black.
 Standing out now
 (hand in hand)
 to cover each other from
 the stark nakedness of the dark,
 soon to nature
 we
 began to black ourselves
 (as to stand out unnoticed in the night).
 Quite the same
 (too)
 we both were not; but as the dawn was forgot,
 we were right satisfied with the sunrise
 ourselves
 without the usual dawn before
 the just ending that didn't . . .

— Thomas Hicks



Sketch — Liz Hoy

The Spectacle

Cloud-stripped snowflakes, infant-pure,
Are falling from concrete cliffs.
Electrified by sunlight, dazzle-dropping,
The wind-caught paperflakes
Fidget-fall toward asphalt.

Head-level low, the once-vibrant wafers
Lose their luster:
Fallen from sky-light to street-shade,
Scraps of dead news sprinkle the swarm,
As gently as a dead leaf dances
On an old woman's scarved head
Before accepting earth.

From radiance,
Sun-white or tree-green,
All fall and settle
Underfoot.

— *Marta D. Powell*

The Good-Humor Man

— *Cindy Percival*

His eyes opened with a start, and for a few minutes, because the pounding of his heart seemed to take over his whole head, he could not remember where he was. He was only conscious of the perspiration running down his face and his fists clenching the folds of some kind of material. As his breathing returned to normal and his eyes began to focus again, he recognized the familiar yellow ceiling and felt the summer breeze coming in the open bedroom window. He released his grip on the bedspread and stretched his lanky body until his legs touched the footboard. Breathing a short sigh of relief, he realized that it had only been, after all, the dream again.

He had had the same dream for almost a month now; or at least essentially the same dream; for, within a month's time, the dream had grown from a mere explainable association with an unpleasant experience to a full-blown nightmare which always made him feel when he woke up as if he had been on the brink of death.

He couldn't understand why he kept having this dream over and over. It was such a silly dream — the kind a child might have. But he was seventeen years old and should know better. He had begun having it only a few nights after his encounter with the ice cream truck. Thinking back, it seemed like such a long time ago that he had even noticed the truck. It was the evening of the day his mother had gone to the mailbox and returned with his package — the records he had ordered and had waited almost three weeks to receive. He remembered his initial excitement as he tore off the brown wrapping to find the green box with the gold lettering:

Four Record Set
HANDEL's *MESSIAH*
With Complete Text and Biography
of George Frederick Handel

He had played the records all afternoon, while his father only shook his head and mumbled something about "not understanding how somebody could play Christmas music in the middle of July!" But, lying on the living room floor and listening to the vibrations of the violin strings mingling with the deep resonance of the horns and feeling himself carried beyond the four

*SHORT STORY AWARD WINNER

walls of his house; even beyond Montgomery, Alabama, he didn't understand how anybody could *not* play *The Messiah* in July, or October, or April, for that matter.

That night he had excused himself from dinner, gone to the stereo and meticulously manipulated all the knobs until there was a perfect balance between treble and bass, between tone and volume. Methodically, he raised the living room window, opened the front door, took one last look at the interior of the house, and stepped into the enchantment of the dusk. Filtering through the open window, the music seemed to fill the entire universe, and he became the conductor of music, not composed by mortal men, but by the heavens themselves. Over to his right was no longer a stop sign, but four rows of perfectly-pitched sopranos and contraltos. To the left, not a '64 Thunderbird with a flat tire, but the tenors and basses. And the orchestra was everywhere. He lifted his "baton" and the music began:

For unto us a child is born
Unto us a son is given
And the government shall be
upon his shoulders
And his name shall be called
Wonderful!
Counselor!
The mighty God, the Everlasting
Father,
The Prince of Peace!

He closed his eyes, and once again he was lifted from the mere earth where mortals walked. This night he would walk among the angels and touch the stars!

Suddenly, he was jolted from his reverie and thrust back to his front porch. There was something wrong. Instinctively, his eyes darted to the open window in search of the sound which was intruding upon his world. But the sound had not come through the window; it was moving down the street. His head turned toward the stop sign, and there he saw it — the mud-smeared, white ice cream truck with yellow lights flashing so brightly that he covered his eyes. But he

had left his ears unguarded, and the sound grew and grew until he thought his head would burst. Taking his hand from his eyes, he gazed at the truck, now stopped before a crowd of children. He realized what the sound had been — a record which blared from the two loudspeakers on top of the truck; a record looking, no doubt, very much like his own. But, unlike his perfectly round disk, this was a warped record, which did not project the violins of Handel's masterpiece, but the irregular, scratched sounds of jangling bells. To add to his misery, there was one note which was always flat, and it was played more than any other! Unable to stand it any longer, he walked out to the truck to plead for mercy:

"Hey, would you please turn that machine off? I mean is it really necessary? I'm trying to listen to something over there."

The driver turned his head and faced his inquirer. The boy noticed his greasy brown hair, which seemed to melt into his greasy brown eyes, which were the same color as the greasy chocolate stains on the once-white uniform.

"Go screw your mother, kid."

"I . . . I . . . just thought maybe you could turn it down a little."

The ice cream man took one step toward the boy, daring him to make further trouble.

"You think you're man enough to make me turn it down?"

The boy turned around and shrank back into the house, sure that everyone was watching his trembling hands and snickering at his lack of courage.

"Compliments of the good-humor man," he thought to himself.

Once inside the safety of the house, he stood at the window and waited for the truck to pass. He heard his beloved music again:

For unto you is born this day in the city
of David, a Savior which is called
The Lord.
And suddenly there was with the angel
a multitude of the heavenly host praising
God and saying:
Glory to God in the highest!
And peace on earth.
Good will toward men.

But, instead of relieving his fear of the ice cream man, the music threw him into a strange new reverie. He thought about the baby Jesus, and he thought about that man who had now become the embodiment of

all the evil in the world. He could see the child who was born "unto you," but instead of being born in "the city of David," that poor little baby was born on the streets of Montgomery in the back of that ice cream truck — right there next to the chocolate-covered Dilly Bars. And Jesus would ride in the back of that truck until he was thirty years old; until one day the ice cream man (looking very much like Judas now) would turn him over for fifteen cents to an angry mob of children because he had dared to tell them that man cannot live by Dilly Bars alone.

By this time, his music had stopped; and after the truck moved down the street, the boy was left to sit in silence.

The dream began only a few nights later. At first, he would see the truck making endless circles around the block. Inside the truck was the shadowy figure of the driver, always with his face turned toward the house and his right hand raised with the middle finger extended. This version of the dream had continued for several nights; but as the real truck plagued his waking hours more and more, so the truck in his dreams grew to monstrous proportions. Now in his dreams, the truck stopped outside his house, and instead of the jangling bells blaring from the top of the truck, a command came from the loudspeakers:

"Tulane! Tulane Foster! Come on out, Tulane! Come out and play."

It was not the voice of the ice cream man he heard, but the voices of children, who always called in a jeering, sing-song manner. Compelled by the voices, Tulane would walk outside. He tried to see who the driver was, but every time he crossed in front of the truck to get to the driver's side, the motor would start, and the truck would begin to roll. The thing would actually chase him down the street. And while he was running, he would look over his shoulder to see the driver. Yet, all he could ever really see were his eyes, which now seemed to glow like the yellow lights on top of the truck. And Tulane knew that if he ever fell, which he inevitably would do because he was not a good runner, he would die under the wheels of that truck. He always woke up before he fell. He had waked up this time, too. Only, he still heard a voice. He listened again.

"Tulane! Tulane Foster! You come right now. I'm not calling you again to supper!"

Thank God, it was only his mother. And he *was* awake. Tulane acknowledged her call. He rose from the bed and went to his bureau. He lit a cigarette, but instead of being revived by the sweet smoke, he was thrown into a coughing fit. "Emphysema," he

thought, as he put out the cigarette. He looked at himself in the mirror and realized that he had not fully recovered from his nightmare, for only his blue eyes broke the whiteness which started at his blond hair and spread throughout his pale face. He gave his cheeks two quick slaps, put on his glasses, and shut the door behind him as he went downstairs.

Seated at the table were both his mother and his father. His father's tanned skin was beginning to turn that shade of pink that indicated to Tulane that he was irritated at his son's tardiness. Throughout the meal, Tulane sat silently, barely touching the fish his father had caught that afternoon and brought home for his mother to fry. He sat there until he could stand it no longer and then politely asked to be excused. His mother, in a fretful voice, asked if he were sick. He assured her that he was not and reminded her that she knew how he felt about fish. Just the same, she said, he was much too thin as it was and should really eat more. He smiled politely and lit another cigarette. Again, the coughing.

"Tulane," his mother said, "can't you please stop smoking? You don't sound well at all."

His father interrupted, "For Christ's sake, Martha. Leave the boy alone! It'll make a man out of him. Look at me; I've been smoking for thirty years, and I'm still here."

As Tulane climbed the stairs, the voices of his parents faded. Yet, back in his room, he still heard his father's words, "It'll make a man out of him." Tulane was convinced that his father's main goal in life had always been precisely that — to make a man out of him. Looking into the mirror, he thought back to the first time his father had decided that Tulane was ready to be a man; that was when he was eight years old and had lost his first fight. It had only been a schoolyard battle, which had evolved from name calling the day Tulane became the first boy in his class to appear in glasses.

"Hey, look at Tulane! He's got on glasses. He-y, Tulane, now we can call you 'Four eyes Four-Lane'."

"Naw, you dummy, you can't call him that. Don't you know anything with four lanes is an Interstate?"

"He-e-y, Interstate! Com'ere, Interstate."

Tulane had come home with a bloody nose, and his father had gotten out his old boxing gloves from college to instruct his son in the manly art of self-defense.

"Now look here, Tulane, if you're going to get into fights — and you may as well get used to the idea that you *are* going to get into fights. Let's face it; with a name like Tulane, you haven't got a chance. I

swear to God, I don't know what ever got into me letting your mama insist on naming you that. I wanted to call you Bill or John. But, 'no,' she said. Her great grandfather proudly bore that name through many a Virginia battlefield and legislature, and it was good enough for him. O. K., I gave in to 'Tulane,' thinking we could put a John or a William in front of it, and your mama would still be happy. But, nope, she was bound on having the whole works. So here you are — Tulane Arlington Foster. What I mean is, you better learn to fight, Tulane."

Tulane never did learn to fight, and as he lost one battle after another, his father's eyes grew less hopeful for his son. Now it seemed his father's last hope for a manly act from him was reduced to a pack of cigarettes.

Tulane put the cigarette out and once again lay on his bed. How many other times had he tried to be what his father wanted, and how many other times had he failed? Probably one of the biggest failures was when he thought he had the problem licked. That was when he was fifteen, and he announced that he was going out for the football team, and beginning tomorrow, everyone could just start calling him "Lane." It had worked just fine the next morning when his father greeted "Lane" for breakfast. But that afternoon, one of the biggest players on the team decided to be cute while Tulane was holding the tackling dummy. He hit the dummy at such an angle as to knock Tulane off his feet. Tulane's arm had gotten caught in the rigging, and it jerked him almost two feet off the ground. By the time they untangled him, they discovered he had broken his arm and would not be playing football that season. They might as well have said never again. That night his father had come into his bedroom and asked in a quiet voice, "How do you feel, Tulane?" Tulane understood what his father meant. He smiled politely and said, "All right, sir." His father closed the door on his way out.

Tulane's trance was broken by the voice of his mother, yelling to him that she and his father were going next door to play cards for the evening, and she highly encouraged him to get something to eat. Although he wasn't hungry, he did go downstairs. The quietness of the house enveloped him, and he turned to the stereo. As he put out the lights and lay on the floor, Handel's *Messiah* filled the room. He closed his eyes, ready to block out everything but the sound of the music. But, again there was something wrong. This time it wasn't a sound. It was — the smell! That fish smell filled his nostrils until he felt as if he were suffocating. He could even see the fish; not the fried

fish on his plate, but that first fish his father had helped him pull out of the lake — the one with the big sad eyes that he threw back into the lake when his father wasn't looking. That was the last time his father took him fishing, and that was the last time that Tulane could ever see, smell, or taste fish without feeling sick at his stomach. He got up from the floor determined to rid the house of the foul smell. He threw open all the windows and breathed fresh air once more.

As long as he was up, he might as well make his mother happy and get something to eat. He walked through the den toward the kitchen, but stopped when he saw that one of his father's shotguns was leaning against the wall rather than in its usual place in the gun rack. There were some oily rags lying beside it. Apparently, his father had anticipated a night of cleaning his guns and not of playing bridge. He reached down and touched the barrel of the gun. Tulane realized that the last time he had been this close to the gun was a year ago. That had been another one of his father's "man-making" projects. He had gotten Tulane up at six in the morning to go deer hunting. He remembered how much he had enjoyed the brisk early-morning air and walking with his father in the solitude of the woods. And then it happened. His father spotted the deer and whispered to him, "O. K., Tulane, this is it. Don't shoot until I tell you to. Steady. Steady. The safety. Don't forget the safety. Now! Shoot, Tulane! TULANE, GODDAMN IT, SHOOT! TULANE, FIRE THAT GUN!" His father's voice had risen to such a crescendo that the deer naturally fled.

After that, his father had made no further effort to assist his son in growing up. The communication had almost ceased between them. Reliving that moment and feeling the agony as his father turned from him in disbelief and walked silently back to the truck, Tulane suddenly felt very lonely and cut off from his

father and the world. Perhaps, the least he could do was finish the job his father had started. He picked up the gun and the rags and carried them into the living room. He put the needle on the first groove of the record again and began methodically to move his hand up and down the barrel of the gun.

Sitting by the open window, with the breeze in his face and the music in his ears, he was lifted from the world of memories and the smell of fish. Even the gun stock felt only like the finely grained wood of its original tree. He looked out the window at the white light of the stars; he had finally succeeded in capturing in his hands and ears and eyes all the purity of the Creation. But, one of the stars he saw out of the corner of his eye was becoming yellow. He turned and faced the star only to find that it was not a star at all, but a yellow light — the light of the ice cream truck. It rolled slowly down the street and came to a stop in front of his house. There were no children waiting for the truck; yet it did not move. The perspiration ran into his eyes so he could barely focus. His ears were filled with the drumming of his heart. Then, as he feared, that sound was replaced by voices, while the truck waited for him:

"Tulane, Tulane. Hey Four-Lane!

Come on out Tulane."

"For unto us a child . . ."

"Child? Child!

What about the man, Tulane? The man!

The safety, Tulane, the safety!"

"Hey Tulane. T-u-u-l-a-a-n-e!"

"Tulane, goddamn you,
shoot. SHOOT!"

At that moment, all the sounds and all the lights converged upon one another until there was only one bright light and one loud sound, as Tulane Arlington Foster raised the gun — and fired.



Windmills — L. Kinney



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The judges for the WRITERS CONFERENCE for prose are GRETCHEN SCHULZ, B. W. BALL, MARGRET TROTTER, MARTA POWELL, BETSY SMITH, and MAUREEN EMMET; for poetry the judges are BETSY HAYNES, MAUREEN EMMET, B. W. BALL, GRETCHEN SCHULZ, MARGRET TROTTER, and ALICE FAULKNER.

— AGNES SCOTT WRITING FESTIVAL —

The public is invited to attend all events. Meals at a reasonable cost are available in the College Cafeteria, and women students may obtain lodging in a College dormitory for the night of April 30 if arrangements are made by writing in advance. There is no registration fee, but visitors should go first to the welcoming center in the Hub, located in the middle of the campus.

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April 30	8:15 P.M.	Lecture by Robert Penn Warren, distinguished poet and novelist, in Gaines Auditorium, followed by a reception in Rebekah Scott Hall.
May 1	11:30 A.M.	Readings by student writers, Rebekah Scott Hall.
	12:00-1:30 P.M.	Letitia Pate Evans Dining Hall open for noon meal.
	2:00 P.M.	Discussion of fiction and poetry written by Georgia students in colleges and universities. George Garrett, author of <i>The Death of the Fox</i> , and Writer in Residence, University of South Carolina Coleman Barks, poet, author of <i>Juice</i> , from the University of Georgia Nathalie Fitz Simons Anderson, Moderator, of the Department of Education, Agnes Scott College
		Audience and participants are invited to a coffee break about 3:00 p.m.
		Prizes for the best poem and the best story will be awarded at the close of the panel.

Aurora, the College arts magazine, containing the fiction and poetry judged superior, will be available at the conference.

THE RIMERS OF ELDRITCH

Not a part of the Writing Festival, but of interest to those who enjoy drama will be the production of *The Rimers of Eldritch* by Lanford Wilson, in the Dana Fine Arts Building on the Agnes Scott campus May 3, 4, and 5, at 8:15 p.m.

This play, by a new playwright, opened off-Broadway in 1967. Set in a tiny abandoned mining town, it concerns people who are the victims of ignorance and prejudice. It won the Drama-Desk-Vernon Rice Award.

The young author, a member of the New Dramatists' Committee, the Playwrights Unit of the Actors' Studio, and the recipient of a Rockefeller grant in playwriting, was 1967-68 playwright in residence at Yale University.

For reservations call 377-1200. Admission is \$1.75.

