

# WINTER

ARDATH WEIGLER

Faint, uncertain fluorescence of day struggling to penetrate the murk of man-made atmosphere — pushing through the exhalation of factory and furnace, making silhouette background for life. An occasional, broken shuffle of steps along the gritty alleyways as a solitary devotee gropes his path to the six o'clock mass. Lining the street — drab frame houses point a picket finger of mediocrity. Unrelieved monotony of mansard roofs jaggging against the dun-colored sky, holding the saturated weight above.

Blank panes set in the soot-stained ripples of weather-boarding punctuate the flatness as their gaze keeps vigil with the lamp posts. Paths of broken cement divide the filled-in evenness of earth — setting apart precise squares of front yards. Here and there a few patches of weedy grass have survived the pressure of feet and wagons.

The black asphalt pavement is lightened in places by the gravel-gray of chuck-holes — fluted edges breaking the smooth placidity of man's invention and W. P. A. construction. Presence of yellow-faced stop

sign and matching hydrant at the end of the smooth blackness. A thoroughfare hems in the quiet obscurity of mansard roofs and square yards.

Impenetrable breath of civilization — enveloping odor of smog pushes heavily, crowds the sensations until taste and smell become interchangeable. Sharpness of winter air and sound is deadened by its omnipresence — breath of civilization . . .

The thoroughfare is a pattern in parallel and perpendicular. Scarred woodenness of telephone poles supports the commonplace regularity of wires. Below, the lines of railing lie stolid and substantial. But of the blur — a distant box-car shape looms . . . replica of a candle-lighted shoe-box drawn along the curbing by small children on summer evenings, mimeographed face shapes at the cut outs. Nearing song of steel on steel . . . humming crescendo along the rails. The shoe-box passes.

Decrescendo.

Slight lifting of fog curtain . . . day draining the ugly glass bulbs of their puny electric glow.

# MOTHERHOOD

MARY ELLEN SHIRLEY

As she lay in the midst of dirt and squalor she seemed in utter oblivion. To her the cobwebby walls, the cockroaches, the plush chair with springs uncovered, and the filthy blanket were unimportant, because for once in her life, the young colored girl had captured the spotlight.

She was the center of interest in that room; of secondary interest was the baby — her baby — in the next room.

It was a half-insolent and half-scared look she gave the doctor as he moved about taking her temperature, checking her pulse, asking questions, and prescribing medicine.

She was proud of the fact that she could refuse to answer him. She could make him wait. That he was helping her did not seem to matter. It was almost as though she was trying to keep him from helping her, not by actual active resistance but by a passive resistance.

It was impossible to fathom those deep expressionless eyes. At times the only outward sign she gave to show that she was aware of other people in the room was a slow, faintly audible sigh which escaped from her thick lips.

There were none of the usual signs of

a new baby — no knitted suits, no embroidered dresses, none of those garments which show months of planning and love. She could neither afford them nor did she want them. She made no outward show of affection toward the baby. He was merely a tiny hungry body that had to be cared for. The only apparent pleasure she had was that for a short time she alone was the center of attention.

Was this her dream of motherhood — this squalid home, this poverty, this ignorance, this short period of doubtful triumph?

## EXCERPTS

- I. . . . a golden ball of magnificence, brilliantly rendering fiery shadows across frosted trees . . . The twisted azure and golden shadows falling here and there . . . *Sunrise Serenade*, by Melvin Kuebler.
- II. Such pieces are the bastards of literature. They are errant misfits . . . doomed never to know a moment's exaltation from a thinker's lips . . .  
Some (writers) can swear and never use a profane word. Some can see death, and think only of life . . . These are the few; these are the great, of which the greatest has not yet come. *De Libris*, by Richard Jowitt.
- III. . . . the autumn-blazing landscape . . . Below me in the valley stretched a complete world with browning grass for continents and ponds for seas . . . The day was brown and yellow and the fiery orange of burning logs. It was the yellow haze of bonfires, the acrid smell of smoke. It was the supreme perfection of white and gold asters in turquoise bowl. *My Favorite Spot*, by Mary Elizabeth Black.
- IV. The big busses are like huge ocean liners, gliding majestically, smoothly away from harbor; the little ones

- pitch and toss like skittish catboats on a lake on a gusty day. *Market Street Harbor*, by Quentin West.
- V. The curtain rose on the first act, and flippant little fireflies coquettishly darted back and forth like tiny ballet dancers . . . Over the heads of these flirtatious insects soared the nighthawks and whippoorwills, diving and swooping like trapeze artists, soundlessly, without effort . . . Thus the orchestra of the northern forest prepares and plays its nightly performance. No famous opera goer's jewels can compare with the stars; no brilliant Hollywood Kleig light can illumine a scene like the moon . . . no great orchestra can ever play such a harmonious overture as Nature's children; and no great stage designer can fill in a more marvelous background. *Night Show*, by Edward F. Wright.
- VI. Then mother responds with a gleam in her eye, a dust-cap on her head, rubber gloves on her hands, and such a spirited vehemence that everyone in the family begins to make plans and appointments that will keep them away from home for at least a month. For spring cleaning at our house means a complete rejuvenation of civilized living.