to bed, snapped under the covers, crouched there suddenly, shivering.

Next morning she grabbed her notebook and wrote what she could remember of faintness, exploring its significance. The mullein slept. Magnetically her attention turned to it; the bottom whorl of large flat leaves had dried and become grey. It looked unwell.

I have experienced pure existence without whys, without clues! Conscious almost without thought, like a plant . . . The sensations are unreasonable, yet occurred for some reason. Fantasy must be some kind of reality . . .

Her mother brought breakfast on a tray. Afterward it was more difficult to recall the other reality. Questioningly she studied the mullein.

III.

It was dying. Now, even as it dried, the great plant radiated a power which was unmistakable. As the girl gained strength, the whorls detached, circle after circle; as she returned to the reality that claimed her, the mullein, to a lesser degree, became merely a biennial completing its second year. They who had shared herbacious leisure, who had ventured motionlessly into night, to one of whom pure existence was its dignity, to the other an experience of weakness—what, finally, is the secret of them? Hopefully she poured water into the pot, separated the few remaining leaves to restore the secret drop.

Rabbitries

Allyn Wood

The girl in the car drove slowly out of the city. She crossed train tracks with a leap of the heart, following the straight line which was the street and then the highway. By its outer edges will the city be known by those who arrive and depart, will it be loved by those who can love, with fatalistic wonder, their creation! As she passed by the monstrous grain-elevators, it began to snow, great dry flakes falling slowly and sparely from a sombre sky. She put back her head and worshipped. Following the invisible sun southwestward across rolling country, she turned from the highway to a rutted road. School was out and children flew before her like snow-birds, ducking into houses and running across fields of winter wheat to houses far, running through grey-lemon air to catch the snow that fell into the frosty furrows forever, disappearing.

The girl began to look for a particular house. Soon she recognized it by the long outdoor hutch behind the bungalow; a door flung open.

"Come in and make yourself at home!" welcomed the farmer's wife (and pot-bellied stove in the parlor). "I've bread baking in the kitchen, but Henry will be in in a moment." The girl stood alone before the stove; the yeasty room, flickering with flame-light from a hundred mica windows, seemed to expand with a spongy sizzle like hot bread. The farmer entered, shouldering a basket of kindling.

"Afternoon, ma'am; I can show you the rabbits now. Looks like we're in for the first snow."
It was the usual rabbitry, or two-story rabbit apartment house under a roof; each rabbit fitting snugly into its own compartment, bedded down with alfalfa, and staring vitreously through the wire at its neighbor. As they approached, the silence was broken by a stamp, one of those strange definite thuds that an indignant rabbit makes with the flat of its hind foot, without revealing itself by any apparent movement or change of expression.

She went down the line of hutches, then back and forth as the farmer followed making inconsequential talk. She dropped onto her knees on the frosted ground to see the occupants of the lower floor; she grew wild and excited and heard the farmer no longer. Rabbits! Rabbits! Allons, enfants de la forêt, le jour de gloire est arrivé! Which one to choose? Of gipsy tribe, rhapsodic, independent, intoxicating, individual—from the dusk of each compartment, two sparks met the tinder of her soul. How long it had been since she had known rabbits! With a sudden intake of breath, looking up, she thought of setting all the rabbits loose: across the hoary fields, Checkered Giants, Belgian hares, New Zealand Reds, great white rabbits with alfalfa-yellowed feet, a legion hopping, hopping—across the hoary fields—toward the thin and dark and mystic woods against the dusk, their sombre haven. She felt that she was going to cry with the love of those woods; she pressed both hands against the cold earth, which was like extending them to the warmth of a hearth. Her eyes swam, washing pale bars of lemon and orange across the sky. Through her hands night rose to meet the snow. What is that music in the stillness, that continuous universal tinkling in the whole sky? Winter silence. Silence? Winter silence. Breath of rivers, restless sleepers beneath blue ice; song of woods in windless air, song of weed-stem bent in two, making music through its hollow body; music of dry leaves cupped for snow, rocking cradles of sleeping seed and insect; the world whispering a vast berceuse. The music passed through her body bent to the ground. Tinkling crash of snowflakes was in her ears; and then she opened her eyes and was looking into a rabbit's eyes in the darkening hutch.

The farmer had left her and was working at his chores nearby.

"This is the one I'd like to have," she said, showing him a thin young Belgian hare. He lifted it into the hamper she had brought, which they carried by the handles back to the car. While the transaction was being completed, the girl stood again before the stove, beginning to shiver. Like the hundred mica windows of the stove would be the windows of the city when she returned—where already it was tea-time, as it was supper-time in the country. As she drove under the lariat of power wires that holds the city in bounds, the roads became jammed with traffic and lights; in chaotic gusts the snow was driven between, becoming a moving mesh outside the glass.

She left the car, with the hamper in it, and went up into one of the buildings. Tea was being served by candlelight to a dim crowd. She was led to the usual little table against the wall. Tea came, and impeccable hands offered a tray of cakes for her choice; at a word the impeccable fingers holding the silver tongs descended into the cakes and removed one, two.

Do you recall the silence which is many sounds? Were you an eavesdropper on the world once, long ago? She heard the result of that final inbreeding of conversation, which begets the sterile voice with terrible ennui; she heard marriage and birth, illness and death measured out
like sugar into their tea. In their little lighted hutch they sat nibbling, nibbling, staring at each other without expression. They came and went: to whom had they been sold? Out of the hutch into the hamper. Over the cup's rim she searched for a glint and spark in the eyes, the hidden independence, for a sign that from under one of those table-cloths might resound a muffled thud. The spark was there, very dim.

She lingered until the tea-bag squeezed out its last potion of pale alfalfa-water. Was it still snowing out? "And miles to go before I sleep..." trickled through her mind as she rose, threw on her coat, obeying an impulse to be gone at once to reunion with the Belgian hare that waited in the car. "And miles to go before I sleep."

The Locks

ALLYN WOOD

"Little Jason, you run out now. I got house-cleaning to do, and then I got a little boy to clean up, for tomorrow you begin going to school, little Jason!"

He came out into the sun. Spice of wood-dust hung over the line of shanties following the canal; it was the dust of their houses baking on the bare packed bank that scarcely lifted above the water waiting passively behind the bridge. Sometimes little clapping water-hands beat against the iron doors of the locks beneath the bridge, beat against the concrete sides of the bridge, beat, clapped, despaired, and fell. Brown and oily and dusty, the water lay with a strange subservient beauty behind the locks, moving round and round ever so slowly, as if it must remember motion while it waited.

Children were playing not far off, but Jason preferred to lie alone and watch the locks. He looked across to the other bank, which rose steeper to a strip where chicory and smoke-stacks loomed equal against a flat sky without perspective. Somewhere beyond was school: tomorrow he would cross the bridge, crack the sky like an eggshell, and learn everything that people knew. He wondered if water were not piling up behind the locks as he watched, until one day it would have to overflow, and the locks would have to open. He thought of a great Being looking down on them, waiting until a momentous instant to open the locks. Perhaps when he crossed the bridge tomorrow, going to school... From one of the houses, old, old Mrs. Swink emerged with her basket of washing and began to hang it, jerking up and down on malnourished bones. How many times had they opened in her life? He knew because he had asked her, and she had said "Many, many times." He could hear the iron doors grating open to receive Mrs. Swink gliding through again and again, never different. Mrs. Swink was time, like the sun and the clock and the factory-shrill; she had turned mauve with time, like an ancient bottle.

In the warm afternoon, the locks remained inexorably cold, in shadow. A fishy exhalation spread, chilling Jason and disturbing a memory from his own short life. All the women from the shanties clustered in the wind—strange calyx of patterned aprons—in attitudes of cold and