

spend the holidays with me last Christmas, but the car in which he was riding turned over and he was killed instantly, the only one in the car who was even hurt.

So now he'll never know. I don't let myself think too deeply about what happened that night, but every once in a while I remember that tired, sorrowful voice and wonder about it. One thing I know for sure: I'll never answer an ad under "Personals" in the newspaper.

The Song of Love

Keith Shields

HE SAT in the straight-back rocking chair in the front room of the old farmhouse. As he played the harmonica she had found for him in his attic trunk, their tiny baby held her eyes wide in quiet wonder at hearing the new sound.

Sheila held the infant close to her breast and the baby craned her back seeking the origin of the strange waugh-waugh sound. Her small mouth hung open and the clear saliva leaked onto Sheila's print house-dress. Sheila smiled at the baby and then looked at the man who played the harmonica.

And while the man across the room, her husband, blew the sad music floating into the warm air of the farmhouse, and while her baby, the small Teresa, cavorted and cooed at her breast, Sheila let the harmonica suck her in its undertow back through time.

Back through the recent anxious years when she had felt the springtime bloom of her body begin to droop and had married in desperation. Back and past the gay Christmas parties with the girls at the office and the days of clothes by de Marte and hair styles by Pinello. The music washed her ashore finally at her sixteenth summer, the one summer in her life that she had really been in love.

I was young, so young. And I wore my hair long, to my shoulders, 'cause he liked it that way. Blond, curly-headed Don. What a time we had at White Beach that summer, in the sun, always in the sun. He had a lovely body, and the sand stuck to the muscles of his arms where he had lain. Never could quit talking. All the time he talked and it was relaxing to hear him chat on and on about the waterskiers, or the blubbery old women in their half-ton bathing suits. Something was wrong with everyone. Everyone but me. He was wonderful. Oh, those beach parties! Look at me, look at me everybody! And sidling back and forth across the sand balanced tip-up fashion on his hands like an escaping crab. How he could make us laugh. He could make anyone laugh. Or cry. Like the time he played "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" on his harmonica with only the campfire to light and warm the party. The music was so sad and beautiful . . . Should've said, "Yes, Don." Should've said, "I will be your wife." Should've. Should've. While the firelight had not yet died and the moon was still up. "Yes, Don. Yes, Don."

While everyone sang, "Shine on, shine on, harvest moon . . ." Should've. "I am *not* too young," should've said. "I am old enough to have babies and I will marry you. Here is my sun-tanned hand in holy wedlock." But he just went and never came back. "Maybe when we are older," I said, and he said, "Sure, when we are older." But he never came back, he never . . .

"Never came back," she sobbed aloud and then hugged the small form to her to hide her hot tears against its chubby throat. The music had stopped and presently she heard a voice beside her and felt an arm around her shoulder.

"What's wrong, Sheila? What can I do?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all, Hugh," she said. For Hugh was her husband's name.

She wiped her eyes and brushed her hair back so that his arm fell from her shoulder. He watched her until she handed the baby to him and said, "I'll go get dinner now." She waited until she was in the kitchen before she took that deep breath which one must take after crying.

He rocked the baby and kissed her fingers when she tried to stick them into the cave of his mouth. He sang to his Teresa as he rocked:

"Swing low, sweet chariot,
Daddy's come to carry you home . . ."

In the kitchen Sheila looked out at the maddening white barrenness of the snow, and pressed her teeth together until they ached.

The Game of Chess

F. William Backemeyer

The persons of the dialogue: A Student, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, William Wordsworth, Titus Lucretius Carus

STUDENT: Pardon me, Dr. Nietzsche, but if you're not especially busy just now, I would appreciate it if you could enlighten me on a subject that greatly interests me.

Nietzsche: What is it that's bothering you, young man?

Student: Well, sir, I'm quite a newcomer here in Heaven, having died of exhaustion during my junior year in college, but I've been hearing fascinating stories about a great game of chess that was once played between Lucretius and Wordsworth.

Nietzsche: Ah, yes, that was *quite* a game!

Student: Did you witness it personally, sir?

Nietzsche: Yes, I was fortunate enough to be the only spectator at that famous game.

Student: Would you do me the honor of relating the story to me?

Nietzsche: Certainly. I believe I can recall the events in approximately the order in which they occurred, but would you also