The field can be a delightful place. Once somebody saw a snake in the field. It was talked about around here for some time. It was “that long” (about eighteen inches), and it was black the first time I heard about it. But later, it was blue and then it went through all sorts of color changes—from green to pink with yellow stripes. About one year later we learned that it had had a rattle in it too! There is a roll of barbed wire out there also that can catch a person by surprise, and over by the fence is a nest full of crotchety bumblebees. So you see, the field is a dangerous place.

One of the best best things of all about that old field, although it is so very far back in it that a person has to take a sandwich, some cookies, and a bottle of water with him to make the trip, is the creek. In the spring it overflows its banks and the water gets almost two feet deep. Later on, in the late summer, it is just a mud hole, but it has strange creatures in it. Some of them jump, but most of them just wiggle or squirm. The creek is important for several reasons. First of all, a person has to have a creek to build a bridge over. Second, a person has to have a creek to fish in. The water itself is much more important than fish. A person can fish in a creek without fish, but he cannot fish with just fish and no water. And last, you need a creek to provide mud. The field has some natural resources.

I cannot think of anything else important to tell about the field. It has a hill, but it is not high enough for sledding. It has several trees, but they are all too little to provide shade or to support a swing (except the big one, and its lower branches are too high). There are many quail out there, but they frighten a person when he is just walking along by starting up so fast. Somebody said we should eat them, but that does not sound like a very good idea. And if we did, what would the dog chase and bark at? In the fall, the thistles have beautiful lavender flowers on them, but they are too sticky to pick. We could raise another bull out there. On the other hand, when the one we had grew up everybody was afraid of him. Besides, he ate all the flowers and corn we had planted.

There is no reason at all for us to keep that field. It is simply a waste when someone else could have it to build a house on. There are houses built on all the other fields around here. Next year we will probably put a “For Sale” sign on it.

**Possession**

Anna Monahan

Standing behind a curtain in the upstairs bedroom, he watched Jeannie come down the street, smiling a little . . . must be a reason; met someone, maybe . . . saw Danny run across the yard, their quick kiss and impetuous hug, a sharing of confidences as they continued hand in hand toward the house . . . couldn’t read their lips, the angle was wrong . . . heard her steps cross the porch
and go down the hall.

Certain the way was clear, he laid aside the binoculars and crept silently down the steps and out the side door. When he returned moments later, the wooden floor of the porch reverberated to his heavy tread, the screen door slammed, the front hall echoed the sound of his passage. A smell of onions told him she was already busy with preparations for supper. At the bedroom door he paused briefly and noted the cleaner’s bag draped across the chair . . . been visiting with Mrs. Armstrong, but there’s no one else in the shop, that’s certain.

Jeannie looked up and smiled gravely, fleetingly, at him.

“I thought you’d be home first, I was so late.”

. . . guessing, that’s all . . . couldn’t really know . . .

“Where were you all afternoon?” Shielded now by the newspaper, his eyes followed her, back and forth across the kitchen, watching, waiting for some slight hesitation, some tell-tale flush.

“You knew I was going to the doctor. I told you. Remember?”

“All afternoon? Surely it couldn’t have taken so long?”

“I window-shopped a little, coming through town.”

“You stopped at the cleaner’s.” The tone was flat, contradictory.

. . . why was it omitted . . .

“Oh, that, yes. Mrs. Armstrong said you stopped in for the cleaning the other day. She thought it was odd, your expecting it back so soon.”

“It seemed long enough.”

. . . blabbed everything she knew . . . noticed that inspection of the shop, probably . . .

Jeannie stepped to the door. He listened for that special tone in her voice calling Danny to supper, and saw the affectionate touch directing the boy to wash up, the pat with which the dog was refused admittance.

“Even the dog fares better than I do.” His voice was pleasant. It was a matter of pride that he never displayed anger nor impatience, no matter what the provocation.

“No. You got into the house.”

. . . the smile again that wasn’t a smile, not a real one, not like other people got . . . wait . . . she’d pay some attention . . . It was a strained meal. In good spirits for the moment, he became talkative, but her replies were brief and carefully thought out.

“Danny and I had a talk this afternoon.”

“You did? I didn’t know you’d be home. I could have left him with you instead of Mrs. Doty.”

“Not all afternoon. Forgot something and had to come back.”

. . . slipped there . . . have to be more careful . . . “I saw Danny, so we sat on the porch and talked.”

“How nice for both of you! Did you have something in particular to talk about?”

“Matter of fact, we did. Danny didn’t know you love me more
than you do him. You never told him mommies love daddies better than anybody else. But we talked it all out, didn’t we, son?”

. . . got her attention that time, all right . . .

Out of the corner of his eye he noted the startled glance at him, at Danny, and back again, then the fork laid so quietly on her plate, the hands clasped together, tightly.

“I think Danny’s a pretty bright boy.” The voice was determinedly light. “He knows I love you best of all the daddies, and I love him best of all the little boys.”

Abruptly she rose and walked toward the stove, but he moved quickly despite his size.

“Tell him the truth! You can sneak, and cheat, and lie to me, but not to Danny! Tell him—I’m your husband; you love me most of all. That’s the way it has to be!”

Jeannie’s glance slid beyond him for a moment, toward the boy.

“You can’t measure unlike things, John. My love for you and my love for Danny are different; not more or less—only different.”

Her head snapped sideways and an angry red welt appeared almost at once, but she made no sound.

“I didn’t mean to slap so hard, but if you act like a chile!, you should expect to be treated like one. Now, tell Danny . . .”

But the boy was no longer in the kitchen, and during that moment’s inattention Jeannie, too, had slipped away from him, out onto the back porch.

Frustrated, he stood behind the screen and taunted, “Walking out won’t help—you can still hear me. What do you suppose the neighbors think, seeing you standing there, looking so silly?”

She walked on out into the yard. He watched, baffled for the moment.

. . . can’t yell . . . she has to come back, no place to go . . .

Danny . . . reach her through Danny . . . that’s the way . . .

He searched through the house, but the boy couldn’t be found.

. . . doesn’t matter . . . they’ll be back . . . tired, awfully tired . . . bed looks good . . .

Dropping heavily across the bed, within minutes he was sound asleep.

The Bottle of Wine

Robert Beggs

Two hours outside of Las Vegas Maynard Winters realized he had never before felt so alone. It had been bad enough in Vegas without Ellen. He knew he should never have gone, but they had always stopped at the Dunes on their way to see the kids in Los Angeles. Ellen had been dead five months now, and somehow he thought Vegas could cast the same hypnotic spell even without her. He wanted to become a part of the lights, the noisy hysterical crowds, the laughter—something—anything. But he had stared into the