her to come to Chicago . . . you said you'd help her with the studying."
"Why didn't she do it? I gave up when she kept marrying all those bums."
"She didn't come to Chicago because she wouldn't leave little Jean. One night when she'd been drinking too much, she told me she was scared . . . scared she'd fail and then you'd be sure she was a dumb little blond."
Mark got up slowly and crossed the room, then turning around he said, "What was she wearing last night?"
Mrs. Mabee looked up at him, "Why she had on a little sleeveless dress. She was wearing it when I found her."
"What color was it?"
"Why it was pink . . . with a little pink jacket."
Mark drove to the mortuary in a daze. He sat in the car trying to collect himself before going in. He didn't know whether he could take seeing her now . . . but he had to. Somehow he felt a compulsion to see her . . . to look at her. Maybe to prove to himself that she was really dead.
He walked into the building and was relieved when the receptionist told him that the body was not to be shown until the coroner had checked everything thoroughly. Mark felt like he had had a reprieve. Pulling out his handkerchief, he wiped his perspiring forehead. As he put the handkerchief back, he felt a round metal object. He felt it again and took it out of his pocket. It was the compact he had picked up from the endtable at the apartment!
He got into the car and drove back to the house. Uncle Nick and Aunt Nora were still not around. Mrs. Mabee had said they were resting. He again searched the house for her. This time she was in the family room dusting. As he approached, she came over to him.
"What's the matter, Mark . . . did you see her?"
"No, but do you recognize this?"
"Why, yes." She took it gently from him and put it in the palm of her hand. "This is Jean's compact . . . little Jean gave it to her last Mother's Day."
He sat down, taking a long drag on his cigarette.

Retrospect and Thought

Tamalyn Haines

The news has come.
Attack?
Is it true? Oh, no God, no! Not now.
I sit back in the chair, my hand fingers the straw in my glass. Why? . . . .
Why am I doing this? I should cry, or something.
I want to laugh; why do I want to laugh? That isn’t what I should do. . . . Oh, I feel so strange. Not empty, not scared, not any way I should feel.

3 x 2 is . . . .
Isn’t that funny? When I was a little girl, and I bumped my head or something, I always said the multiplication tables as fast as I could, just to make sure my mind was all right, that everything was as before. . . .

People, people always running, screaming. Why? What can we do? What can they do!

Where should I go now. To a basement. A basement. . . . When we were very young and a bad storm came up, Mother always made us go downstairs, even in the middle of the night. One time we ate our breakfast huddled beneath Daddy’s carpenter bench. It was damp and dark, but we were safe. . . . Safe? . . .

Safety where? . . .

“Come on. Quickly, hurry! You must!”
“No, let me alone, please! I’ll be alright.” . . .

The room is empty, now. Such a big room. Lots of tables, even more chairs. The windows are open . . . a breeze, sheer, floating curtains. Spring.

Leaves, grass, a lilly.
I want to go outside.

There is noise; there must be noise. Why can’t I hear it? Where are the people? I can’t see them. Have they left? Why are they gone? . . . I Know, oh yes. I Remember. . . .

Grass-green-bright.
Blue-sky-bright.
The world is bright, shinny silk. My heart . . . so dark now it seems.
Soft grass, a little bush, it has a flower. Not a rose, not a rose. What kind? I don’t know. . . .

4 x 4 . . . .
Once I had a flower, a bunch of flowers.
My corsage.
They were small and delicate, and I felt so small and delicate like my flowers. Prom. A prom, magic night . . . beauty. Stars and wind. A dress so light, white and smooth . . . it was silk, a cloud. . . .
A cloud. I wonder if they see that cloud. Do they, of course not. People, just like me.
A girl over there who looks up and sees that cloud. She has a home, a family. . . . Just like me. . . .
Is there a difference? She is one of them, but never one of us. She and I. . . . Different.

Family. . . . Mother. . . . Daddy. Oh! Where are you?
Dime—Liberty. For Liberty it is. For Liberty all shall be.
"Mother? . . . Mother, it's me."
"Where are you?"
"Here. I can't get home, don't try to come for me. You wouldn't make it. Where's Daddy?"
"He called; he's at work; he won't be home. We're alone."
"Yes, we're alone. . . . Mother, . . . Mother, I love you. I love Daddy, and I'm sorry for anything I've ever done that wasn't right. Mother, . . . I'm afraid."
"I know, so am I. Try not to be. It's hard, but it won't be long now. Time is short. Be Brave. God will watch over you, and Honey, I love you too."
"Good-by, Mother."

7 x 3 . . . . . .
Good-by.
I'm alone. Oh, God, I'm alone now. "God will watch over you."
No, no, He won't.
He doesn't care. If He did we wouldn't die. Not this way.
Fists, anger, tears.

a sign
"Is there someone you've forgotten to call?"
So cheerful, so bright—Why? Why can't it feel the same way I do.
Beat it! Hit it hard. Make it hurt the way I hurt.

1+0 . . . .
Not me. Oh no, never me!
Oh yes, I realize of course that we all die, but me?
Immortality.
As long as I'm around surely not this.
Tears, why tears? Wipe them away.
They splash down, and fall to the dust of the ground.
Dust— Tears.
No use for either. Men . . . . dust. I am dust.
The Bible says.
If dust . . . no purpose . . . then what use am I?
Why? Why?
Here I am, I live, I breathe, but not for long
I am going to die. . . .
Oh, God! It isn't fair. Not now.

1+1 . . . .
Love— I have never felt for anyone.
Not ever. . .
We Die. . .
Were we of any good ever? Did we really deserve to live?
Deserve to live, for What?
Immortality?
Once I remember struggling through a course at school,
the teacher says again, “Division by zero is undefined.”
Zero— nothingness — infinity. . .
\[ X = \text{Life and Death, the unknown quantities.} \]

The Dream

Helena Marie Boukes

As she sat on the side of her bed, the obsession melted away,
drifting into nothingness, leaving in its wake a mysterious
awareness of complete peace. For fifteen minutes she sat
there, thinking, wondering, dreaming. It had started fourteen years
ago.

She and her husband had been driving on the highway, like
two separate individuals, immersed in their own thoughts. “Why
did he have to drive so fast, passing everyone?” There was no
hurry on Sunday afternoon. Now he was going to pass someone
else, taking a chance. She never looked at the car they passed, for
she felt embarrassed, foolish, rushing along. In desperation she
gave up, accepted the situation, and began to rationalize.
If her friends knew, they would shake their heads at her philosophy, pre-
tending this was right, to drive as fast as possible. The attempt to
be casual about it was her only defense, “Oh well, we have to die
sometime.” Frivolous, but she refused to nag, no use anyway.

A thought, uncommonly clear, went through her mind: “He
has just five more years to live.” She sat there, still, looking
straight ahead as they sped past another car. The man honked his
horn. Her husband cut in quickly. She sighed, and looked calmly
at the beautiful scenery beside the open road. The vivid thought
was still with her, and she became aware that the words were burn-
ing themselves into her mind; sinking into the depths of her sub-
conscious well.

Days passed, sometimes drearily, monotonously, dishes to wash,
meals to cook, beds to make. There were children, two little bright-
eyed girls, and she smiled as she worked and trained them. Only at
night when they were in bed and she was alone while their father
worked, her smile faded, she became serious, sometimes cried. The
breach widened, the days dragged, her feet felt heavy.

Then help came, encouragement, smiles, laughter and hope. “We