

Wrong!\*

Ed Shacklee

Every hand in the class shot up and waved around in a frenzy.

"All right," said Father Sheets. "Now, everyone who does *not* believe that God can make a square circle, raise your hands." This second question was answered by a wave of repressed giggling. Really, now! we thought. After all, this *was* a parochial school. Everyone in the second grade was almost ready to be confirmed; everyone *knew* that God could do anything—how simple can you get? There was a wonderful effervescence in the air, and the whole class bubbled with the assurance of a predetermined success.

Father Sheets ended the farce. "Then, we all agree that God *can* make a square circle, right?"

"Right!" we echoed, fifty voices strong.

"Wrong!" said Father Sheets. "There is no such thing as a square circle; God could not possibly make something that doesn't exist." A leering malicious sort of smile had invaded his face, and he reminded me of how my brother looked when he went out with his magnifying glass to burn ants. I was crushed. God had always been a father image to me, a great, cosmic Steve MacMurray who could do absolutely anything. Now, in his place, there was Father Sheets, a smirk in a sea of dead faces. Was nothing sacred?

I became the world's youngest religious derelict. For a while I was like a ship without a rudder, floundering into shattered ideal after shattered ideal. Then, in the winter of my discontent, I was saved (please excuse my entire second grade class as we await the sound of bugles and an opportunistic last-minute charge by the cavalry). Sister Irma Rose, our former teacher, had returned from her trip to Ireland. What a sweet old nun she was! There was laughter in her eyes when she smiled and said, Oh, she supposed God could manage to do anything if he really wanted to. She was a wonderful woman. I remember her telling us the happiest stories about how Saint Peter stood by the Pearly Gates and was so kind-hearted that he would usually just wink and let half of the people who were supposed to go to Purgatory sneak in. God would smile because he realized that Saint Peter was just a "softie" at heart, and besides, a couple of souls

here and there didn't matter all that much anyway.

But Sister Irma Rose had to stay back in the second grade a couple of years while we went on. Soon we were playing new games entirely different from the ever popular "God Really *Can't* Do Everything," although, in a sense, of the same order. In the fifth grade we started playing "The Bible is Didactic," and by high school we had become adept at "Is the Church Relevant?" By my sophomore year we had finally gotten around to playing "So You Want to Know about S-E-X." My senior year we had become so good at playing games that we started inventing some of our own. Such diversions as "I've Taken Up Raja Yoga," and "Guess What? I'm Pregnant!" continued to amaze and delight our teachers. Yes, those were the days of my childhood—one game after another. At that time, believe it or not, I thought it was funny.

Somehow, though, I managed to grow up in spite of my childhood. At times, if I try very hard, I don't even play games. Even as I write this, I realize that I have become just as twisted as the worst of my religion teachers. I am able to realize that, just as they had approached me, laughing at my ignorance, I am now laughing at the ignorance of their approach; my weakness is that I am not strong enough to prevent myself. By all rights the situation is hilarious, but I doubt if either myself or Father Sheets will ever laugh about it. I look back and remember the sparkle in Sister Irma Rose's eyes and wish she could have taught us that. Of all of us, only Sister Irma Rose laughed.

And I don't think she even played games. [o]

### The Killing\*

Mar Miller

The wind caught the red and gold leaves of the trees in the forest and flung them about, as though to pry them prematurely from their temporary homes. It was a wild October day, the sun shining coldly on the earth and white wisps of clouds racing frantically across the sky.

He wanted to go out and walk through the falling leaves and