It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the words of the state preserves of loaves and fishes that things in general were settled for ever.
FOREWORD

(Scrawled in the front of an ancient volume)

Molly McKay

Thou art vile, whoe'er thou be,
Which made this stuff called poetry.
To put me through such misery
With metaphor and simile—
'Tis criminally felony.

To men of prose I say "Beware,"
When at these leaves of verse you stare,
For dreaded Iamb 'waits you there
Within her tetrametric lair
To trap you in her pedal snare.

Thou art a demon and a curse!
Although thy meter's straight and terse
A headache have I now to nurse
From reading limericks—even worse—
That rhyming, scheming, blanking verse!

Manuscripts

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Also, many warm thanks to Michael for his innovative and invaluable ideas for the layout design and graphics of this magazine.

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*Denotes Freshman writing.

I'll call for pen and ink, and write my mind.

Shakespeare
I Henry VI. Act V:iii
He sat on the cool, steel step of his house trailer, curling his toes in the grass and inhaling on his cigarette. Early evening air drifted down between the yoke of his cotton shirt and his flesh. Over the hill the horse tents stood darkly. He thought how the horses' bodies heated the tents; expensive horses standing in stalls made of chicken wire and pine wood. Here and there the tents' canvas flaps were tied open with baling wire and a groom stood in the opening either cleaning bridles or rearranging them on a hook. He remembered what it felt like to be a groom. In the tents during the day it was hot and muggy, especially when in the Midwest. Jeans became stiff and they rubbed tender the back of the knees. At night everything became very cool and the tents held the odor of horses, and soap, and liniment, and leather, and grain, and manure. He spotted a groom standing under a naked lightbulb soaping and wiping a bridle. He remembered that sensation, too—the sensation of slick suds rubbing against pliable bridle leather.
He looked at the horse trailers, mostly new, some with socks and underwear hanging on a line or a show jacket turned inside out airing on a hanger. Tabs popped off beer cans, clinks of ice in glasses and occasional laughter mingled in the air. Nearby, a low, male voice relentlessly discussed the virtues of a horse he’d already sold. Two people embracing formed a silhouette behind a curtain. He heard the sizzle of meat in a hot pan and his stomach growled, then the metallic clang of a shot hoof against pine stall boards forced his attention back to the horse tents.

A wispy girl chirped a sharp, quick, rough, “Quit!” to the kicker. About every ten minutes she emerged through the open corner of a tent dragging a straw manure basket. He’d seen her earlier in the day, bringing five horses to the ring while she ate a hot dog. She moved like all grooms—tired, conserving of energy, precision machine.

He thought the mare had been good in her classes. She’d done her lead change smooth and slick, tucked her knees tightly, looked for her fences. She’d softened, too, didn’t pull, didn’t lug any on the turns. She’d surprised him, even. She hadn’t much ring experience but she jogged in quietly and squared up like an old strip horse.

His day had been ruined, though, by a man named Lansing. Lansing obviously was a rider. He’d asked questions: how long she’d been jumping, how old she was, who all her riders had been, could a junior ride her. Lansing wanted to know who owned her, too. That agitated him. If she were sold he’d either have to beg for another show horse or go back to riding racetrack rejects. He cursed himself. He wondered why he worked so hard, so long on a horse only to have it pulled out from under him. Over and over he would start on a new horse; over and over he’d have to start again. How many really good horses had he ridden? He looked at three fingers on one hand. The way Lansing had asked who owned the mare . . . he almost said he did, almost said she wasn’t for sale, but he’d admitted Brauch owned her.

Brauch had seen the mare’s morning class and had stood around afterwards speaking to everyone and holding a gin and tonic. Brauch worried him, too. Between drinks he’d mentioned some offers he’d gotten on the mare but reassured him that she’d only go for cash. Maybe Lansing hadn’t spoken to Brauch. Brauch had also mentioned that Peter Ransom had called a few nights before and asked how the mare was doing—had wished him luck. Maybe Brauch really believed Ransom wanted the mare to do well, but Ransom only wanted to ride the mare himself.
A mosquito landed under his ear, and he slapped at it and caught it in his palm. A sore lump began rising and he held his cold, perspiring beer can against his neck. Someone yelled from a tent to a trailer, "Steak and eggs sound good?" He thought about that combination and swallowed the excess saliva.

"Cast horse! Cast horse!"

He jammed on shoes and joined a handful of grooms and trainers that jogged towards tent "FF." The tent flapped its sides in the breeze, and the racket and rattle of a horse fighting wood seemed too loud. Instinct told him the cast horse was in his stall row. The jogging group turned the corner into the aisle of noise, and a loose horse darted past them looking daring and scared. One of the trainers muttered, "Cast sucker's torn down a whole stall row."

The horse was down and against a stall wall, front legs twisted between the boards, a back leg, high above the body, caught on a board by the shoe. Its eyes were white-rimmed and bloodshot—frantic, but like many domesticated horses, expecting man, who got them into it all, to get them out. The stall door of the next horse was open, but unlike the daring, loose horse, it cowered in the far corner.

He unlatched the cast horse's stall door, "It's my mare," and noted the nails pulling out of the back hoof.

When the stall door was opened, the mare thrashed and banged once more. More stalls pulled apart and the cowering horse considered climbing over the stall's remains, but a groom caught hold of its halter, and it resigned itself to trembling. The handful of people began to softly chant "Whoa," and the cast mare rested.

"I need help in here."

A man in white wearing thongs took his thongs off and came into the stall, putting out his cigarette in the water bucket. He waved his hand, and a skinny boy in overalls promptly sat on the mare's head.

"How are we going to get her out?"

The man in white took a hammer from his back pocket. "I've got this. Son, don't you get off her head."

The boy nodded. The two men began to pry two boards apart that held the mare's front legs. The pine cracked and popped, then the nails stuck out and pricked the men in the arms. They handed four boards to the people outside the stall. The boy saw that the mare's legs were free and he started to rise, but the mare began flailing as if she were trying to swim in rough water, her legs touching nothing, and he sat on her head again. She stillled and let out a long, low, all-suffering moan.
The man in white said in a toneless voice, "Now sit on her till I tell you to get up, okay?" then he took her long, front legs and folded them, as much as she would let him, between her chest and chin. He almost sat on them while her rider unhooked her back foot and backed away in case she kicked. "Get her tail. Now get up, son." Her rider clasped all the hair under the end of her tail bone and the man in white gripped her head by the sides of the halter. "Ready?" The boy ran out of the stall like a cat.

"Pull!"

They leaned against the straining mare, the muscles in their necks becoming rigid. The horse flailed and grabbed for ground—for something to push against. When the men had dragged her far enough from the boards, her front feet felt ground and she turned to get her feet under her. The men rapidly backed to the far corners as she planted her front feet and plunged forward, almost jumping up. Her buttocks rose in the air and out flashed her hind legs.

"Damn it!" Her rider clutched his thigh.

At the sound of his voice, suddenly so pained and high pitched, the mare stopped and turned her head towards him.

"Did she get you bad?" the man in white asked.

"It hurts a little." He clutched his thigh but let go of it to examine the mare. He knelt down and ran his hands over each leg, over each flat, solid joint, the long, hard bones covered with tendons and ligaments, the slick, short hair, the veins pulsing and throbbing beneath the thin skin. He felt the delicate bones in her head, looked at her eyes, and pressed down her long back to find vertebrae that were either out of place or so sore she would dip down. He ran his hands over all of her with that sensitive-fingered scrutiny, then ended by combing a few hairs of her mane into place with his fingers.

"All she's got is a loose shoe."

The handful of people outside the stall sagged in relief and shuffled away to do their different things.

The man in white helped him with the doors that had fallen off their hook-eyes and made sure all the horses were within. He dumped the few inches of water left in the mare's bucket and went out into the dark while the boards were hammered into place. He dragged a black rubber hose with him when he returned, the cold water secretly sizzling out of a hole in the folded end. The water sprayed hard against the sides of the green rubber buckets. "Seems silly. These damned expensive horses . . . . Go to shows and stick 'em in apple crates. One
falls, twenty do . . . Sometimes tent poles smack in the middle of a stall.” He finished and flung the hose into the dark. “Listen, if you need a beer, I’m in the silver trailer next to the Secretary’s tent.”

“Thanks.” He watched the man in white leave the tent and enter the dark night, thongs in hand. The mare hung her head over the door and swung it towards him, her top lip twisting like a thumb. “Elephant trunk nose.” He grabbed the lip in one hand and she twisted it around in his fingers, licked him. He let go. She used the lip to move the collar away from his neck and unfold it so it stood straight up. Then she nipped his shoulder. He smacked her neck and she moved her head away only to return it. The soft whap of his palm against her shoulder echoed in the tent. “Don’t do it again,” he pointed his finger at her.

On his way down the aisle, he saw a groom wrapping the poulticed legs of a jumper and another, a male, drinking a beer and holding a hose down in a water bucket. They looked at him, still in his breeches, shirt, socks, and he knew they were waiting to be riders and not grooms. He remembered that wanting very well. He couldn’t see in the dark, and he walked placing his footsteps as he went up the hill. It had been a long day. Tomorrow would be a long day . . . All the days that involved horses would be long days.

---

MR. AND MRS. SMITH

Gina R.E. Zellmer

Mr. and Mrs. Smith
checked into the HOLIDAY INN
at approximately,
quarter past midnight.

Mrs. Smith
wore her mother’s diamond wedding ring,
and Mr. Smith . . .
felt like a Man.
gossip

Jan Stough

bitter tongue
leaps forward
poisons minds
of guilty ones
casting thoughts
speared
crying
tears of mind
pitying wounds
dead and dying
old friends
once knew
timeless promises
splintered
fragments
relics of
priceless
ruin.
By my own admission
I am a juggler.
No, not in a circus nor on a stage.
I juggle
not in a carnival nor a parade.
I juggle people.
Some poorly, some skillfully;
I manage to
balance them
talk and listen
I continue to juggle
but soon I grow weary
of this game
and I begin to
drop these oranges, balls, people. . .
I am clumsy
and I keep misplacing my balance
and I find
that I can only
effectively
juggle
one.
Eleanora Vilanese caught my eye as a tantalizing ingenue, when Paolo first brought her to the stage. Although he played down to her at the outset, her ability to communicate the subtle intensities soon won her recognition as his peer, and the evolution of their love scenes from naive intimacy to consuming passion became legendary. Do you remember her as Mrs. Armitage in The Fickle Bishop? Only a husband, and wife with child, could have carried it off.

When Paolo died, as you know, she carried on bravely for many years, rising by virtue of her stunning presence and unfltering youth to new pinnacles of triumph in the theater. As a result, she was continually caught up in a coterie of distinguished admirers, amongst whom she chose with great care. Word got about that she was curiously aloof in the bedchamber, and that Paolo was a hard act to follow, but the gossip did nothing to abate the fascination of the media for her peccadillos. A great actress was expected to have a train of disconsolate suitors, and her image as a loving woman was of the utmost importance to her career.

As a drama critic who had watched the tender image building, at
first dispassionately and then with the growing realization that she had captivated me entirely, I sensed the hopelessness of trying to replace Paolo in her life. Because I, who adored her, had always treated her work warmly in my reviews, I was admitted to a closer confidence than was her custom, yet I had always sensed a certain remoteness, a guarded withdrawal, when we were alone together. Perhaps she understood, was even prepared to tolerate, the depth of my feeling for her, as a measure of defense against those who sought her favors. In any event, I was the one she picked to stand in for Paolo at the wedding of their daughter, Carol.

She sat alone in the cathedral, on the right, presenting the exquisite profile atop a graceful white throat, the tawny hair gleaming under a tiny veil in the candlelight, and watched us out of one unblinking eye, like a bird, as we came down the aisle.

"Isn't she perfectly breathtaking?" whispered the bride, trembling on my arm.

"Incredibly," I whispered back, because it was true.

The dearly beloved had crowded the nave to the vestibule, where there was standing room only, because Eleanora Vilanese had invited the world to watch her play the gallant mother in this sensitive drama of young love. It was her wedding in a sense, not her daughter's, since she was the one they had come to see. The rest of us had only walk-on parts.
“She detests me, you know,” murmured the beauty at my side, but there was no time to deny her. The dean was already intoning as we reached the steps to the choir.

“Into this Holy Estate these two persons come now to be joined . . .”

The radiant bride and the solemn groom exchanged a message of transparent secrecy in a glance.

“If either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together . . .”

Eleanora was staring straight ahead, but the famous ruby lips were quivering, like any good mother’s.

“Wilt thou have this Woman . . .?”

The groom spoke out full throat, with eager resolve.

“Wilt thou have this Man . . .?”

“Oh, yes!” said Carol, her heart in her eyes. “Yes, I will!”

“Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man?”

I handed away the bride with my most benign air, and seated myself beside her fabled mother. It was a little like sitting at the foot of a marble Aphrodite, I thought, for I was aware that all eyes were fixed on the statue.

So was Eleanora.

She dabbed daintily at her eyelids with a bit of lace, and swayed against me.

“Isn’t it revolting?” she shuddered, without turning her head.

I was shocked.

“Whatever do you mean, my dear? They’re obviously mad about each other.”

“That’s precisely what I mean, David,” said Eleanora through her kerchief. “The little beast is actually in love with that oaf!”

I spoke soothingly into her ear, and tendrils of her fragrant hair brushed the tip of my nose.

“What a pity Paolo can’t be here to see how happy she is.”

She turned on me a look of utter incredulity.

“But how can she love him, David?” she hissed. “He’s a nothing—a silly computer engineer, if you can imagine it, and she might have made a very rich marriage.”

“I pronounce that they are Man and Wife,” the dean droned on relentlessly.

“Perhaps they’ve found something of what you and Paolo had,” I ventured, as an usher came forward to lead us up the aisle.
Again, the look of incredulity.

"She’s an idiot," she breathed. "She’s something Paolo did to me, and I can never forgive her for it. Not content with rupturing my body at birth and obliging me to stand by for weeks as a milch cow, she must make a mockery of my life by marrying a—a computer engineer!"

Then, becoming aware of her audience, she began to smile brilliantly from side to side and fluttered her fingertips in regal acknowledgement. It was time to strike the proper balance between gaiety and bereavement for the cameras clustered at the door, and Eleanora Vilanese was up to it. She played the role beautifully—beautifully, if you know what I mean.

She maintained a thoughtful silence as we were driven to the reception, but did offer me her gloved fingertips to hold.

"Dear David," she said, as I handed her out of the car. "You’re such a comfort. I do wish I could love you."

It was hopeless, you see.

She was surrounded at once by a host of admirers, and the cameras clicked and spun as she was swept into the ballroom. When the bride and groom arrived later, the cameras were inside, gorging themselves on a feast of celebrities.

I fell into conversation at the punch bowl with a stolid executive I recognized as the chairman of a great corporation.

"Didn’t I see you with Eleanora Vilanese at the wedding, Grimes?" he demanded enviously. "How on earth did you manage that?"

"We’ve been good friends for some time," said I casually. "I knew her when Paolo first took her under his wing."

He raised an eyebrow.

"What a stroke of luck for that nincompoop! I’ve always wanted to have a woman like that under my wing."

He strolled away.

The orchestra struck up on the dance floor, and the crowd at the punch bowl thinned out. To my astonishment and delight, Eleanora appeared magically out of the throng, which gave way in awe before her, and laid a hand on my arm.

"Come, my dear," she said. "The reception line is just forming, and I must have you by me to fend off the groom’s parents."

She had acquired a fresh bouquet from some lovesick wretch at the door, and held it poised under her chin as she smiled up at me, wide-eyed and appealing.
"Dear David," she glimmered. "You must remind me to tell you about Paolo some time."

The insidious chores of the reception line did nothing to dampen her charm. She had a gracious word for everyone, and was even pleasant to her daughter.

"I've been thinking about the poor creature, David," she confided to me later, "and I've decided I've been difficult with Carol. She's really a harmless little thing, and I do believe she's devoted to me."

I took her up quickly.

"I know she is, Eleanora. It shows in her eyes."

"Her eyes are nice. She gets them from me, fortunately. But are you sure it's not just my—my notoriety that impresses her?"

"She'd love you if you were a charwoman."

The actress bit her lip in puzzlement.

"She was crying in the powder room, David, and she said it was for me."

"She loves you."

We were interrupted by one of her most persistent suitors, a power in Wall Street, but she sent him off for a glass of champagne.

"There goes a man not greatly different from all the rest, David, except for his wealth," she declared. "He's in a perfect dither over my body."

"One can scarcely blame him," I replied, and she looked at me askance.

"Et tu, Brute," she said softly.

"I'm a man," said I.

A young fellow with flowing hair came up and swooned over her hand. She gave him a quick peck on the cheek and shooed him away.

"That one's so young—too young," she lamented, "and very adept with his hands. He worships me, I think, but he doesn't excite me."

The banker returned with her champagne, and threw a proprietary arm about her waist.

"It was such a beautiful wedding, Eleanora," he prattled, with a salacious wink for me. "Doesn't it give you ideas?"

"Yes, Victor," she said primly, detaching his arm. "I'm resolved never to marry again."

He leaned toward her with a hungry leer, and his eyes nearly popped out on his cheeks.

"Marriage is not really essential," he chuckled.

She dismissed him with a look.
“If you’ll excuse us, Victor. I’m having a little talk with David.”
“Best of luck, Grimes,” said he sarcastically, and backed off with a bow.

Eleanora drained her glass at a gulp, and beckoned to a waiter with a full tray.

“Let’s face it, David,” she observed grimly. “Marriage is a farce that demands the subtlest of acting skills. The whole idea of giving a woman to a man is comical. A happy woman is one who lives for herself.”

She looked at me for reassurance, but I balked.
“Didn’t you see Carol’s face?” I protested. “She wasn’t given. She gave herself, with love.”

Her eyes found her daughter on the dance floor, where she swirled from one partner to another, head thrown back and pony tail tossing, laughing with abandoned delight.

“She looks happy enough,” Eleanora mused, sipping delicately, “but I’ve given myself to the stage. Love is an illusion fostered by men to bolster the deception of wedlock. Thank God I’ve a career that absorbs me completely!”

“Too completely, perhaps,” I suggested ruefully.
“Is it not enough to be famous and beautiful?” she gasped, twirling about airily, a little tipsy with the champagne. “You must admit I’m beautiful, David.”

“I admit it,” said I, as the waiter hurried up with a fresh glass. She downed it and giggled at me through the bubbles. Her hair was coming undone in the back, and she was altogether desirable.

It was hopeless.

A handsome brute in an impeccable morning coat whirled her off, breathless, to the waltz, and the stolid executive returned to the punch bowl. He was obviously yearning to be presented to her.

“You’ve let her get away from you, Grimes,” he wheezed. “Are you mad? I think she’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen!”

“In all probability, she is,” I assented readily. “Have you seen her latest play?”

“Three times,” said he. “I like the part in the nightgown. I’ve always wanted to know a woman who could love like that.”

“She’s a great actress,” said I.

Eleanora returned alone from the dance floor, adjusting her velvet skirt. She was not quite sure of her footing.

“Take me home, David,” she commanded imperiously. “If I’ve
told that son of a bitch once, I've told him a hundred times. I'll not be stroked like one of his prize mares."

"This is Edward MacIvor, the chairman of UDK, Eleanora," I offered uncomfortably, and the stolid executive put down his cigar hastily and advanced on her with a lascivious grin.

"I don't care if it's God," she snapped, weaving slightly. "Please take me home."

At the penthouse, she dismissed the servants, let down her hair and kicked off her flimsy slippers. She had lovely feet, and was never reluctant to show them off.

"Now I shall tell you about Paolo," she said.

Stretched languorously on the chaise longue, her arm pillowing her tawny head, she studied me in solemn silence for some time, every elegant contour of her body an unspoken invitation.

"You're tired," said I. "Perhaps I should be going."

"Dear David," she sighed, wriggling her long toes in silk. "It's such a pleasure to have you about, because you demand nothing."

"To be with you is enough," I answered humbly.

She watched quietly while I lit a cigarette, affecting a carelessness I didn't feel.

"Are you really so impregnable?" she asked lightly.

"Tell me about Paolo," I said.

Suddenly her face was drawn.

"He was a stud!" she spat. "He loved no one but himself!"

"Did you love him?"

Once more, her gaze was incredulous.

"Not even his women loved him, nor he them."

"How in the world did you come to marry him, then?"

She brooded.

"Before I knew him, he was attractive to me, and he had a great presence on the stage. He told me he needed someone very—very beautiful!" She bit off the word. "Surpassingly was the word he used. A surpassingly beautiful woman, to enable him to fulfill himself. He offered to kiss my feet if I would throw in with him, and I fell for it."

"I trust you didn't let him."

"He never tried."

"What about Carol?"

"Poor little thing! She's the one who survived to carry the blame."

"There must have been something between you at the time."

"The child was a mistake. We were both drunk."
"He found you irresistible."
"He found me irresistible, but he did not love me."
Her voice was hoarse with anger and contempt, and I sought to comfort her.
"You certainly never let your true feelings show on the stage with him, Eleanora," I said.
"Am I not Eleanora Vilanese?" she asked haughtily.
"I thank God for that!" said I, moving toward her hesitantly.
"He insisted that I have an abortion, because a child would cloud our image, but I refused."
"The bastard! He was only a player."
"That's it," she murmured. "A player at love. He never slept with me again."
I got down clumsily on the floor beside her.
"Then he gave you absolutely nothing, Eleanora."
"Nothing," she said flatly, "except the realization that there is no such thing as love."
"But there is!" I retorted passionately. "Only today, you watched your daughter, Carol, make love to her husband with her eyes. Couldn't you sense that there was something almost palpable between them?"
She stroked the top of my head with a silken toe.
"If there is something between them, David, I'm glad, but I simply don't understand what it is, and don't want to."
I looked up to see that her eyes were closed. The lashes which guarded them were incredibly long, but they were her own.
"The stage is everything to me," she went on. "I do love the cheers and the applause, but they're for me, you see."
As I searched her still face for a flicker of warmth, I could tell that she was blind, love-blind, to the devotion in my own eyes. It was hopeless, if you know what I mean.
"You must be aware that love is something one gives," I mumbled disconsolately. "It's not to be taken up like a collection, Eleanora."
She regarded me with amusement, and patted my cheek.
"You've become a philosopher, David," she beamed. "You must write a play."
"I know what I'm talking about," said I, "because I happen to love you very much."
Her cool fingertips toyed with my ear.
"You're different, David. I believe you do," she said, "It's too bad
you didn’t catch me before Paolo did, because it’s barely possible I could have learned to love you.”

I yearned up at her.
“IT’s not too late,” I pleaded.
“It is too late!” she replied heatedly. “Don’t you understand that to be without the power to love is like wanting desperately to see, or to hear, and simply being unable to? It’s an infirmity I can’t do a damned thing about, though God knows I’ve tried!”

I took her slender wrists in my hands and kissed her palms.
“Let me be your eyes and ears, then,” said I. “I love you more than enough for both of us.”
She was gay again.
“Do you find me irresistible, David?”
“No. I love you.”
She leaned over me and gently took my head in her arms, to cuddle my face in the parting of her breasts.
“Poor thing!” she whispered. “You shall have a reward for your suffering.”
She got to her feet and drew me up insistently. The warmth of her body against me was maddening, and I could feel her sweet breath on my lips.
“You would do this for me?” I wondered.
“If I didn’t think I’d enjoy it, David, I shouldn’t throw myself at you,” she gleamed.
“But you will do it just for me?”
Her lips brushed mine.
“Isn’t it what you’ve always wanted?”
“I have wanted your love.”
Her face was a study.
“I’m truly sorry I’ve none to give you. Paolo has tutored me too well.”
“Love is an illusion,” I quoted her bitterly, “and I’m only a man.”
She stamped a stockinged foot.
“I’ll give you what I can, David. You had best take me while I’m in the mood.”
I sat down heavily on the chaise and put my head in my hands.
“That’s not enough, Eleanora. I need all of you. Couldn’t you act just a little?”

There was a long silence. My temples throbbed agonizingly as I sought to get my thoughts straight. Then she drew my hands away from
my face and peered down into my eyes.
	"For you, David," she beguiled me, "perhaps just a little."
	"But I must remember it's just acting."
	"I'm afraid so. Yes."
I got up deliberately and turned away from her.
	"Really, I must go, my dear," I said.
She watched me as far as the door, then stole up behind me and put her arms about my neck, feeling for my lips with her fingers.
	"It needn't all be acting, dear," she temporized.
I spun about and took her furiously in my arms.
	"See here," I said gruffly. "You're not compromising your ideals, Eleanora. Simply by being with me and being loved as you are, you're giving me something very precious in spite of yourself. Will you marry me?"

Her face was buried in my shirtfront. She stiffened, but did not draw back. I think she was taken with the idea.
	"I've been terribly selfish," she said, her voice muffled.
	"You're learning to love," said I.
She looked up appealingly, and there were tears in her eyes.
	"It's something I could do for you and Carol, David."
	"Then you will marry me!" I cried, my heart singing.
	"Yes, dear," she said, raising the ruby lips for my kiss. "as soon as my play has run its course. We shall find a small island, where I can have you all to myself."
he stretched an arm across the whole expanse
And loudly boasted to the other One:

"Seest thou the teeming regions at my hand,
Far-flung to every corner of the globe?
Behold the Mongol hordes on horses swift
Ride spirited out on the Orient plain.
Grand Romans, masters of the Western World,
March legions, legions, legions through the land.
Thy Father's Empire!—passive, little sheep
Who join crusades and conquer Turkish wives.
Look, look on yon adventurous fleets
Teach natives how to pray, make love, and hate—
Brave lads! Cortez, who died in golden fits;
Columbus, who also found the New World.
Look out on Salem at the Puritans,
Devout and humble anti-witchcraft folk.
Or scan the Afric coasts for useful goods:
Cheap souls whose hands are strong and faces stupid.
The sun ne'er sets on Britain's widespread might—
All purchased with the ocean's greatest force
And processed with the progress of machines.
One man restored to Germany its last-
ing grandeur and supremacy o'er all.
Out on the East horizon looms the cloud
Of this world's ultimate discovery:
The power that is man's (and therefore mine).
Here, i give it to Thee if Thou but grant
i own a fine, a splendid universe."

With eyes cast o'er the broad and battered world
He helped create, o'er each proud state and soul,
Christ wept to think He dared not claim His throne
Till He had bought it, bought it for His own.
The air has been infiltrated with the stench of anger. 
In its eddies swirls the injustice of unattainable answers. 
In the upward rush of dust particles, vengeful inequality deceives humanity and stains clouds black.

The turbulent, chaotic movements of mounting pressures explode heavily laden ethnocentric prejudices. 
It spews forth the doom of life on earth. 
In the bombardment of cutting droplets comes the appeasement of mounted hatreds.

But in the shelling comes the slaughter of innocence. 
The reality is that with the sweetness of revenge there lingers a dormant stench of damnation.

The heart throb of monsoons—the pulsating ebb and flow of despair and hope, the torrential storm followed by the promise of sunlight—will continue. 
And oh how reassuring the colors of the rainbow.
The Crayon Beetle
I was a very shy child. There were no other children on my block to play with, and my sister was too young to be of any use as a playmate. For a long time, the only people I came in contact with were adults, so when I started school I really didn’t know how to act around the other kids. Boys were the hardest to handle. They were noisy, and dirty, and they scared me to death. I don’t think that I got up the nerve to even talk to one until I was eight or nine years old. Of course, in school I always had to sit next to a boy, and I would spend most of the day worrying about what he was going to do next. I don’t think I learned very much, and I certainly suffered through some needless traumas.

In first grade I sat next to Billy, who had a passion for drawing race cars while making the appropriate sound effects. He also had a habit of borrowing my crayons and then breaking them. Because of Billy, art was not my favorite subject. One day, we were handed big sheets of manila paper and told to draw pictures of boats. Although I knew that Billy would probably break some of my crayons, he didn’t know what kind of noises boats made, so at least there would be a little silence. I began to poke around in my desk looking for my crayons. I found them at the back, but then my eye caught something else. There, in the very darkest corner, was a big, black beetle.

I froze. I didn’t know what to do. If I left the beetle in my desk it might crawl out and bite me. Or, worse than that, it might stay where it was and have baby beetles! Of course I certainly wasn’t going to reach in there and get it out, either. Maybe it was just my imagination, I thought. “Maybe if I wait a minute and then look again, it’ll be gone.” I waited, and then I looked again, and the beetle hadn’t moved at all. It was still there, shining blackly. That bug absolutely terrified me, but I was also worried that a bug in my desk might mean that it wasn’t clean or that I had germs. I sat glued to the chair while these thoughts whirled through my mind. Finally, I remembered our teacher. She could take care of it for me! It seemed to take forever to get to her desk, and then, when I reached it, I didn’t quite know what to say. “Mrs. Baker,” I whispered into her ear, “Mrs. Baker, there’s a beetle in my desk!”
Mrs. Baker seemed to take it very well. She just said, "William, Elizabeth says that there is a bug in her desk—would you remove it, please?"

I stood at the front of the room while the whole class watched Billy paw around looking for my beetle. I thought that he must be the bravest boy in the world. At last he stood up and, with a wide grin on his face, announced loudly, "It's just a piece of black crayon paper!"

I don't remember how I got back to my seat—I think that I must have blacked out, because the next thing that I remember is me drawing boats with a very red face, while the entire class giggled. Billy kind of took a fancy to me after that—I think he thought that someone ought to look after me. And, the next time that he borrowed my black crayon, I let him keep it.

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**BALLOONS**

Dan Lillard

Shimmering globs of suns, sunrises, sunsets;
Even rainbows, really.
Yes. . . .
Sweet, wet, laughing rainbows.
Dear Diary:

I just had to write you about Johnnie Paul Cooper. When we was at school this morning, he came running up to me yelling, "I know a secret. I know a secret."

Of course, I didn't believe him but I asked anyway, "What's your old secret?"

"I'm not telling you," he laughed and started running around in circles.

"That's 'cause you don't have no secret," I told him, knowing all along he didn't.

"Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I know something about Miss Richards that you don't."

"You don't know nothing about Miss Richards, so stop making things up."

"Yes, I do. And I know 'cause I seen her. I seen her with my own eyes this very morning right out there in her car in the parking lot. I seen her."

"It's 'saw', not 'seen', you old dummy. And you'd better stop it or I'm telling." That dumb old Johnnie Paul is always making things up. I
tell you he's enough to wear a person's mind completely down. You never can believe a word he says. He's as crazy as a squirrel with its tail on fire.

Just then he stops running and acts like he's sneaking up on something to grab it, and I don't move because I'm already sitting on the bus bench with my books piled up and my lunch box on top; and when he gets real close, he stops and turns his head from one side to the other and rolls his eyes around and around until they bug way out of his head, and he whispers, "Miss Richards wears a wig."

"You crazy boob!" I yelled at him and chased him all the way over to the flag pole. "You quit saying that. She don't wear no wig. If you don't shut up, I'm telling."

"Tell if you want to, but I seen her this morning right in her car looking in that little mirror. She gave it a yank, and the whole thing turned right around on her head. Then she lifted up one corner by her ear and shoved some light-colored hair under it, then she lifted up the corner by her other ear and poked hair under it, too. I tell you I seen her with my own eyes. I was poking holes in the old stump waiting for Dicky Taylor, and she was parked right beside me."

"Well, I don't believe no such thing," I told him.

Miss Richards, and everybody knows it, is the most beautiful woman in town. She wears those soft silky blouses with little shiny, raised places on them, and she smells like Heaven itself. When I grow up I'm going to wear perfume just like her. You can tell she's been in a room even if she isn't there anymore. And I love the way she puts her lipstick on, when she puckers up her mouth and then gives that little smack right when she's finished. I tried it in the bathroom once when nobody was home, but I couldn't get the smack quite right. All I could make was a sort of pop sound.

Nobody ever had a nicer teacher in the whole world. She lets me sit right up front by her desk so I can pass out the spelling papers, and every Tuesday she sends me down to Miss Riggs' room to get the book for story hour. Old Johnnie Paul got to clean the erasers Friday and really thought he was hot stuff. The very idea, him saying that awful thing about her! I just know she don't wear no wig.

Mama says wigs are for those women who dye their hair until it frizzes right out of their head. Miss Richards couldn't be one of those women Mrs. Evans whispers to Mama about. I'm not supposed to hear, but if I pull the vent down on the heat register in my room, every sound in the kitchen comes up plain as day. I always go up there and pretend
to read when Mrs. Evans comes over. She knows everything—even what everybody in town had for breakfast, Daddy says. She talks and talks. Mama says it's real bad to gossip so she don't say nothing, but just listens and listens. I listen, too, 'cause I figure it don't hurt to know what's going on. Daddy says that one of the true blessings of life is someone who minds his own business, so that's what I told Johnnie Paul. And then I said, "Besides, you'd better be able to prove what you say 'cause if you're making up awful tales, it's a sin and disgrace against the Lord.

"I ain't making up tales—anyway, I bet I can prove it."

"Bet you can't, you old chicken. Anyway, how're you going to do it—yank it off with a fishing line?"

"Don't call me no 'chicken'. I bet I can yank that thing right off her head. When she takes the Bluebirds to do their reading on the chairs in the back, I can just sneak right up behind her with a fishing pole," he said and started sneaking and rolling his eyes again.

"You don't have no fishing pole, you old chicken. Besides, you'd be scared as a snake in church."

"I ain't scared, and I ain't chicken. You just wait and see."

About that time the bell rang and everybody had to hurry inside, and that dumb old Johnnie Paul kept shoving me and saying, "Wait and see. Wait and see." I tell you he's crazy.

After the Pledge of Allegiance and Pricilla Jane Sanders leading us all in our morning devotions, we had to work on our geography; that is, everybody except the Bluebirds, and they went to the chairs in the back for their reading time. We were drawing our maps of the United States with Canada and Mexico attached. I had no sooner finished Mississippi and was starting that little stick-out place on Louisiana when the awfullest screaming there ever was came from the back of the room. It near scared me out of my wits. And before we could figure what had happened, old Johnnie Paul went running right across the front of the room waving a brown wig on the end of the map stick, and Miss Richards was hot on his trail. You never saw anything funnier in your whole life. We all started running around, and that was the end of the map drawing, you can bet. Mr. Wilson must have heard the commotion because it wasn't two minutes before he popped in the door, and old Johnnie Paul nearly bumped right into him still waving that old brown wig around. Boy, it sure got quiet fast. Everybody's scared to death of the principal. Then Miss Biggs came in and told Miss Richards not to worry, that she would finish the day for her.
I felt real bad. You could tell poor Miss Richards was about to cry, the way her chin was all puckered up. Then she said there would be criminations; and I sure was glad she was looking at Johnnie Paul because, if it was all the same to her, I'd just as soon he had them as me. After all, I had told him he should keep his nose where it belonged and out of other people's business. I suppose she can wear a wig if she wants to.

Goodnight.
I love you.
Maureen Elizabeth Stapleton
They
Don't
Tell
You

Dawn M. Snyder

Thursday was wash day for as long as I could remember. We lived commune-style—my cousins, aunts, uncles, and my immediate family—most of the summer. The cottage we rented was rickety; sometimes it seemed as if the old walls could barely withstand the laughter, not to mention ten kids between the ages of eight and sixteen. This place was a virtual paradise—we lived in swimsuits and stayed in the lake until our lips turned blue. Hair slicked back and streaked with blonde, arms and legs nut-brown from the sun, we played and tumbled and grew up together. There was no piano to practice; who could ask for more? With the exception of various duties assigned by the adult who was acting as sergeant-at-arms for the week, we were blissfully unconstrained.
I am the oldest and my cousin Laurie is six months younger than I. We worked our way up through the ranks from watching for sea monsters (friendly ones), to sweeping away the ever-present sand, to (ta-da!)—laundry. The privilege of doing laundry came with the driver's license; we were still too young to know what an undesirable chore washing could be. Especially if you have to do it. Every Thursday we filled the entire back of the station wagon with laundry or, to be more precise, a mixture of laundry and sand. It would have been one part laundry to one part sand, but wet beach towels and soggy sneakers added bulk to the laundry side. The hilly drive was a relatively short one, past all the familiar landmarks: Butch’s Mariana and the A & W Rootbeer Stand.

Once inside the laundromat, Laurie and I filled every available washer. (Even if we could have used them all, we would have had to run two batches). But, the other regulars were there too—Mrs. Grimm from Lookout Point, a nice old lady who smelled horribly of sachet and had blue hair; the Baxter twins—blonde, blue eyed “sweet little things” about fourteen years old, and, of course, the Dunnigans. The Dunnigans were my favorites. They were fat and jolly and nice. Today they had brought their brand-new granddaughter with them so that their son and his wife could see some friends. They only stayed for a couple of weeks each summer, and the Dunnigans, in their children’s absence, adopted my cousin and me. We were all comfortable with each other and with the same old magazines, the same old washers and dryers, and the same temperamental candy machine.

Laurie and I didn’t rush as much that Thursday. The wind was pretty strong and cold for July—definitely not a good day to work on a tan, so we opted for the relative peace and quiet of the laundromat instead of babysitting cousins and siblings. The time came, however, when each beach towel was perfectly and symmetrically folded, the contour sheets were masterpieces of patience, and the tennis shoes were so dry they had shriveled. The others had long since left the laundromat. Good thing, too, because it was starting to rain. We reloaded the station wagon and started for home.

Once back at the cottage we donned suits and sweatsuits in hopes we could at least swim our “morning constitutional” (as our grandmother called it) since the rain seemed to be holding off. The water was too rough, though, rougher than I had ever seen it. The wind whipped the surface of the small lake, turning it a mottled grey-green with white caps crowning the waves at their highest point. We sat on the sand,
sheltered between the breakwater and the first terrace, and watched, fascinated with the change from our normally peaceful lake to this wild, tossing, threatening body of water.

"My God," Laurie whispered. "Look!"

I followed her pointing finger. I couldn’t believe what I saw: three people—large ones—at that—loaded into a flat-bottomed aluminum skiff capable of supporting only about half of their accumulated weight. The motor, carefully adapted to attach to the back of a boat meant to be rowed, weighed the skiff down even more. What would have been potentially dangerous under normal conditions was an incredible folly now. And they were heading for the middle of the lake!

Laurie and I split up. She ran for the cottage and the car to find a phone: I took a position at the end of the dock, standing on a seat and holding on to one of the anchor poles. The wind whipped at my clothes and hair. I could barely keep my footing; the spray from the uncustomed waves made the dock slippery. I had a hard time keeping them in sight. They wouldn’t turn back! The little boat bobbed and weaved—the motor died several times, but the people started it up again and kept on going. What did they think they were doing? I just prayed that they could all swim, and swim well. I noticed that only one of them was wearing a life jacket.

By this time, a small crowd had gathered on our shoreline. Even the younger children were quiet, watching the slow progress of the boat. Several times the boat came very near to overturning; the three boys raced off to alert neighbors with boats of sufficient power to handle the storm—just in case. The people in the boat were more distinct now—a man in the back and two fat women lurching from side to side in the unstable craft.

They were more than halfway now, about three hundred yards from the end of our dock. Now they were fighting time, too—the clouds began to roll in, blacker and more ominous than before. The water was dark and frothy. The motor stopped.

After pulling the cord several times without success, the man began to stand. It was Mr. Dunnigan. "Sit down!" I yelled, but the wind caught the words, and he never heard me. The boat rocked violently; it almost seemed to jump out of the water, spitting the foolish couple and their daughter-in-law into the water.

"Count heads!" my father yelled. Sometimes I could see them and sometimes I couldn’t. They looked so tiny, bobbing furiously in the angry water. Certainly they’ll grab the boat, I thought. My father had
come out to help, but he was too heavy to stand where I was. He did what he could to brace me against the wind—I was the only one now who could see the human buoys, flailing ineffectually behind their overturned boat. One of the figures did grasp the boat, I thought, and the one in the life jacket was easy to spot and staying upright. Why didn't the other woman grab the boat—it seemed close enough. She didn't seem to be struggling much. I blinked my eyes against the wind and—only two heads were left.

"One's under!" I shouted. I had never felt so helpless in all my life. Too far to swim in this weather, no boat at all, and someone drowning. Right there. Right in front of me. I was watching it. It was really happening. I wasn't doing anything at all to help. I knew...

"Get ahold of yourself." My father's grip on my legs tightened. I blinked back the tears, swallowed hard and tried to breathe normally.

"Keep your eyes on the other two." I did. But time was running out.

I heard a motor in the distance, just around the bend. Thank God—I hope it's not too late. The boat circled the skiff, and two men jumped overboard—they pulled three people out of the water. I stayed on my perch until they had fished the Dunnigans out of the water and headed toward our dock. They came in fast, hitting the dock sideways with such force I thought it would break. The men in the boat didn't hesitate, they grabbed the inert figure of Mrs. Dunnigan and half-dragged, half-carried her to the relative stability of the dock. My aunt stripped the old woman's fluorescent suit down to her waist, pounded once on her chest, and began the steady pressure-release of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Hand over hand, heel of the palm between the ponderous breasts, my aunt bent over the bluish figure. The men then carried the old man to the shore and helped the younger woman away from her mother-in-law. They had their hands full.

"Dawn." I started.

"Mouth to mouth. You know how. Get to it!"

In a minute I was down on my knees by the old woman, Mrs. Dunnigan, routinely performing what I had performed many times on a dummy. A lifeless, plastic dummy.

What they don't tell you about saving lives is how cold the face of a drowned person feels as you cover his mouth with yours. Or the taste of seaweed and water and vomit as the stomach loses control. They don't mention how the eyes can be open and looking at you—looking at you like they saw things you can't see. They don't talk about how the muscles and bones seem to melt into a heap of flesh—blue, cold. They just don't tell you.
I cleaned out her mouth with a towel and concentrated on counting. I had to breathe for her every fifth time my aunt put pressure on her heart. One, two, three, four, five, breathe, one, two, three, four, five, breathe.

"Rescue squad's here!"

One, two, three, four, five, breathe, one, two, three, four, five, breathe...

"O.K. I'll take over."

I quickly moved over and a man in uniform took my place. Another had an open medical bag. He checked her heart and pupils. He looked up.

"How long?"

"About twenty minutes on the dock, three to four under the water."

He shook his head. The other men stopped. I couldn't control my stomach anymore. I leaned over the side of the dock.

"Nothing more you could have done. We'll want to talk to a few of you."

"Of course," my father said.

We watched as they covered the old lady with a coarse blanket. It wasn't until then I remembered the others who were with her. Mr. Dunnigan stood there shivering and moaning, tears running down his cheeks. The chubby daughter-in-law began to shriek and was led away to lie down and take a sedative.

The sun peeked through the clouds and the wind died down. The sheriff, the ambulance, the men—they were all gone. The cottage was quiet except for the martins who swooped and quarreled noisily. The younger kids played half-heartedly. They didn't ask to swim. The adults smoked in silence. Even my grandmother had a stiff drink. Supper was forgotten.

I watched the lengthening shadows of the trees intrude into the room. They fell across the pile of clean laundry, neatly-folded and waiting to be put away. I closed my eyes—could smell the soap and cement of the laundromat, hear the whirring and jostling of the washers and the thump of sneakers chasing each other around in a dryer. I saw Mrs. Dunnigan nestling her new granddaughter proudly in the crook of her arm and beaming senseless endearments at the child.

Her son stopped by the next day.

"I thank you," he said, choking with emotion. "There's nothing more you could have done. I want you to know that. Nothing more."

And he was right. But it didn't matter.
It is midday, and Marshal Ney has ordered our cavalry across the trampled valley into the fiery north slopes of the steadfast allies. Against lesser foes, our artillery fire would have already bounded through the files of waiting infantry, dismembering along the way. But Wellington has couched his men on the far side of the ridge, thus hidden from view and protected from our barrages.

Each unit of cavalry steels itself for the several-hundred-yard race that must end in either victory for our Emperor or glory in death. The entire valley is washed in a dusty-blue haze, the smoke from the cannon and muskets. This constant smoke-screen obscures the distant ridge, and we peer with anxious eyes into the mist. Across these barren fields, our horses must sweep like the irresistible main. British infantrymen pebble the human shoreline. Marshal Ney would never order this assault without ample ground forces and abundant faith that the enemy lines will break. The order is given to charge.

Heavy rains from the night before have softened the ground to mud that the noontime sun has not yet turned to steady earth. The massive animals beneath us drive down the southern slope in nervous frenzy, churning the grain and pulp beneath their pounding hooves. Our cannon stop. Their cannon stop briefly to realign and reload. For a magic, consuming moment, the field of battle is hushed and graced with the awful sight of a thousand horsemen, hundreds abreast, descending the southern slope at breakneck speed. The martial blues
Illustration by Robert Roach (Freshman)
and blood reds of our uniforms and standards flow into the gap, onto the open plain between the Empire and Brussels, our destination.

My hand on my saber, raised in exultant gesture, I am carried along in the current of fury, looking neither left nor right. Surely the ground rumbles under such weight, madly plodding the treacherous way. My comrades shout, venting passions too intense and too complex to describe. One can only shout. Marshal Ney has called us to break the retreating army, break it and burst through to Brussels. Our Emperor is returned to us; Providence and he are with us. We are a force too colossal to withstand.

As we turn up the northern slope, encouraging the brave beasts beneath us, Wellington fires his grape shot on us. These are the nasty packets of nails, broken glass, and metal scraps his artillery sprays at short range. Grape shot does not bound and explode; it scatters and mows down whole rows of men. My comrade to the right falls quickly. One second we are bursting forward; the next, I am without him. Perhaps a fragment from the blast has torn into his shoulder or face. No, the horse would not stop for that. My comrade could not stop for that. The horse itself must have stumbled or been shattered beneath him.

My steed feels the clinging mud and labors to continue despite the difficult sprint just to get here. Though many have fallen, the tide continues to rise and engulf the forward guns. This is the moment of clashing. We bear down on the silent foe and end all intellection. Elan shall win the cause.

In the face of our monumental assault, Wellington has calmly formed his army into squares, a proven defense against cavalry, but a miserable formation to meet the trailing infantry. A square consists of human blocks, bordered by kneeling soldiers propping their bayonets with point up at the threatening animals. This row of spikes deters almost every beast, for it is said that insofar as we are master of him, he determines our limitations. Our men sweep over the crest, unable to retreat because the rushing ranks plow on behind, admitting no deceleration. The sea of blue crashes about these steadfast rocks and filters into the crevices between. We have met the stony shore.

My saber is worthless and my pistol gone. We must bolt about the squares, feinting and blustering, as the marksmen in the enemy squares load, aim, and fire into our mass. Many fine cavalrymen fall, but many more replace them. The noisy, smoky chaos lingers on the crest. I can see the flies buzzing about a British general’s horse. I notice
the lame, abandoned in the rear, crying out in defiance and despair. I hear the trembling Dutchmen cursing either us or Duty. I can reach one soldier with my blade, and so I slash his face. We turn back down the slope, anxious to meet the grim soldiers of substance, our infantry, and we find there is not one! This is no grand assault, but a psychological thrust, a gamble, meant to demoralize the foe. We are to die. This knowledge braces our resolution. We will die.

At the bottom of the slope, our commander calls us around, up into the prickly fray. Soberly, I turn my frightened horse back into the grape shot the British have resumed in our short retreat. Sweat stings my eyes, and the smoke of allied cannon restricts my visibility to a few hundred feet. Into the clouds of fire and steel we march. We reach the crest; the squares remain intact; pandemonium returns. One brown stallion leaps over the silver hedge and lands, sprawling onto a dozen wriggling musketeers. I gallop around one of the squares, swearing at and baiting the wild-eyed British. Musket accuracy being what it is, no one is likely to hit whom he intends. Thus, I may taunt and frown within twenty feet of fifty guns.

Again, we slip back down the hill. Again, we align ourselves and charge into the thickening haze. This is suicide, I mutter, wondering how long their lines would hold. What time is it? No one can tell by the sun, eclipsed by bluish gasses. Into the renewed spray of hot and ripping metal, we clamber without zeal. Again and again, our tortured animals strain to take that hill. Many must have fallen in exhaustion. With mingling soot and sweat encrusting me, with a small sliver of glass buried somewhere in my thigh, and with thirst clutching at my dry and dirty throat, I fly into the increasingly black vapor—silent, crazed, and feverish. Madness.

* * *

I do not know what tore my torso from me as I sped across the plain to the south. The charge was rescinded, and I was heading home. Now I can taste the soil in my mouth and hear distant drums of other skirmishes. My head buried halfway in the ground, embedded in the field I traversed scarcely an hour before, I am overwhelmed by thirst. I do not know if Marshal Ney is yet alive. I do not know if the Emperor is pleased. I do not know anything but the aching loss of body and the piercing lack of water. I pray somebody finds me. God, help me. *Vive L'Empereur!*
AUTUMN
Jan Stough

It is so unmistakably fall.
The sun's last clasp of warmth
Furtive whispering of leaves
Defining color
with magnificent palette
There is no substitute
for the sky's mantle of
patchless blue
and yet so swiftly it
yields to winter.
So listen
and contemplate
the movement
of revolutionary
beauty for
it exceeds eternity.

STATEMENT
George Curran

On the night of this lord,
I submit to you:
ASSAULT AND FLATTERY,
(or love), (or sex),
For your discriminating
Values and Philosophies
To consider.
(I am like a flower.
I am like a cigarette.)
Daydreamer,
the road lay straight before you
but you chose the grassy path
and sat among the flowers
observing all the beauty the forest hath.
Lulled by the songbird’s happy chorus
as you gazed into the trees
bathed in the warm sunshine,
rocked by a gentle breeze.

Daydreamer
rides white horse clouds in the sky,
soars with the hawk
where eagles dare not fly.

Daydreamer
saw all, felt everything, heard much
and, before journey’s end
did soar to the stars to touch.
John F. Kennedy was dead. That is my earliest recollection of anything: the New Frontier exploding in bits of skull and hair over and over again on national television, compliments of Abraham Zapruder and the Eastman Kodak Company. My mother cried. I didn’t. I played with my Tinkertoys.

"Why is Mrs. Kennedy wearing black?" I asked.

"Because she’s in mourning, dear."

"But it’s afternoon, not morning," I protested.

My mother saved the old issues of *Life* magazine devoted to the assassination. I have seen them: pictures of Jackie’s bloodied dress,
Lyndon’s upraised hand, Lee’s final grimace. I’m told that these are the most valuable issues of *Life*.

Johnny, they hardly knew you. I didn’t know you at all. What is Camelot?

Body counts. That’s what I remember about the Vietnam War: body counts.

Every night at six o’clock, Walter Cronkite told the nation how many American lives had been lost on an imaginary jungle battleground a hemisphere away. If their body count was greater than ours, then it had been a good day for Truth, Justice, and The American Way.

Body counts.

And every night at six o’clock, my grandparents anxiously awaited any news about Vietnam. Their youngest son—my uncle—was Over There in the army.

Fighting for apple pie.
Shooting for baseball.
Killing for Mom.

Body counts.

It happened like this: I am in grade school, but I am home today because of a cold. Mother is in the kitchen, ironing. The telephone rings.

“Aunt Kate just called,” Mother said, trying to remain calm as we drive across town to my grandparents’ home. “She said that Grandma and Grandpa got a telegram a few minutes ago.” A pause.

“Something’s wrong with Uncle Willie.”

My uncle was dead.

Body counts.

And every night at six o’clock, Walter Cronkite continued to tell the nation how many American lives had been lost on an imaginary jungle battleground a hemisphere away. But Uncle Wally never told us why.

While Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dreams were slapping awake a
nation which had been sleeping since the Civil War, I was swimming in
the backyard pool of my family's modest home, located in an all-white
town.

All white, that is, except for one family: the Wilkes.
Charles Wilkes was in my fourth grade class. He was my age, but we were not friends. After all, he was black.
One day, Charles Wilkes came to our house and asked if he could swim in our pool. My father said yes. I was appalled. How could my father do such a thing?
Mercilessly, my friends and I taunted Charles Wilkes while he was swimming with us. We pushed him off the diving platform, and we held his head underwater. Less than a half an hour later, Charles Wilkes went home—crying.
“Whities!” he raged.
“Nigger!” we yelled. It was fun.
That was the day Charles Wilkes cried. That was the month the Wilkes family moved from our town. That was the year Martin Luther King, Jr. stopped dreaming.

I stare at the simple white cross which marks the grave of Robert F. Kennedy in Arlington National Cemetary. Fresh roses, placed there by visitors earlier in the day, lay withering at the base of the cross.
This time, I remember everything: the cameras, the hotel, the speech, the cheers, the exit, the pantry, the shooting. I remember the anguished horror of a panicked nation wondering if it had gone mad.
Nearby, middle-aged men and women take Kodak photographs of the eternal flame at the gravesite of another Kennedy. Children of the children of the sixties race noisily about, blessed with ignorance of the immense tragedy represented by a single flickering flame.
And then there was Bobby . . .
I turn back to look at the small white cross which bears no identifying marks. They say Bobby wanted it that way. I stare again at the dying roses.
Was this Camelot?
Death
the loss of . . .
the longing for . . .
one who is gone.

I have felt such pangs
for one who is yet alive—
Even across the room
Even breathing, laughing, living
No longer for me.

Like death,
I cannot touch him with a smile
Or kind word
The abyss lies there.

As in death,
I receive only the cold stare
the empty reaction
the silent reply.

The one who is dead while still alive,
how he taunts you.
O death, there is thy sting!
Photo contributed by Michael Hemmes
The Visit

George Curran

When we walked in, the nurse glanced over her shoulder and gestured for us to wait a moment. We stood by the door at the base of one of the beds. A woman was sleeping there—hands clutching a purse, mouth wide open, smelling of talcum and face powder. Smelling, I thought, like dust on rose-leaves:

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.*

Finally, the nurse took the syringe from my grandmother’s mouth and wiped her face and chest with a paper napkin.

“Margaret, you have visitors,” she said as she gathered her things. My mother and I sat in the two chairs by the bed. My father stood:

“We’re just finishing up dinner,” the nurse smiled at my father.

“Is she eating?”

*T.S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton.”
"Well, she was good at lunchtime. She ate some soup and drank some juice, but she doesn't seem hungry now. Maybe she'll eat some more for you."

"Margaret, will you take a little more soup?" My grandmother made a gurgling sound when the soup was forced into her mouth.

"Come now, Margaret. It isn't that bad. You need to eat to keep your strength." A stream of soup blotched my grandmother's gown.

"Well, Margaret. You don't want an I.V. do you?" We all stared at her. "I guess that's all she'll eat. Have a nice visit." The nurse picked up her tray and whisked out of the room.

"She ain't much of an eater," said a woman in a wheelchair. "The food around here stinks. Ya' know, ya' get used to home cooking, and when ya' come here ... I don't know, dey ought to do somthin'."

The wheelchair lady wore a pink gown with blue flowers on it. An arthritic arm hung like a bear claw from the end of the armrest.

"Ya' got to eat, though. To keep your strength."

"We brought her some bananas," my mother said. "Maybe she'll eat some bananas."

"Do you want a banana? Here, I'll peel you one." My mother drew a banana from a paper bag, peeled it, and put half of it in my grandmother's hand.

My grandmother lifted the hand with the banana to her mouth and bit a piece off with her lips. She took a large bite next—awkwardly, with both hands.

"What's wrong with your arm now?" my father asked. "A couple of weeks ago, you decided you couldn't walk. What kind of game are you playing?"

"Now, don't choke. You're getting banana all over yourself."

"Do you want another half?" my mother asked. "Here."

She ate the second half more quickly than the first. My father laughed.

"She likes 'dos bananas, don't she?" said the wheelchair lady. "Dey don't give us much fruit."

Another woman entered the room carrying a pillow. She was well dressed and moved easily. "Look at this pillow they gave me! It's like a concrete block!"

"Yeah, I knows dem," said the wheelchair lady. "I had my son bring a feather pillow from home. It's real soft. I can't sleep on dem dey give us."
The pillow lady noticed us. "How are you folks doing? It's so nice to have visitors, isn't it Margaret? Oh my, and they brought you a treat!"

"It's awfully cold outside. I wish they'd turn on the heat."

"You're likely to freeze to death," said the wheelchair lady. "I got three quilts, but jeez, dey ought to do somthin'."

The pillow lady walked over to her bed and arranged her pillow under the blankets.

The woman in the bed by the door stirred. She still clung to the purse on her chest. Tufts of fine white hair went everywhere. Awake now, she meticulously opened her purse and slipped out a piece of yellowed newsprint. She brought it to her lips and kissed it repeatedly, then put it away.

"Would you like me to raise your bed a little, dear?" asked the pillow lady.

The purse lady looked up blankly. "God bless you, dear. You're my little angel."

"I'm not your little angel," she said smiling. "We just take care of each other, don't we?"

"Thank you, little angel. God bless you."

The pillow lady cranked the bed up a couple feet and stood up holding her back. "I'm going for a little walk. It's good to get a bit of exercise everyday. Now you all have a nice visit."

"Are you goin' to be back to take me to dinner?" asked the wheelchair lady.

"I'll be back. Don't worry."

"That's nice. I'll wait for ya'."

The pillow lady disappeared around the corner, and the wheelchair lady picked up a newspaper from her nightstand. The purse lady slipped the bit of newsprint from her purse, kissed it several times, put it back, and arranged and rearranged the things in her purse.

My grandmother tilted oddly in her bed and looked at us with watery eyes. She opened her mouth—nothing came out—and gestured to my mother.

"Do you want another banana?"

She nodded tiredly.

"Well, I'll give you half, but I don't want to give you anymore. You might get sick. O.K.?"

As she ate the banana, I noticed her wrist. It was thin, fragile, and encircled with a name band embossed "Margaret Dolan." The name
seemed so alien to me. She was called “Grandma” by us and “Mom” by everyone else. I don’t recall her being called Margaret ever before.

“Now you’re getting banana all over yourself,” my father scolded. He looked around for a paper napkin. Finding nothing, he pulled out his handkerchief and awkwardly picked the bits of banana from my grandmother’s gown and bed.

“I’m going to find the nurse.” My father walked briskly from the room, folding his handkerchief.

I looked at my grandmother. She looked at me. I spoke, “How are you doing, Grandma?” She said nothing, but held her eyes on me. I couldn’t understand what they were saying.

“We’d like to have you for Thanksgiving,” my mother said. “But the doctors said you can’t leave unless you feel better. You need to get up and move around a little.”

“My son lives in Arizona,” said the wheelchair lady. “He said I could come down, but I don’t think I could take the plane ride and all that. Maybe Christmas . . . .”

“Is there anything you want?” my mother asked. “Do you have enough dresses and everything? I bought you a size ten like you said a couple weeks ago, but it seems much too big. You’ve lost a lot of weight since then.”

A tear streamed from my grandmother’s eye.

The purse lady was asleep now. Her head was tilted back and her mouth gaped open. Old people asleep always look dead to me.

My father reentered the room and sat down. “We ought to get going.”

“O.K.” my mother said. She looked at my grandmother. “Here, I left you some bananas. If you want another, just ask the nurse. They’re right here, and I’m sure they’ll get you one if you ask.”

“Bob will be over next week,” my father said. “Now you start taking care of yourself.”

“Good bye, Grandma.”

As we walked out, the wheelchair lady waved at us. “Bye-bye, now!”

The commotion awakened the purse lady. She spoke with both hands raised. “God bless you. God bless you, my little angels. God bless you.” As I left the room, I saw her pull out her ragged piece of paper. She kissed it, kissed it again, and put it back in her purse. Then she pulled out a small box and opened it. With a small pad, she spotted her nose, cheeks and eyes with face powder.

Rose dust, I thought. Rose dust.
Photo contributed by Elizabeth Vandegrift
TWO EYES
Lunus Finchum

Nay, that any two shouldst the same be
that any one should stand alone.
Nay, that either be so called as right or wrong
that completion be not shown.

Wherein the mixture sheds the light,
so the panes come to one.
Therein awaits truth
as reason, passion play,
so the longest day be done.

Yet, that one shouldst the other see
the second see the first;
Yet, that both should be as mirrors
ending question, doubting thirst.

Wherein the battle tells the tale,
so the tallest is made small.
Therein suggests perception
as reason, passion weigh,
so the longest day be all.
By the rippling silks in pacific winds
And rigid ivory with an emerald tinge
Surrounding in a crescent on the fringe
Of one man’s handiwork, the tamarind
Stood out against the oriental sky
And showered brilliant black into the scarlet,
Like the passions of a wicked harlot
Who conjures subtle dragons in her eye.

The yellow wood grew twisted and entwined
Among the slowly waking stars above
As if to share a mystic kind of love—
A trinity of heaven, earth, and mind.
In that one embrace of kindred creations,
The grandeur passed of art, machines, and nations.
The Shell Game

C. F. Hibbard
The undertakings of Niccolo Avelli, as you know, are celebrated in the canons of crime as models of delicate deception. Few of the historic figures practiced with comparable aplomb, and none with such mischievous subtlety. In consequence, it was likely to be an unwitting accomplice, protesting bewildered innocence the while, who paid the price for Avelli’s ill-gotten gains.

He began in a modest way with smuggling. While the bulk of a substantial consignment of contraband was off-loaded at Southampton in a bale, the customs officials were preoccupied with the discovery of a handful of jewels in the luggage of Audubon Scone, a petty officer in the British merchant marine. Scone, a jovial Cockney, could offer no explanation for the presence of the jewels. As a result, he drew a discharge and three years in Dartmoor, which doubtless afforded him an opportunity for thought.

“It ’ad to be Mickey Avelli,” he confided to a fellow inmate. “I’ll ’ave ’is dickey for this.”

Avelli, meanwhile, went on to greater challenges, for he was not one to rest on his oars. You may remember the express wagon for Tiffany’s which overturned far from its scheduled route. The driver and the guard were found dazed on the site, their pockets stuffed with uncut emeralds, and both did time, though the more valuable articles of treasure were never found. Then, within the year, a bank official was convicted of embezzlement when his personal account bloomed suddenly by an amount three times his annual salary. However, an audit disclosed that the entire loss to the bank was many times the amount in question, and the official denied heatedly that he could account for the rest.

These whimsical examples are merely illustrative and not intended to comprehend the full scope of Niccolo’s work. Suffice it to say that he established a clear pattern and, having found it successful, thereafter adhered to it confidently. The authorities should have an obvious culprit and a significant, if not princely, share of the proceeds, in order to establish their acumen, while Avelli himself remained at liberty to plan for the next conquest.

Perhaps the most gripping of his adventures arose from a scheme he devised to remove his illicit store of jewels to another country, where the market was better because it was safe, and to augment it along the way to afford entertainment and pay for the passage. Transportation costs, Avelli knew, could eat one up.
Having formed an attachment for a petite adagio dancer, a lithe creature who maintained an aristocratic bearing when not seated astride her own neck, he began at once to formulate the logistics of a veritable masterpiece of deception. Not one, but two, members of a ship’s company would be caused to disappear at sea, while he, Niccolo Avelli, sailed through with his spoils in a duffel bag and a gay chantey on his lips, and none the wiser!

The dancer, a Contessa Almaviva Petrovna, of course, would be the culprit, though the more intimately he came to know her the more he regretted having to jettison her in the end, an outcome she must never be allowed to suspect. He cultivated her discreetly, in order to avoid giving alarm, making only the most seemly display of his considerable wealth, and she, in her turn, was clearly taken by the charm of his manner, not to mention the large bills in his wallet. In time, she took Niccolo into her confidence.

“Can you imagine a dancer named Birdie Pluckett?” she exclaimed with spirit. “Let alone a bloody contortionist! God, how I’ve struggled to gain position, and can scarcely draw a breath when I’ve done it, but my lawful name is Contessa Almaviva Petrovna, as you can see from my papers, and my life is no longer just an awkward pose.—Contessa’s the first name,” she explained with a winsome grin, “and changed legal as can be, in court, Mr. Avelli.”

Impressed by her enterprise, Niccolo persevered patiently enough to learn that she had been born within the sound of Bow bells, had learned her curious art from her mother, a famous music hall entertainer, now destitute, and had a former lover, a tugboat captain out of Southampton, who could be counted on to do anything she suggested. The pieces of his plan soon fell into place, for he perceived that she could be useful to him aboard ship, by virtue not only of her clever title and her aristocratic air, but the unearthly faculties of her body. Moreover, the tugboat she could summon at the crook of a pretty finger rounded out the design by affording an avenue of escape from the customs.

“We shall have a gay time of it, my sweet,” he promised merrily, chucking her under the chin. “Though it is not easy to disappear completely aboard a ship at sea, I, Mickey Avelli, have conceived a most ingenious plan. You may call me Mickey.”

“Dear Mr. Avelli!” Petrovna squealed, squirming in his arms. “How sweet of you! But surely you won’t leave me alone, Mickey.”

He scowled.

“On second thought, Contessa, you had best call me Niccolo. My
familiar name has already won some notoriety in the world.—But no, love, I shan't leave you. I shall only appear to disappear. We shall board the ship at dawn, you in first class as yourself, to take away the breath of the passengers in the grand salon, I . . .” his eyes dropped modestly, “as a humble waiter in the employ of the line. The arrangements are made.”

“Shall I see you only at meals then, Niccolo?” she pouted.
He regarded her hungrily.
“I dare say we shall find the opportunity for an occasional meal together,” he predicted.
“Only if you promise not to disappear,” she murmured, falling limp on his breast.
Her weight was so slight she seemed unreal, and she hadn’t a bone in her body.

“First, I must appear,” confided Niccolo, shifting uneasily with a heightened sense of claustrophobia. “I shall use your cabin for a base, Contessa, since my own quarters will be confining, as befits my station. I shall adopt two additional identities during the crossing, one a blond cabin boy without this luxurious moustache, and one as a nondescript deck hand.”

“Niccolo, dear!” whispered Petrovna, her voice muffled against his shoulder. “Your gorgeous moustache!”

“It must be sacrificed to the cause, I fear,” said Niccolo, seeking feverishly to unwind her clinging limbs. “But it’s easily replaced, as you shall see. It is the cabin boy and the waiter who shall disappear, once the thefts are discovered, and I, the deckhand, shall accompany you down the rope ladder at Spithead, while the ship’s company searches in vain for the thieves.”

The tiny dancer sat up abruptly.
“Down the ladder!” she wailed. “But, Niccolo, I can’t swim!”

“No need,” said Avelli, feeling about to be sure he was free. “The tug will be under the counter when we lie to, to pick up the tow.”
She brushed her hair from her eyes, very businesslike.

“Then I must cable Audie at once, to make certain he knows his part.”

“It is done,” said Niccolo complacently. “I have dispatched a fond wire from you suggesting a reconciliation at that very place and moment.”

Contessa Almaviva fell back with a sigh.
“You’ll find the rope ladder in the ship’s stores,” she conjectured.
"We'll not chance it," Niccolo replied, grasping her cautiously. "The ladder shall be brought aboard in your luggage, my dear, together with the costumes and appurtenances essential to my deceptions. I, Niccolo, shall carry only a small valise to the servants' quarters in steerage, but it will contain a considerable fortune in currency and jewels, I assure you, and may be easily transferred to my duffel bag at the proper time."

The dancer slid pliant arms about his neck.

"Why not just leave it with me, dear Mr. Avelli? Won't it be safer?"

He detached himself with a stony stare.

"Will it?" he asked.

"Don't you trust me?" she lamented, making a moue.

He smiled paternally.

"Do you trust me, Contessa?"

"Let's pack," she said.

They boarded separately, of course, Petrovna at her haughtiest, thoroughly cowing the ship's officers and shooing her luggage to the luxurious stateroom Avelli had thoughtfully booked for her, while he skulked below, as befitted his station. For three days, Petrovna bemused the most hardened passengers with her languid contortions, which were the more spectacular owing to the meagerness of her costume, and Avelli, the attentive waiter, evaluated the most ostentatious displays of jewelry with avid eyes. Having identified the most desirable, and the staterooms of their exhibitors, he prepared for the bustle of activity which would render the passage worthwhile.

In the afternoon of the fourth day, having ascertained which passengers were lounging on deck, the clean-shaven, blond cabin boy entered a succession of staterooms with a linen cart containing the compactly folded body of Birdie Pluckett. In each case, he retreated at once to stand guard at the door until a shy knock from within informed him that she had completed a fruitful search. It was agreed between them that if the proper occupants approached while the plunder was under way, his own knock would warn her to conceal herself in the linen bag once more, after which he would enter, with profuse apologies, to remove the cart.

Unfortunately, this is precisely what happened, shortly after the seventh entrance, and the embarrassed cabin boy made off toward Petrovna's stateroom, trundling the linen cart before him. All might have been well, for the dancer managed to escape into her room in her shocking pink chemise, with a pillowcase carrying the diamond
necklace and matching tiara she had acquired, but the cabin boy was observed before he slipped through the door. Thus, by the time the chief steward and the purser got around to investigating, they were astounded to discover the nimble dancer unclothed in bed with the waiter, Niccolo Avelli, an employee of the line.

"'Ere, here! What is the meaning of this?" cried Contessa Almaviva Petrovna. "Can't one enjoy a harmless bit of entertainment in the privacy she's bought so dearly? The ambassador shall be informed of your impertinence!"

She drew the rumpled sheets hurriedly to her chin, and Niccolo's moustache fairly quivered with indignation at her side. The officers explained the situation and, with no more than an envious glance at Avelli's sleek skullcap of black hair and the juxtaposition of his moustache to her ear, undertook a dogged search of the room. No trace of either the blond cabin boy or his rich booty was to be found.

"We're mustering them all within the hour, Avelli," snarled the purser as they left, "and you're to be on hand to help us pick out the odd one."

His gaze lingered wistfully on the delicate nudity of Petrovna, which the flimsy sheet did little to conceal.

"I fear I shan't be of much help to them, Contessa," grinned Niccolo, when they marched out, "but, as long as we're here, have you a moment for Mickey Avelli?"

Birdie exposed herself demurely, just long enough to remove the blond wig, and fluffed up the pillow.

"Can't we put away the evidence first, love?" she twittered. "The diamonds are scratching my neck, and this wig has been itching like sin."

Though the telltale clothing was found on the boat deck, it has been blown from one end to the other, and the cabin boy himself was never seen again.

"We shall raise the Isle of Wight by morning," said Niccolo later, patting a yawn, "Therefore, tonight is the night."

"But Niccolo, dear!" Petrovna whimpered. "Haven't we really enough, when it's put together with what you brought aboard?"

He returned her gaze thoughtfully.

"Not enough for two of us," he sighed at last. "There's one more stone, Contessa, a big one. The Colossus of Fountainbleu, it's called, and it would be lovely on your throat. I've had my eye on it throughout the passage, and the harridan who wears it simply can't carry it off."
“There’s only tonight, sweetheart,” moaned the dancer, coiling miserably. “You’ve pitched the cabin boy’s clothing out the porthole. How are we to come by the solitaire?”

“We are not,” said Niccolo grimly. “I shall acquire it myself, as Avelli, the waiter. It is time we made ready.”

He sprang lightly from the bed, with a final peck for Birdie, and flipped open one of her stylish steamer trunks. Tossing a heap of her shimmering lingerie unceremoniously on top of her, he withdrew a fat coil of rope, which she knew to be the ladder, then carefully laid out the middy, the bell bottom trousers and the ribboned cap of the deckhand. Lastly, he produced the duffel bag, which he stroked affectionately.

“It’s a bit large,” he acknowledged, “But the best I could do on the spur of the moment. Now listen carefully. When I finish inspecting the cabin boys with the purser, I shall retire to my quarters and transfer the contents of my valise to this bag. When the Colossus of Fountainbleu battens down for the night, I’ll drop the bag here. That will be about the time of your last appearance in the grand salon, so you won’t have to worry about guarding the contents. It will take me but a moment to capture that solitaire—for you.”

So saying, he departed, still as Avelli, the waiter, but with the duffel bag draped jauntily over a forearm.

As it happened, Contessa Almaviva Petrovna did not appear for her last performance that night, perhaps because she had experienced some difficulty in extricating herself from the grand finale of the previous revue. When she returned exhausted to her stateroom, she found the duffel bag tossed casually on the bed. Its contents, though they by no means filled it, proved on inspection to be more than enough for two. She bethought herself of the gems in her pillow, but found them gone. They were, in fact, in her purse, where Niccolo had put them to focus attention on her.

At the same time, Niccolo himself was busy not far away. He had knocked at the door of the stateroom which contained the Colossus, together with its elderly exhibitors, and cheerfully announced:

“Compliments of the Captain!”

When they opened to him, he had presented an ice-bucket containing a costly champagne. He was not in the least concerned that he could be easily identified as a familiar figure in the salon, because the waiter, Avelli, in his turn, was soon to disappear.

Once within, he bullied the startled old couple into sullen submission while he tied them securely, back to back, and stuffed their
moms with towels, thereafter gleefully departing with the solitaire.

"I fancy this one’s worth as much as all the rest," he gloated. "I shan’t leave it behind with Birdie, for it’s too great a price to pay for a few nights’ lodging with a coiling serpent."

He was relieved to find that she was not in her stateroom, since her absence would assuage the grief of parting. Verifying that the jewels which implicated her still gleamed in her handbag, which was open to catch the eye, he folded the solitaire into a pocket of his mess jacket, removed his trousers and stuffed the apparel of the discarded waiter into the duffel bag. If it now seemed to be straining at the seams, he chuckled with pleasure at the realization that the best part of it all, if not the most voluminous, was bunched cosily at the very bottom.

With a gay chantey on his lips, he pulled on the close-fitting attire of the deckhand, complete to the ribboned cap, buttoned his sleeves at the wrist and examined his image in the cabin mirror with an approving eye. "Niccolo, my man," he leered, sidling this way and that and cocking his head, "you’ve turned the trick again, and what a trick this time!"

He went out with the duffel bag over one shoulder and the fat coil of rope over the other, exclaiming at the combined weight of the two, but the gay chantey sprang again to his lips because he had more than paid for the passage.

The ship’s company was in full alarm, for the elderly couple had been found trussed in their cabin, and both had unhesitatingly pointed the finger at Avelli, the waiter. Unhappily, Avelli did not appear to defend himself, but it turned out that the dancer, Petrovna, who had been in bed with him, was also missing, and that she herself had been up to some mischief. Her purse had been discovered to contain jewels stolen by the cabin boy, and there was a great hue and cry for her as well.

"Look sharp, mates!" cried the purser. "The little serpent can hide herself in a very small space!"

It was concluded, you see, that the contortionist and the cabin boy were one and the same, and thus it had been an easy matter for the cabin boy to slip into bed with Niccolo. The purser could scarcely be blamed for failing to identify him with a woman of such exquisite proportions.

The report came down that the police were waiting on the docks at
Southampton, and word was passed that no one was to leave the ship, but Niccolo Avelli was not perturbed. When the great liner hove to off Spithead to await the pilot and the tow, the first tug to come up was waved off, because it was not a vessel of the line, but he knew this was the last leg of his voyage. The tug drew up under the lofty counter with an air of disgruntlement.

Niccolo deftly affixed his duffel bag to the bottom of the ladder and lowered it with great care to the deck of the rolling tug, where it was swept up in the arms of a jovial English master. Reassured to see that the man's battered cap bore the insignia of the British merchant marine, Avelli himself started gingerly down, but was no more than half way when the duffel bag sprang open to reveal the cramped belly of Birdie Pluckett amid a welter of waiter's clothes.

"Back to smuggling again, is it, Mickey?" roared the master.
"But see 'ere wot you've laid on me this time!"
Birdie unwound herself from the duffel bag and flew into his embrace with cries of "Audubon! Oh, Audubon!"

The captain waved up cheerily as he cast off.

"You put me in Dartmoor right enough, Avelli," he shouted, "but this time I'll come visit you, with Contessa Scone!"

Niccolo dangled disconsolately as they chugged away with his treasure.

"Alas," he wept, "it was the work of a lifetime."

"Avelli! It's Mickey Avelli!" cried the purser over the rail. "Come up here, Avelli. We know you!"

"I must make a fresh start," observed Niccolo to himself.
THE LAMENT

Nathan W. Harter

As an echo in the hollow
played a melancholy round,
I was straining by my window
to record the mellow sound.
Through the valley of the forest
in its shallow, shallow tone,
I could hear the lonesome calling
of a creature left alone.
Though it faded in the hollow
with a sorrowful career,
Still it bellowed with a rolling
in the silence of my ear.
Such a lulling piece of music!
Such a sullen sort of strain
That it filled my peaceful evening
with a powerful refrain.

As I wondered at the pathos
such a wailing would allow,
I was living in the nature
I forgot to love somehow.
They call me 'great'.

They say I'm a 'genius'.

My plays are 'masterworks'.

R.I.P.
Wm. Shakespeare
1564-1616

My work is 'timeless'.

I'm 'the greatest playwright in the English language'.

I wonder if Neil Simon has this kind of pressure.

R.I.P.
Wm. Shakespeare
1564-1616
"I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore
my name, a man winning his way up in that path
of life which was once mine. I see him winning it so well,
that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his.
I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him,
foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of
my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this
place--then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's
disfigurement, and I hear him tell the child my story, with
a tender and faltering voice.

It is a far, far better thing I do, than I have ever
done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I
have ever known."