any more with light, carefree step. The noise and confusion of the city—it got on his nerves. He wanted to scream. He desired quiet and rest: that was all. He wanted to go some place where he would forget. To get away; that was his wish—to get away from it all. To find peace somewhere. To rest. To forget. To grow strong again. It was weak to give way to his emotions—he must not let go. He must not let go. He must not let go!

People walking up and down the street, didn’t it bother them; this confusion? Didn’t they feel their heads would split with the noise? How could they walk along so calmly, chatting, laughing so unconcernedly? Didn’t they know that life is tragic, solemn, cruel? Didn’t they feel its pressure? But they hadn’t had their hand on the controller that night. No horrid sound of groaning was in their ears. No vision of mangled flesh haunted them. He must not let go. He must not let go. He must be calm. He must not think about it any more. He would think about the sunlight on the budding trees. How pretty it was. Golden... Golden... The budding trees. The maple tree in front was not in bud. It would never bud again. It would never throw shadows over the little gray house; never shut the glaring summer sun from it. She would never run in the sunshine again... But he must not think of that. He must not brood. He must have pleasant thoughts. It didn’t do any good to worry. It only made it worse. The bells in the Christ church were ringing—how sweetly! He paused to listen. Was there any evil in the world, any sorrow? They seemed to sing out no—no—no! Was the world then, happy, and he simply unhappy within himself?

He walked on slowly. He must get somewhere quiet and peaceful. The park. He would go to the park. Perhaps there under the shady trees, along the quiet paths... oh, how lovely here! The city seemed miles away. He must breathe deeply. He must be calm. He must forget. How clear the water was in the lagoon. How white the swans and graceful. He walked to the edge and watched them. They moved slowly about in the cool, blue water like stately sail boats propelled by gentle winds. They made a beautiful design with the cup-shaped, deep red water lilies. Blood red, they were. Blood! Blood! The little rocker—it had swans for handles...

**Vacations**

By

**Barbara Oakes**

Willis Dean stood glaring down at the dirty, rain-streaked roofs below his window. An early April sun had just set, and the city was settling down into its cold, gloominess. Everyone else had left the office and gone home to waiting dinners and to cozy, curtained living-rooms, and to pipes and papers that could be strewn about, and to wives that were interested, but not solicitous. And there was Jerry Pock, lucky devil, just leaving for a month’s vacation. There must he quite an advantage in being a bachelor, and in being able to leave on your own quiet vacation by yourself.

To be able to do anything just by yourself would be a blessing. He thought back to the conversation at breakfast that morning. “Willis, a slice of toast and a cup of coffee really aren’t enough breakfast for a hardworking man.”

“I’ve existed on that for a good many years, my dear.”

“Well, I’m sure I don’t see how you can. I do wish you would come home for lunch, too. Drug stores never offer you a balanced meal. And they aren’t clean. I could fix you up a lovely little lunch every noon. And perhaps you could lie down afterwards, to break the strain of the day.”
"But I really don't have time, Anna."

"I feel that you could make time, if you wanted to."

And it was that way every morning. Only yesterday it had been about overshoes, and the morning before it was long underwear. He pulled his coat on slowly, and pushed into his overshoes, and started walking downstairs. He never began this first lap of his homeward journey without wondering what Anna would say if she knew that he chose this manner of descent instead of conserving his energy in the elevator. "Like to walk? But you shouldn't!"

Dean honked his way disconsolately through the traffic. The house would be hot when he got home; it always was, with every window locked solid and tight against any possible draught. Everything would be spic and span and stuffy, just as it had been every night for nearly twenty-five years, and he would be supposed to leave them that way. Twenty-five years with the same family! With Anna getting cross and scolding, and with Ruth becoming more and more strangely silent and moody. Suddenly it occurred to him: he'd take a vacation—away from the family, all alone, like Jerry Pock. He'd go south somewhere for a month and get away from this nagging home atmosphere and this miserable northern weather. He wouldn't put it off, either. He'd tell them tonight, and leave next week. Why hadn't he thought of it before? It was just the thing to do! As he turned into the driveway it began to rain, and he caught sight of his wife hurrying up the front walk.

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Mrs. Dean turned the key nervously, and stepped quickly into the dark hall. Here she was—late again. And now supper would be late, and Willis would be crosser than ever. She went into the kitchen, slipped a white frock over her good dress, and began peeling potatoes over the sink. Really, Willis was getting harder to live with every day. This morning at breakfast he had nearly taken her head off at everything she said. Goodness knows, she didn't want him home under foot every noon for lunch, but it would be better for him, because he always picked out all the starches on a restaurant menu, and he was getting fat. He really was quite fat, but of course it would hurt him awfully if she told him that.

She hurried into the living room to turn on the lights and to be sure that the oil burner thermostat was turned high enough. What could Willis be doing all this time out in the garage? He'd catch his death of cold in the damp air; he always did, but experience never seemed to teach him anything. Oh, she was so tired of telling him what to do and of looking after him. How she would love to get away some place, maybe to the ocean, where things were big and wide and fresh, where you could forget about people, and fill your mind with peace and beauty. How long had it been since she'd seen the ocean? Not since their first wedding anniversary, when Willis had taken her back down to North Carolina to see her mother. Her mother was gone now, but how she would love to go back. All right—she'd go back! By herself. And she'd stay until she began to miss them here, and then she could come home. Willis and Ruth would have to shift for themselves while she was gone. It would be good for them, especially Ruth.

Ruth was getting to be such a problem—sulking and pouting around the house. It had been a mistake for them to send her East to school; she wasn't good for a thing now here at home, and she was always talking about her friends at Sarah Lawrence. She used to be content with her friends here. What was the matter with them now? Oh, she couldn't understand Ruth at all, but of course she really didn't see much of her. She never got
up for breakfast, and most of the day she was up in her room writing letters and reading. Mrs. Dean began to set the table, and she remembered how they had started out taking turns in getting the meals and taking care of the house, but now—. There was Willis at last. And there was Ruth’s step in the corridor upstairs.

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Ruth Dean sat down slowly on the window seat at the end of the corridor, and stared out defiantly at the misty night. She had made up her mind definitely: she was going away. Another month in this house and she’d go crazy. Half the time her mother and father didn’t seem to know that she was around, and when they did notice her they began to nag and criticize her. She was going to take the car and go away to the mountains, where she could be alone without feeling lonely. It was so hellishly lonesome here, and none of her old friends seemed interested in her any more. They’d all been together while she was away at school, and now it wasn’t easy to get back into the crowd. Oh, if they’d only let her get a job! Why did they make her sit at home like this with nothing to do? She just wasn’t one of those born housekeepers, and her mother never let her do a thing by herself, anyway. Girls all had jobs nowadays, and it gave them something to do, and it made them new friends. But she—she was going away. Not to meet new people, but to be really alone for once, so that she could get her life straightened out in her own mind, and then come back and do the things that would make her happy.

A “home girl”—that’s what everyone thought she was. But heaven knew she wasn’t! This sticking around home, and the family, especially, was more than she could stand. Well, she’d never get the car if she told them that. But anyone could see that she did need a change. She’d go downstairs now, and break the news after dinner.

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Mr. Dean pushed back his chair, and wadded his napkin up beside his plate.

“Please fold it, Willis. It makes it so much easier for me.”

“What? Oh, all right . . . Bad night out, isn’t it?”

“You, very cold and uncomfortable. You’re not going out tonight, are you, Ruth?”

“No, Mother, of course not. Do I ever?”

Mr. Dean cleared his throat. “Anna, I’ve been thinking. I—I think I’ll take the car and go away for a little while. Take a trip south for the rest of the bad weather.”

“You—leaving town now? By yourself?”

“Yes. Things are slack at the office, and I think—well, a change might do me good. You—you don’t mind, do you?”

“Mind?” His wife stood up suddenly. “Of course I shan’t mind. I’m going away myself next week. But I simply can’t imagine your getting along by yourself away from home. Where are you going?”

“Why, just South, I guess. Where—where are you going?”

“To the ocean. Carolina, probably. You know it’s been a long time—”

“What about Ruth, Anna?”

Ruth smiled sarcastically. “Oh, don’t bother! I’m leaving, too, or at least. I was. But I’d rather counted on having the car. I suppose there are trains that go to the mountains, though.”

“The mountains!” Mrs. Dean sat down suddenly. “Do you think we’re going to let our daughter start off by herself on a trip like that? Why do you want to go?”

“Well, you don’t want me to stay here alone while you’re gone, do you?”

“You could go over to Helen’s.”

“Oh, no! I want to get out of this town. I’m so sick of it!”

“Yes, I think you are . . . Ruth, why
don't you and your father go together in the car? You could go down into the Smokey Mountains in North Carolina.

"Carolina? Isn't that where you want to go, Anna?"

"Well, yes, but I was planning to go by train—"

"Mother, why don't you go with Father, and let me go by myself? I'm certainly old enough."

Mrs. Dean stared absently at Ruth, and slowly began to fold her napkin. "I suppose, Willis, that we could all three go together. It wasn't exactly what I had in mind, but it seems like the only sensible thing to do."

"No, I wasn't thinking of that, either, Anna. But of course it would give us a vacation. We'd get out of town—at least."

"Yes," said Ruth slowly. "We'd better all go together, we couldn't feel right about it any other way."

**Angles**

By Martha Rose Scott

Russ was sprawled at his ease—that is, as much ease as he could obtain in a metal chair (with slippery silver arms) which oscillated easily back and forth in the manner of a chicken picking up grains. He had thrown one arm out and his fingers were wrapped around the neck of a glazed silver bird which was reflected in all of its disproportion in the glass top of a triangular-shaped end table. There also, were mirrored two books with bright red covers contrasting with the blue cushions in the chairs. Russ was trying to read a mystery story by the light of a lamp which threw its gleam up to the ceiling instead of onto the pages. It was more effective that way, as if the sun which threw its rays down on the earth was not an excellent example of efficient illumination. There was a bowl of brittle glass flowers on another table which Russ toppled off as he stretched his legs toward the shining electric wires of the gas log. Above the mantle was a pale still-life picture of several pink apples tumbled on a yellow table cover. Russ reached for a cigarette, realizing suddenly that they had been put back in the silver case which required pushing a button before the mechanism would roll out the desired article. Russ got up to manipulate it, and walked toward the great glass window which stretched the length of the room. The electric eyes of other homes were glaring into his. One of the neighbors had just lowered their Venetian blinds. Very well—he gave the cord a jerk and obtained privacy—the privacy of what?—association with these awkward angular cabinets and oscillating rockers? The green statue of an indefinite sort of figure streaming out towards something made a shadow on the cream-colored blind. Russ’s thought reached out to the home of his childhood. There was the deep warmth of his father’s armchair and a footstool which he remembered immediately. He could see his father’s spectacled eyes appearing over the top of an old volume of law cases which he was studying, his feet comfortably stretched toward the blue and orange tongues of fire springing from an old pine log. He himself had often lain in front of the fireplace for hours imagining castle spires in the yellow flames and great red caves in the underlog. There were brown leather books tossed open on the long library table. A vase of vivid bittersweet which he had cut away from the tough vine himself, stood on the bookcase along with a group of shells from the Gulf of Mexico. Rather a jumble, he recalled. Opposite the fireplace was the picture of his grandfather, a large canvas from which the sturdy old minister frowned piously on the family.

He was disturbed in his reverie.