



L A B Y R I N T H

LABYRINTH

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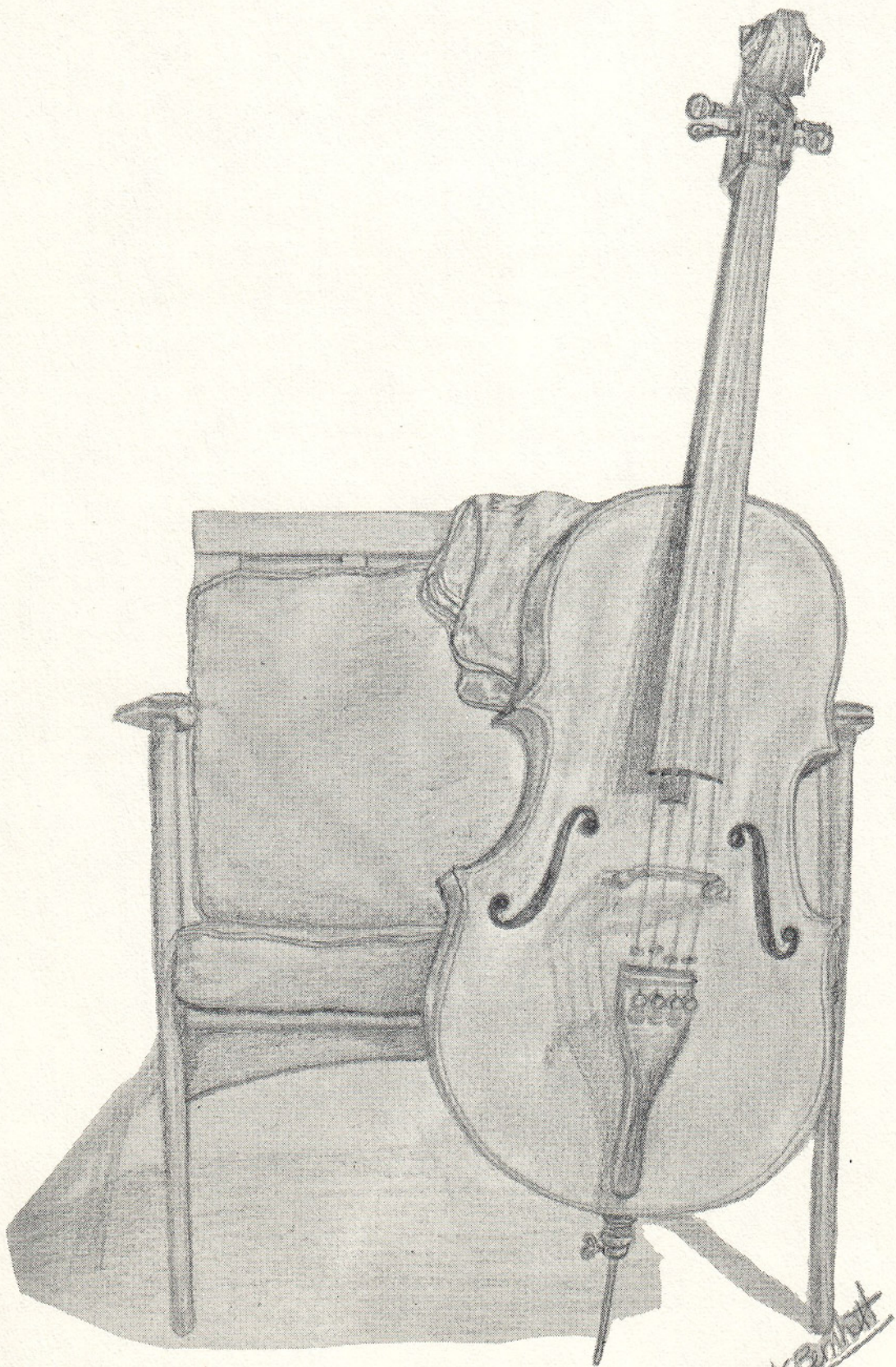


George Jennison

He leaned out the window of his dingy
little apartment, the city sprawled
out before him in its splendor
and its squalor.

A warm breeze caressed the city,
lifting away the grey, stale cold,
and winter lost its stifling grasp.
Someone put a geranium in a tobacco
can on a window sill, and it was
spring.

Sandy Beck



Cher Monsieur-

Your keen sense of wit would take
ironic delight in my confession.

Did anyone ever wish to be you?
How you would laugh!

The mockery you made of yourself
The prowess never hesitatingly displayed
The tongue--greatest weapon of all
And the letters that won for you
Your soul's only life

Given away

Oh noble man!

The pure deep beautiful sentiments
Sincere in times of flattery
Impossibly unoriginal

--When was love new?

But phrased so

As to make dew glisten

On the morning leaves as if heretofore unknown
And unadmired.

Not able to express myself so
Unable to reach the heights to
Which your soul so strained
Too mean for that integrity
Too shallow for that breadth of wit
De Bergerac

Wendy Hilton

HUMAN FLIGHT

Wax on water, wood on wax,
friction holds you no longer to
earth.

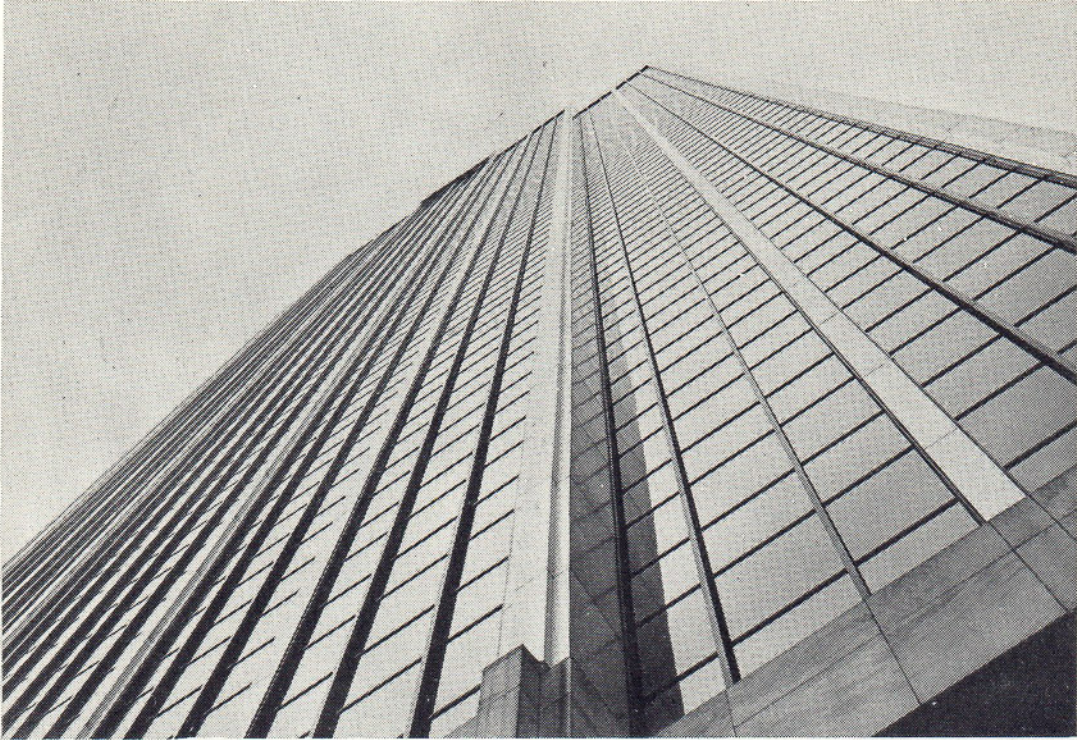
Skimming fast faster fastest down
the slope hair loose behind you,
air hitting chilling biting, scarf
tugged and pulled and streaming,
eyes moist damp tearful,
cheerful, are your thoughts as
you pass them rushing downward
ever going never wishing, arrest
upon your flight.

Pines blur as you pass them,
thoughts roar as you amass them,
the chairs, ascending, are above.
Soon upon them you will be,
then swiftly down the crystal sea,
you will fly, once again, in a dance.

But now the static of the base,
gleaming red light in your face
reminds you of the quickly setting
sun.

Tomorrow you'll return,
yet another lesson learn from
the furor of the volitant traverse.

Joe Bonfiglio



Gordon Green

LINE

Line
My life is like a line,
Disappearing,
Still rigid and straight,
Into the darkness.
There is no room
For deviation, bending, turning, or such curvation:
Destiny awaits;
One has only to follow.
How resigned--
Deterministic, you may say.
But one line may meet another,
And if this is fate,
Destiny, my friend, will have to wait.

Donald Weber



Dan Friedheim

SPRING

trees
bent and broken by winter's blows
bow low over still
water
reflecting perfect images
more clear than life
finite depths more fathomless than the
sky
high and gray and empty like the
bridge
of fibers made
leaves
dead brown and soaked
decay slowly into nothingness
crushed together they sink
to form the foundation of life
spring
rots in cold rain
stillborn

Susan Eaton

January 15, 1974

Time exists to a pebble,
ages passing infinitely.
But human life thinks
of time in spans,
only to find it
minutes
and
inches.

Laurie Beyer

MRS. CHIC

The cold air brushed against her face as she entered the ice cream parlor. Mrs. Chic had always loved the way the air felt; it gave her a pleasure that just couldn't be described. The ice cream parlor looked the same as it always had. The red and white tablecloths, the little bells on the door, the fresh flowers on the counters everyday, but especially the white wicker tables; everything had special meaning. Mrs. Chic thought that stepping into the parlor was the best part of coming; stepping in everything hit you at once; what a thrill!

She lightly made her way to her accustomed seat. Years ago she sat by the windows; Mrs. Chic always liked to know what went on, but now she preferred to sit in the back. She still knew what went on.

"Good day, Mrs. Chic," Mr. Armour greeted her as he set down a small menu. Mrs. Chic knew what was on the menu; she had known it all for years. Mr. Armour always gave her a menu; however, that was what she liked. The menu was almost as enjoyable to her as the air. The writing in it was full of swirls and curls, so graceful. She enjoyed fantasizing that all of the curls were her friends and came to life when she peeked in at them. She could see them swaying back and forth, now and then making a turn or two. Mrs. Chic didn't read the menu; she looked at it only to see the letters dance. She ordered a vanilla sundae with extra strawberries; she always ordered it. When Mr. Armour came with her order, he asked for her menu. "I'd like to keep it here, if you don't mind. I may want to try something else," she replied. The letters in her menu were her only company now. Her husband used to be her company, but he had been dead for over thirty years now, although he could not be more vivid in her memory.

It was her husband, John, who had first introduced her to this parlor. Anything he loved, she loved; so immediately she fell in love with the

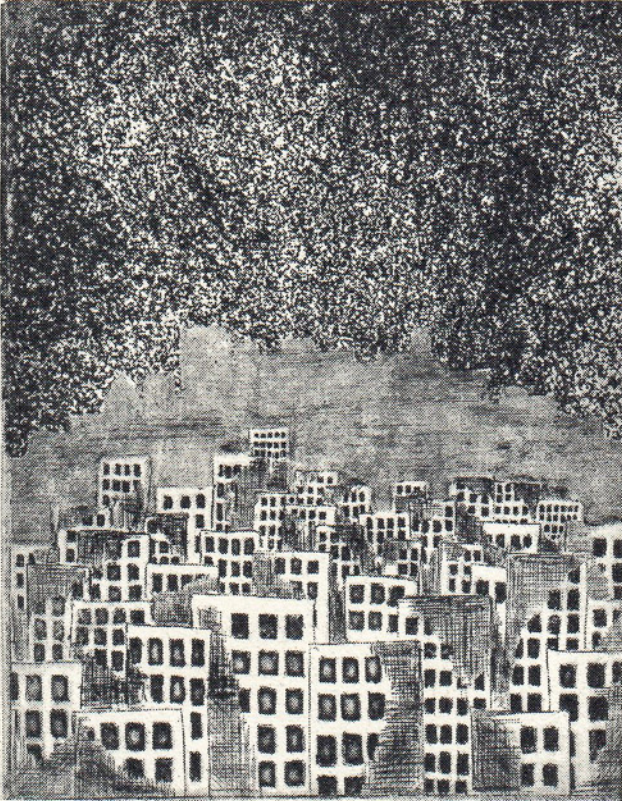
charming little parlor. Almost their entire courtship had taken place in the little parlor. Mr. Armour knew that she was in love with John even before she did. Strolling along in the park on Sundays, they always seemed to wind up at the ice cream parlor. If it wasn't too crowded, they would manage to get a seat by the window. John had a knack for making everything seem funny. "And do you see that little man there, next to the dapple gray horse?" he would ask. "He wears that dark gray hat so he won't clash with the spots on his horse!" John was always so funny. She couldn't help but smile now, even a little giggle escaped from her. "Is everything satisfactory, Mrs. Chic?" Mr. Armour inquired. "Yes, just fine, thank you," was her reply.

It was strange how everything except for herself seemed to have changed. Was it possible that John alone was preserving her youth? When she looked around the counter, she saw herself sitting amidst red and white tablecloths, white wicker chairs, and fresh flowers. She was certain that there was an even greater twinkle in her eye than there used to be. Looking outside the window, she again saw the little "dapple man," as they had nicknamed him, but even he seemed to have changed. Mrs. Chic didn't need to worry; as long as she had John and the ice cream parlor, nothing else would change.

The sundae certainly was delicious; every time it seemed to taste better; what a shame that it went so fast. These Sunday afternoons with John also passed quickly, but they would be back--next Sunday and the Sunday after that.

Closing the menu, she said goodbye to her friends. She glanced around the parlor so she would be able to remember exactly what it looked like in her dreams. Mrs. Chic put her money on the table and slowly made her way to the door. As she opened the door, the bells rang softly; as she stepped out, the hot air of the world surrounded her.

Debbie Steiner



Tony Costagiola

FULL CIRCLE

the canyon walls form parallels
wind whistles grating cries
and looking down the corridor
one's struck by its great size
the ground below is hard worn down
by some persistent flow
brave grasses break the surface but
most die before they grow
a few sounds interrupt the wind
a rustle there a crunch
small rodents seek dry sustenance
a decimated lunch
below the hard ground water creeps
it seeps out here and there
but it dries up quickly subdued
by arid heated air
man once was here this all was his
and yet he doesn't come
the wind sings soft alone and mourns
new york after The Bomb

Christy Rodgers



Kathi Coleman

DAY OF DARKNESS

They say that Black is
The color of Calamity.
Mark of Mourning.
Symbol of Satan.

They speak only of angels,
Winged and white.
The color boasted by virgin brides
And tiny lies.
Not big Black ones
Like those they tell.

They say that the stormy skies turn Black
And the swirling seas turn Black
When men's lives are swept away.

They say.
They do not think.
They think.
They do not know.
Or they know,
But will never tell
Of that wonderful day of darkness.

Dark clouds mourn for tired bodies
At the dawning of the day.
They release their sorrow to the earth below,
Refreshing us.

Darkness is delicious at noonday:
Fresh pork on pumpernickel,
Liverwurst on whole wheat,
Coffee beans and their aroma,
Powerful, but not overpowering.

Sweet sable molasses, slowly dripping in Winter
With spicy cinnamon and cloves combine
For nut-brown gingerbread.

O give me that day of darkness
And also the night.

The silhouettes of sooty chimney stacks
Spread against the sky,
Black on black, barely to be seen.
The little black cat crosses my path
In the darkness, but causes no harm.

The dancing shadows on nightclub walls.
The loquacity and laughter of darker brothers.
Thick, rich, and mellow. Unmistakable.
The black 'n' bluesy sound of sharps 'n' flats
Played on black piano keys.
The smooth mahogany that
Encloses the musical keys.

Black coal glows red in a fiery flame
In the furnaces of dimly lit homes at midnight.
Dark eyes also burn, surrounded by dark skin.
The fever ends in silent sleep
As does the day of darkness.

They say that Black is
The color of mournful,
Morbid Death.
So let it be.

Some may lament,
But the dead do not mourn for themselves.
They dream of the death that
Lives in the Lilacs of Whitman.
Death, his dark mother who
Carried him through blissful seas
Upon joyful shores. O glorious ceremony,
Ending all those days of darkness.

They say that Black is. . .

They say.
They do not think.
They think.
They do not know.
Or they know,
But will never tell

Of that wonderful day of darkness.
O give me that day of darkness.

Lisa Randolph



Kathy Quaife

I seem to be living in a vague, unreal uncertainty. Impressions, strange thoughts, fragments float and drift and I find myself among them. Is that me? I don't understand. The porter of the next building crosses the street, it is dark now, not as hot. Is it the heat he is escaping, or the oppression of a life that perhaps culminates in summer heat? So, driven by forces he could never explain, he leans, and his gaze drifts across the bay. Capri, the magic island, lies there, its lights seen in a not-too-clear darkness. The bay, moonstruck, glimmers with a false promise of coolness, and the quiet is too much. No boat passes to disturb the moon-splashed waters, no car passes to disturb the quiet of the lamplit streets.

And the people in the houses; what of them? Those who have not gone away, to Ischia, Sorrento or north, what do they do? Do they feel within themselves those feelings which only the summertime produces; or do they stand at windows, looking out across the bay, not able to sleep, and not knowing why? Coming in from a balcony one wipes the sand, not noticed until felt, off the face. Is it the scirocco that can have this effect on the people? Or the oppressive gloom, the blanket laid over the city that sends people away, or makes them retreat into the half-closed dank houses by day.

Only at night does the city seem more free. The air seems fresher, cleaner, cooler; and one is inspired to resolves, and hopes that, once morning comes, wither away with heat, fading away without an echo into the empty, mocking stillness. At night the mind is cleared--to look forward or back, to times not yet known; the gift is granted to all who would look.

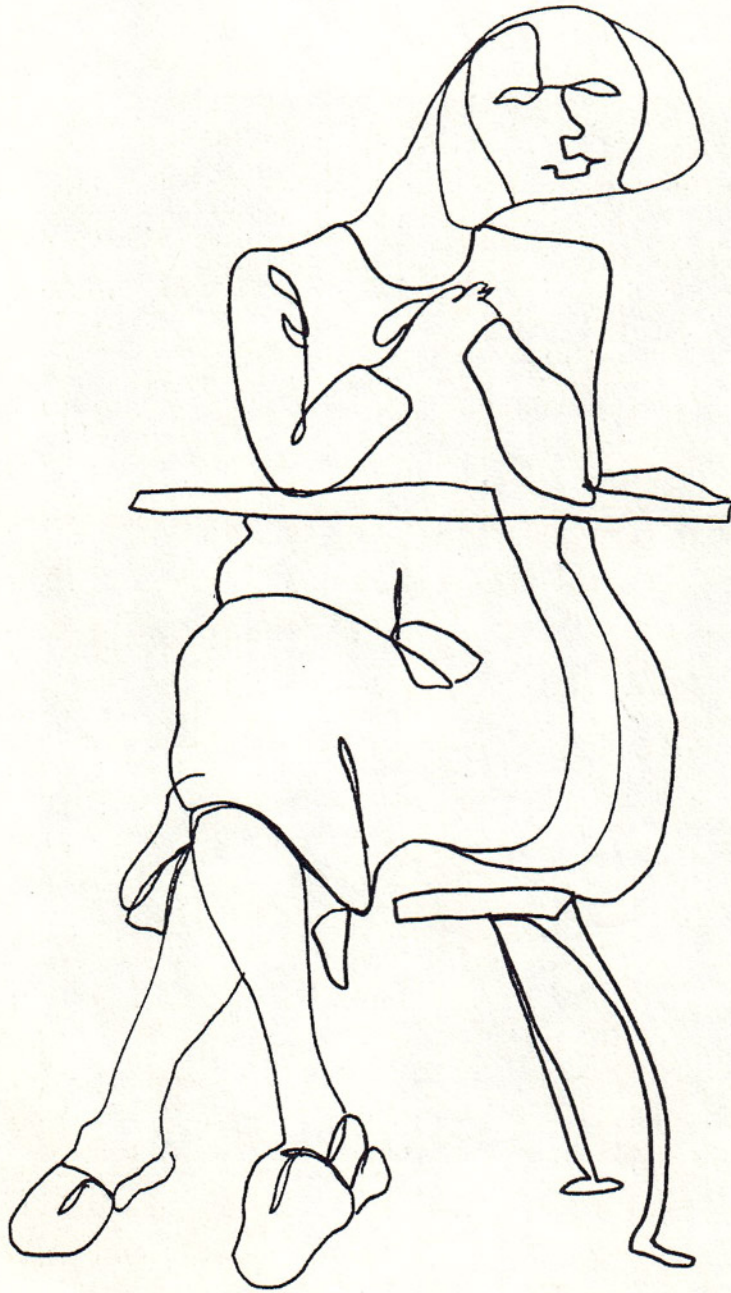
Once light is come, the sight is blocked and the days seem a hopeless task, a long, long chore just to be lived.

Visions; beggar children squatting on the sidewalk, an old sightless man sits, cup in hand, as the well-dressed, the rich, the tourists pass and flow, ebbing like the tide. It is their shifting, ever-changing flow of color and light passing over and through the starkness, the harsh reality that are the poor of the street. And yet the chord they strike is far too discordant, the reality is there, yet overplayed, too much emphasized; there is no harmony among the people anywhere!

Only night, night the torment, dark the blessed, covers and hides, liberates. The sight is mercifully blurred, and there is some peace. Yet there are still those, driven to the outside who surface, restless and uneasy, then turn unseeing still into the restless turmoil, the sea of people. And the bay, still calm, offers its deceiving self for those who take the easy offering, the shallow peace it seems to give. And having turned, they sink into the shadows, the deeps, and are forever lost. Such is the heavy languor of the Neapolitan summertime.

Wendy Hilton





Debbie Meakin



Gordon Green

EDDIES

A free stream swirls in multiple curls.
Where an eddy collects the fallen leaves
A misguided spiral a blanket weaves.

Here is a lure, forever a cure;
Stop this wandering in the careless stream,
And together leaves shall rule supreme.

The gathered debris is far from free;
New layers are deposited, accretion occurs,
And each new arrival an old one inters.

Becoming stuck, and pressed into muck,
Each fallen leaf is inexorably crushed,
Its sovereign rustling forever hushed.

From decaying things a new life springs,
Loud in its greenness amongst the departed:
Their lost vitality is to the sprout imparted.

A new weight now governs the victims' fate:
The sapling presses the spiritless into a single mass,
Using pressure which none before could surpass.

Leaves fall from the tree, but new ones decree
That they continue to tower above the ground,
Now causing oppression most profound.

Upon the hill, the sky lies still:
This is the source
Of the bubbling brook's force.

Will this flood release the mud?
Though none has yet, the lifeless hear
A rushing torrent, clean and clear.

The towering tree falls when the water calls,
Unsteady mud assisting its collapse.
Eddies form amidst the scraps.

Donald Weber

IN THE ASYLUM

Lisa Randolph

Oh, do come in, you're wondering why I'm here,
In such a place that those of your kind fear.
They've told you, haven't they, my case
of woe,

Of my insanity. I'm mad, you know.
Come see these lovely flowers by the door.
My friends sent them; they never did before.
But that's beside the point, so please
sit down,

And then we will talk business. Do you frown
At my thin dress? Then do not peer
through it.

Relax now, certainly you've seen, to wit,
Sad cases such as mine, although your years
In service with the Bar are few, I hear.
You see the fancy curtains that they just
Put up for me. I told them that beige rust
Is my favorite color, and this soon
They're downstairs making plans to paint
my room.

You're young for your profession.
Twenty-two?

A tender age. Experienced, that's true.
But with so much to learn, just like
the dear,

So young, for whose protection I stay here.
Oh, I suppose I should tell you. He sought
His vengeance on some wretched witch
who thought

To call herself his wife. She never shared
His bed, and found me in it. Then he dared
Take aim; and when she failed to rise,
he left

The weapon in my hand, and me, bereft.

Oh, I would never lie, not e'en for him.
This story I've told many times for them.
But they inform me of my madness so
That I almost believe them. I suppose
That I am mad in efforts to preserve
His life. Such privilege, he does
not deserve.

But no regrets: we learned much from
each other,

And I'll be happy here. 'Tis no bother.
Before it can begin, the trial will die.
They'll cry insanity, and so will I.

And then return to this dear, lovely place.
So I shan't be needing you now. Why waste
Your time defending me? Don't leave so soon,
I've little company. Today at noon
They served Eggs Benedict. Imagine what
They're bringing me for dinner. A choice cut
Of beef you say? Whate'er it is, I will
Be glad to share it with you. But sit still,
That will be hours yet, or whene'er I
Do choose to call them. And they give me my
Privacy here. Look, they have given me
A big canopy bed and silk sheets--see?
Come sit on it and see the gorgeous view.
I meant outside, but do as pleases you.
See maple saplings swaying in the clear?
They're young, yet strong and--oh!
So are you, dear. . . .



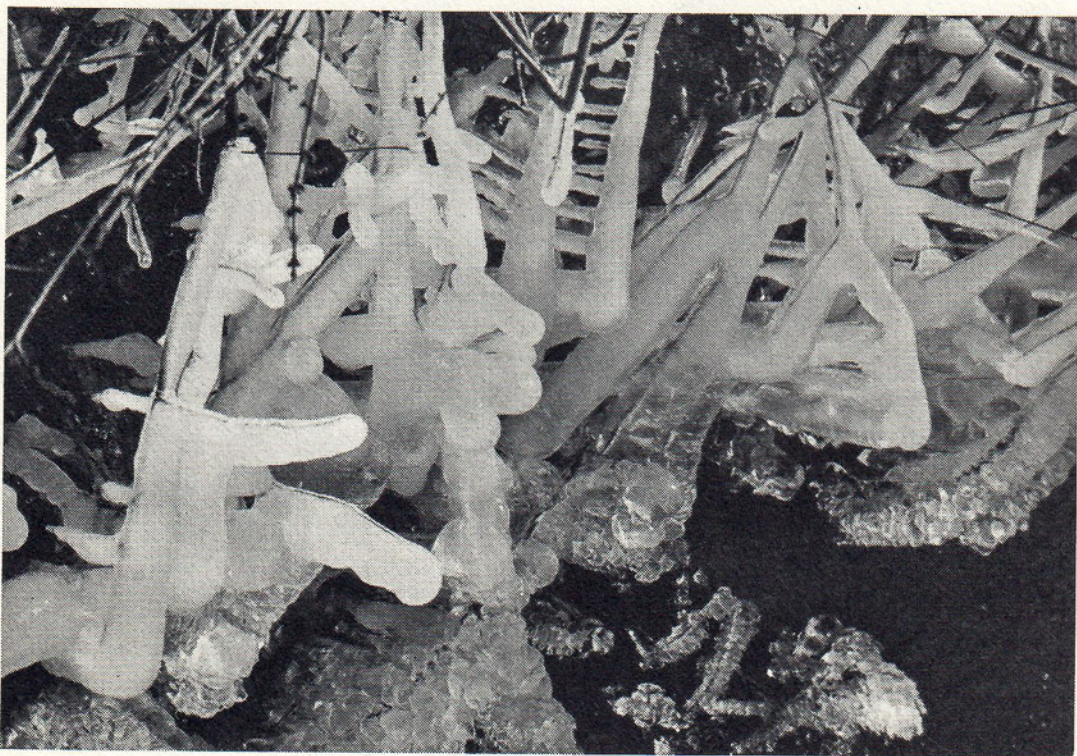
Photo by Dan Friedheim

The snow inspires no emotion in me.
Separate pieces blending to form one
Cold, white unit--this must be the
Greatest conformity of all!
It covers and hides, unifies
And for a short time the world
Is sweetly white, lovingly hidden.

Even this can not hide the inherent
Ugliness we have made of Nature.
The earth disengages itself
And rears up--the snow itself
Turns gray--the evil can not
Long stay hidden.

Take no comfort in the snow
For it only deceives--that
Deception doubly disappointing.

Wendy Hilton



TOSS YOUR HAT ON THE PIANO MADONNA

A piano madonna stands in a roadside cafe
Smiling benignly at all who enter.
Her disciples of the four-lane highway
Are the truck drivers and the salesmen who
 spread the news of her grace
To those who have not yet glimpsed her
 flashing neon star
Shining above in the open night.

Her existence is a shrine of rest where
 offerings
Of a rabbit's foot or an occasional St.
 Christopher's medal
Are left in her honor.

Her smile may be cracked; her faded, wooden
 robes mottled,
But her countenance remains the same.
And many a weary traveler may
Contemplate on the piano madonna when
The Schlitz can is empty,
And the hamburger is cold.

Susan Downs



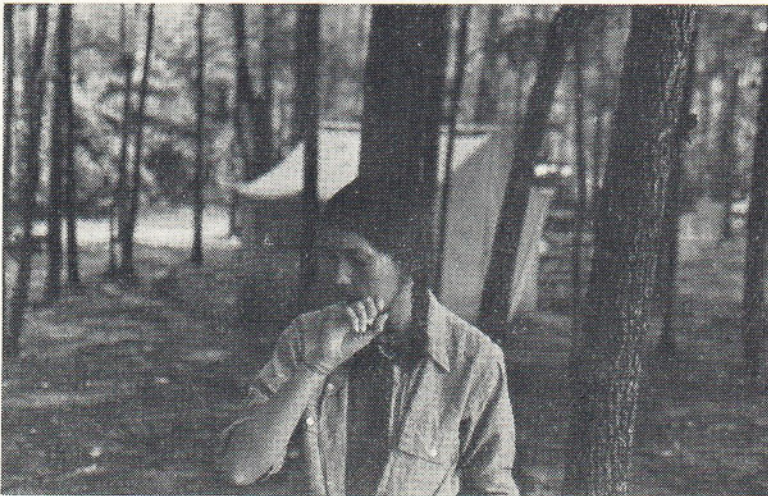
As I was a-travelin' the flatlands on horseback,
I wondered what change the horizon would bring.
I watched the sun lowing, the horizon a-glowin'
With red-yellow fire burning slowly away.

I watched and I listened, as the earth's round curve
Glistened
But all I could hear was what prairie winds say
They whistled how lonely were me and my pony,
And oh, how I longed for the end of the day.

We rode in the night, with the stars shining bright
As if promising their friendship and lighting
Our way;
And as I searched here in the dark night so clear,
I discovered the horizon was not far away.

Then I soothed my pony, and knew that our lonely
Travel would be over with the dawning of day.

Kathy Roberts





Photos by George Jennison



Dan Friedheim

IT'S ALL HELD UP BY ME

One day the world fell on my shoulders
And there I had to stand
With all that weight upon me
I was like a superman

'Twas so much weight I could not move
Nor stop or stoop or bend
Had not the world fell on my shoulders
It would have come to an end

I now had to light the streets
And feed the lads with food
And on top of that my shoulders hurt
I was in a bad mood

I had to govern all the people
And make up all the laws
And bring back make-believe
Mother Goose and Santa Claus

I had to clean every house
And transport the people around
I had to be a mother
The preacher and the clown

All these things I had to do
And still uphold this sphere
I had to laugh I had to cry
I had to shed a tear

But then one day it slipped and fell
And the world came tumbling down.
I stood there with my arms folded
On my face a pitiful frown

And when it fell I picked it up
And the world just kept on going
And I said to myself what the heck
If something's wrong I'm all knowing

The world's still going just look around
And tell me what you see
I hope you like what you're looking at
'Cause it's all held up by me.

G. Stanley Taylor



Dan Friedheim

My love is reborn to thee on a windy night
Fresh with the newness of coming fall.
And yet this overwhelming distance
Has none but all meaning
For if it is a test--I can endure only Time.

I wish to share this oneness I feel
With the life I have touched.
As I cannot, I feel the pain of a child
To whom none listen.
I look inward.
Singular beams of me come trickling outwards.
Whenever I cannot catch them.
So swiftly do they fly.
And so I live my time
Secretly waiting for some unseen unknown sign.
My crime being only ignorance of your preciousness to me.
It is a new experience, you know, being reborn.
Quite so.

Barbara Hunter

It's 11:30 p.m. The night nurse has just left the room of the catatonic ward. The door clicks quietly behind her, but the sound can still be heard across the room.

A miracle shall occur tonight for the twenty comatose patients.

There is a cuckoo-clock at one end of a hall. The little plastic bird has just cuckooed 11:45, three high-pitched chirps which slice through the cool air. The silence is thick enough to be cut by such a knife. It lowers the temperature of the room.

It is midnight. Like a flash, the cuckoo is bursting through its little door.

Cuckoo.

There is a yawn.

Cuckoo.

Several yawns. One of the sleeping patients moves his leg, slowly.

Cuckoo. Cuckoo.

Two of them are sitting up in their beds. Their eyes are open, their faces alive.

Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Cuckoo.

Several of them are standing up. By now they are all awake, stretching their arms and yawning.

Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Cuckoo.

And the room is bathed in light. One of the catatonics has touched the light switch.

The people are awake, alive. Some of them do somersaults and gymnastics. An arm-wrestling championship fight

is formed, as well as a free-for-all in one room.

And they talk.

They talk of dust and diamonds, of pity and plenty,
of sickness and salvation.

One of them cajoles the cuckoo-bird to come down
from its perch and sing for them.

All across the catatonic ward, people are laughing,
singing, and talking. They must enjoy themselves; life comes
so rarely to them.

The cuckoo-bird flies back to its perch. It is 1:45.
Three high-pitched chirps.

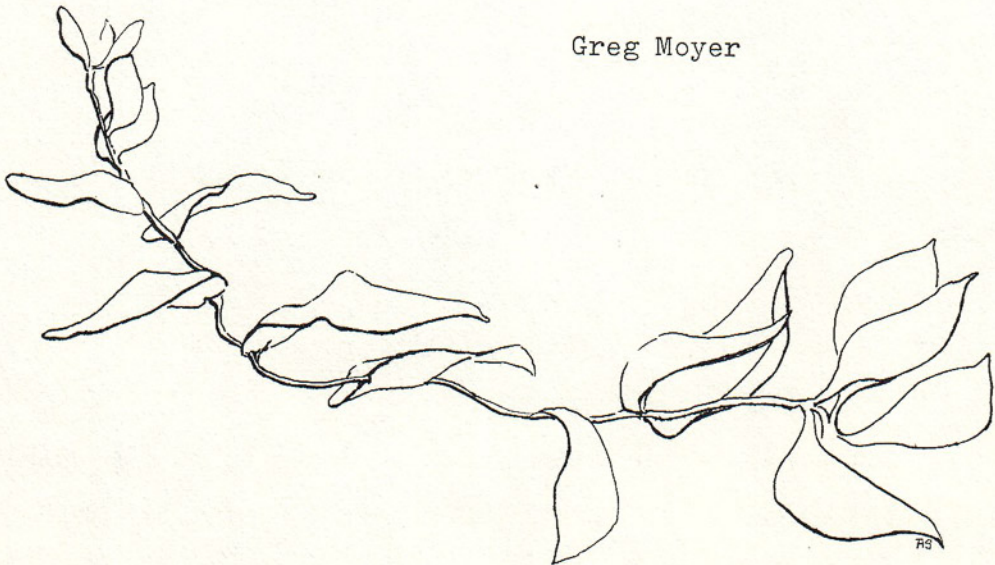
Three high-pitched chirps race through the rooms,
obliterating the laughter.

The people return to their own rooms and curl up in
their beds.

One low-pitching chirp.

And the catatonic ward is silent.

Greg Moyer







Aaron went home to the roots of the land. It was good to go home. The land was good, even as the late afternoon drizzle lifted and the land was only mud.

Aaron stood in the yard of his uncle's farm. November winds mourned across the flatness of Iowa. Farm buildings crouched low with the landscape as though they dared not intrude upon so powerful an expanse of sky. Only solitary black trees challenged the grey paper horizon.

The storm door banged as Aaron's uncle Jeffry came from the house. He sat down on the cement steps and followed Aaron's gaze out across the mud fields. He glanced at the boy, perceived a listener, and so began to talk.

"Don't ya just love this good black earth? I always wanna sink my hands into it and feel it between my fingers."

Aaron nodded.

Time slowed down in the country. People slowed down and lived longer. The sun slant shadow of a tree angled by infinitely split degrees across the yard.

"Now, when your mamma was a little girl she used to come down here over summer holidays for a visit," Uncle Jeffry continued.

Aaron's eyes wandered up into the branches of an ancient tree. He saw his mother as a little girl laughing and swinging from a low branch, her wavy hair bouncing. Her baggy blue jeans had huge cuffs. Her saddle shoes and bobby socks looked silly. Nobody dressed like that anymore.

Aaron leaned against the side of the house. His uncle's voice dragged on as though it pulled behind it a creaking cart laden with memory. The words slowed down, almost stopped while navigating some rough spot in the road, and then pressed on.



"Yep. The land's bin good. Bin hard too, 'course. Walk out to the barn?"

Sunset's diluted orange glow grew muddy like the lane. Aaron walked quickly to match his uncle's long strides. Uncle Jeffry walked like a farmer. He didn't care about the mud on his boots and his arms swung loose in a seed-slinging motion. He was talking about the barn.

"This here's all brand new since May. That's when we had that fire. Memorial Day it was. What a sight. The place went right up. Lightning struck it. Lost over a thousand head. This new building's an improvement anyway.

"'Course it takes a good bit of work. Got young Tom here, praise God. Land, how that young man does work. Nobody round here 'cept for corporations handles as big a place as this. It's nice when the young folks comes back and makes a home here."

Aaron let the last remark pass. Life was in the city where everything moved and lit up.

Wooden pens surrounded the long low building. Black round-backed creatures snorted in the shadows. A new litter was safely installed in the close warmth of the barn. Mother sows lay grunting on their sides while their progeny pushed for an advantage over one another.

Music blared out from "the country music station for the center of the nation."

"The radio's to keep 'em content," Uncle Jeffry explained. "When folks comes busting in here it upsets the little ones so we keeps some noise going all the time."

The piglets trotted about on stiff, nervous legs.

"It's a lot to do for pigs, maybe, but these pigs are pretty important. We're building over again with these here. Yep. This land is good

but, son, it can be hard. These young ones though, they'll do fine. Yep. Bring your appetite along for supper?"

They headed back to the house. The trees stood up to the early evening sky. Tangled trunks supported the leafless limbs which dipped and bowed to every wind. Feathersoft, the fragile boughs seemed ready to blow away with the next rush of dandelion fluff. Yet, the reaching branches remained for their roots contained the strength to touch the sky and stand.

Ann Spahr



Photos by Gordon Green

SPRING

I have an empty, aching feeling that gnaws my stomach, and will not disappear, no matter how many cookies or cups of coffee I devour. With each passing minute, my hand, now throbbing and calloused, grows more reluctant. I must not think of sleep, or even lay my pencil down before I write the last period of the last sentence of the last paragraph of this English paper. Something seems to keep the dreariness out of my head. Perhaps it is the city: I can see the orange glow and hear its low murmur. The city never sleeps; like a humming electric clock, always ready to meet new things, always on stand-by.

I stretch back in the chair and my pencil rattles to the floor. If the city is like that, there's no reason a person can't stay alert, all systems active, at least for a few days. I must think about the report's conclusion: I've still got several hours before school tomorrow. It's only about three. The city instills in me a new sense of determination.

My skin feels warm, and this warmth spreads to my head. The concluding paragraphs seem to just appear as my numb hand feverishly scribbles the last sentence. What is a synonym for dormancy? Easy. Hibernation. Finished, finally--resolution, finis--staples seal the completed work.

The warm feeling comes over me again; my eyes, bright red, are the center of the heat. They open.

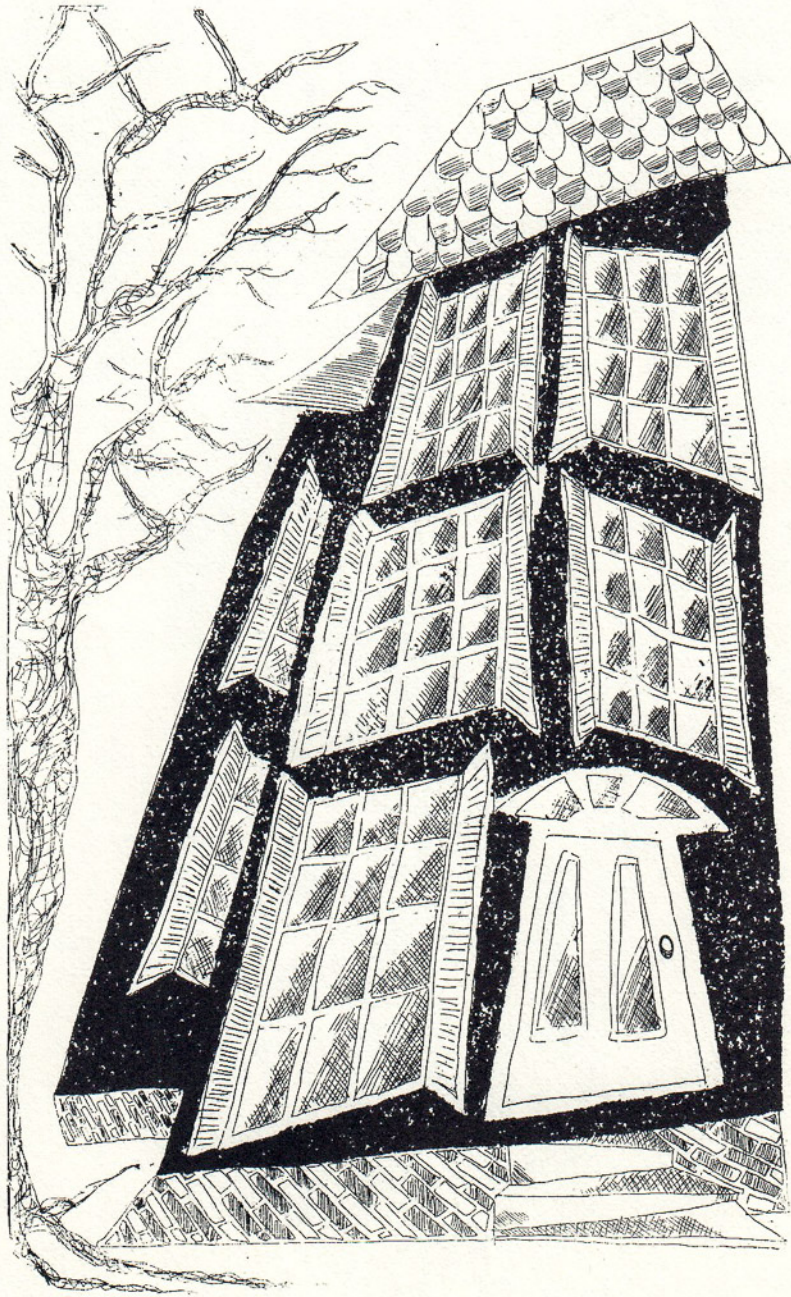
On the desk lie scattered papers, unresolved and unfinished. But I am looking at the morning sun. It shines through the delicate new pale green foliage and orange light drowns out the bright desk lamp's vulgar white light. The eyes are portals of the mind; the young rays enter and endow it with an effervescent new feeling. Drinking up as sparkling light as they can without becoming stung, they stop drinking: the sunlight is like ginger ale which so stingingly stimulates your tongue that the glass must leave the lips.

Turning in the chair, I survey the cluttered expanse: no resolution, no staples. A wave of guilt sloshes through the sea of my thoughts, but it quickly loses significance in this sparkling, shimmering sea of seething sweet ginger ale.

What guilt? It's spring, and I don't care about a thing.

Donald Weber





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