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Manuscripts of less than sixteen double-spaced typewritten pages will be given first consideration. All submissions should be accompanied by a separate sheet of paper containing the author's name, address, and telephone number; this information should not be put directly on the manuscript in the interest of maintaining anonymity of authorship. No manuscripts will be returned to authors. Authors whose material has been accepted will be notified by mail prior to publication.

CONTRIBUTORS

Allen Simmonds, 29. BA in History with honors, 1972, IUPUI. Indianapolis.

Janet Rash, 34. Junior, Philosophy and Psychology, IUPUI. Essay written for course in philosophy of culture. Greenfield.

Harry E. Goodyear, Jr., 34. Sophmore, English, IUPUI. Poem written for his son's 10th birthday.

Florence Miller. BA in English, 1973, IUPUI. Story written for creative writing course. Has published in Indiana newspapers and magazines.

Ellen Einterz, 19. Senior, Humanities, McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Essay written for course in the novel and short story, as a summer student at IUPUI. Indianapolis.

J. E. Means, 21. Sophmore, Education, IUPUI. Indianapolis.

Tom Robison, 26. BA in English, 1973 IUPUI. Graduate student, IUPUI. Recipient of 1973 Judson Q. Quinn Fellowship by Sigma Tau Delta, National English Honorary, for his short story "The Life in the Day of Staff Sergeant Quintaro" which appeared in the Spring 1973 issue of **Genesis**. Indianapolis.

Richard Eiler, 56. Freshman, English, IUPUI. Poem reflects his interest in Astrology. Indianapolis.

Mary Hays, 18. Freshman, Psychology, IUPUI. Poem written in freshman composition workshop: use of a specified group of words in one poem. Indianapolis.

Philip Deaver, 27. BA in English, St. Joseph's College, 1968. Graduate student in Community Education Internship Program at Ball State University, Muncie. Story written as independent work in creative writing course at IUPUI, as a summer student. Muncie.

Dinah Rockwell, 24. BA in English, 1973, IUPUI. Indianapolis.

David Favrot, 21. BS in Journalism, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, 1973. Essay written for course in the novel and short story, as a summer student at IUPUI. Albany, New York.

Marsha Mears, 19. Freshman, Dental Hygiene, IUPUI Poem written in freshman composition workshop: use of a specified group of words in one poem. Indianapolis.

Edmund Byrne is studying at the Indiana University Indianapolis Law School, teaching in the Philosophy Department, and living with a wife and two children, all of which contribute to his special interest: technology and human values. Indianapolis.

Michael Herschel, 20. Freshman, Journalism, IUPUI. Poem written and revised over a four year period. Indianapolis.

Fred Jones, 26. BA in English with honors, 1973, IUPUI. Freshman, Indiana University Indianapolis Law School. His story "One Boy's Way" was published in the Spring 1973 issue of **Genesis**. Indianapolis.

Jody Gollan, 28. BA in English, IUPUI, 1973. Indianapolis.

Silent Night

ALLEN SIMMONDS

Sam didn't like to work Christmas Eve; people should be with their families Christmas Eve. But he always did. Christmas Eve and almost every other holiday or holiday eve. He really couldn't understand his partner who said it wasn't that important to be open those few extra hours. So, either he worked or the store was closed. After all, a drug store, and, more importantly, a pharmacy, has an obligation, a duty, to the community it serves. Besides, there was plenty of traffic on Christmas Eve and a good opportunity to realize a profit from the more expensive items he was forced to stock but seldom sold.

Sam had worked, as he always did. Now it was getting late, late for Christmas Eve. From all the previous years he knew that most people were now wherever they were going to spend Christmas Eve. He knew he would probably only sell a few packs of cigarettes and, at best, a bottle of perfume or some other last minute gift to a forgetful husband. But just as he had been reluctant to work that evening, he was now reluctant to leave. He had closed the fountain much earlier and sent Grace home. As soon as the traffic slowed down, he had also allowed Helen to leave and Bob too after he had swept the store. Now he was alone in the store and, as always, that was a pleasant feeling. He had checked out the cash registers, carefully leaving twenty-five dollars worth of change and small bills in each so they would be ready for his partner when he opened at nine on December twenty-sixth. As he checked the money against the cash register tapes and entered the figures on the checkout sheet, he felt, as he did every year, justified in his decision and his sacrifice to stay open that evening. And, as he did every year, he pondered uncomprehendingly his partner's reluctance to cooperate on such occasions.

Now he could leave any time he wanted and still he hesitated. Finally he decided to wait until the supermarket, which took the larger portion of the low, plain building in which he spent so much time, closed at ten. It was only about a half an hour more. He stood behind the cash register at the pharmacy counter and thought about many things—the work involved in taking down and storing the Christmas decorations, which seasonal items to sell at a loss, which to store until next year and, of course, the one-cent sale which artificially filled the time between selling Christmas decorations and Easter baskets.

He was awakened from these thoughts by the door opening. "Hi Doc, I'm glad you're still open."

Being called "Doc," especially by perfect strangers like this one, was one of the constant irritations of his profession. It was a reminder of what he was not. He particularly resented the young pharmacists he saw everywhere who unsnapped their tunics like that T.V. doctor. He felt this only compounded the whole problem and was sloppy besides. But, as always, he ignored it and asked with a certain professional dignity and gravity, "Could I help you?"

"Yes, I have to get lots of things. I got carried away and still haven't bought stuff for Christmas. Where are the toys and things? And do you have any clothes, I really need to get the girl a nice sweater?"

"No, no, this a drug store, we don't stock clothing." Sam was always amazed at the things people expected to find in the drugstore. He wasn't exactly certain about the relationship to the non-professional items in the store, the 'sundries,' as he preferred to call them. Grass seed and fertilizer in the summer, anti-freeze and rock salt in the winter. Somehow it wasn't quite right to sell them. They, in some vague manner, reduced his status, made him into a shopkeeper and he was a professional. But it was providing a service, a convenience. Combined with the supermarket and its line of sundries (they probably stocked clothes next door), he could truly say Shady Acres Shopping Center provided one-stop shopping. It was a service and, after all, that is what his profession was all about, serving the public. And these items turned over much quicker than the bed pans, trusses, and elastic bandages he sold or the crutches he rented and were much less depressing to handle.

"The toys are on both sides of aisle nine and also just across the aisle, at the end of the fountain. Here, I'll show you."

As they walked to the rear of the store, the man continued to talk rapidly and cheerfully, totally ignoring the subtle reprimand in Sam's remark about the clothes. "Well, if you don't have any sweaters, I'll have to find something else real nice for the girl. She's getting real big now and turning into a real doll. Fourteen, no maybe fifteen. Yes, fifteen and there's probably boys around and all that. My boys are easy, the baby, hardly a baby any more, probably knows the names of all those T.V. animals and bothering his Ma for this or that he seen on T.V. He'll be happy with some trucks and cars, anything on wheels. You got any little trucks or one of those airplanes that the engine sparks?"

But he really wasn't asking a question and even before Sam could show him the section containing wheeled toys, he was off again.

"And the other boy, you got any toy guns? Or toy swords or helmets? Or soldiers? That boy, got lots of energy, always running around like wild Indian, a real little man."

By this time, the man had picked up a toy tractor, a dump truck, a plastic tommy gun and was still looking for more. Sam was anxious to explain why there were no swords in stock; he had just read in a merchandising magazine that all retailers had an obligation to be certain their toys were appropriate and safe for children. So, there were no more swords or even those hard rubber knives he had enjoyed so much as a boy. But somehow he sensed the man wouldn't be interested so he tried something else, "Here are the games. Sound about right for your boy. Channel a portion of that undirected energy into potentially productive areas, help him learn to interact socially and anticipate life's situations." Sam often spoke like this for he was aware of his responsibility and made an effort to remember the things he read in the various trade journals. He had read a long article on the usefulness of games in some merchandising magazine and most of his regular customers were quite interested in the whole concept and deferred to his judgement. This man seemed uninterested.

"That boy won't sit still long enough for any games."

Sam didn't understand these people. He knew the man was somehow connected with the trailer court across the highway. That was the one disadvantage in his new location. He knew moving to a shopping center was the right decision: good parking, more room, all of the advantages. But he didn't understand these people. Didn't their children ever have names? After all, *he* always referred to *his* children by name. But with these people it was always "the boy" or "the oldest girl" or "the middle one." Never any names. No, he couldn't understand these people and found it somewhat discomforting to serve them. But what could he do?

"This is enough for the boys. Where's the perfume? I always get the wife some fancy perfume for Christmas. Something real sexy. This will all be a

surprise to her, she's not even sure I'm coming out Christmas. Oh, we got our problems, especially this year. Don't suppose I lived in the trailer with her half the time last year. But this time I think we'll get it straightened out. Oh, we really fight sometimes, suppose I drink too much and she's real high strung. Yes, we really have some fights but she's a good woman and makin' up is always nice if you know what I mean." The man grinned and winked and would actually have nudged Sam with his elbow if he had not maintained a discreet distance as they walked up the aisle toward the cosmetic section.

Sam had mixed emotions about these revelations people were constantly giving him. If they were from his regular customers, quiet and dignified and ostensibly centered around some family health problem, Sam listened solemnly and offered appropriate advice or sympathy. It made him feel good and secure in his position in the community. Sort of like a minister or a doctor but much more accessible and much less intimidating. It vindicated the little slogan he liked so well in the *Independent Retail Druggist Journal,* "You can trust your local pharmacist, part of the community health team and part of the community." But it was different with these people. Their revelations seemed uncalled for, certainly unprompted by any discussion of health problems. Their confessions seemed so sordid and their openness somehow frightened Sam. Those things were best kept secret or at least discussed in the most veiled terms. Far from making Sam feel secure and professional, they made him feel somehow unclean.

Sam really didn't understand cosmetics and was momentarily regretful that he had let Helen go home earlier. But he was willing to guide the man as best he could, drawing from what he had read. Again, the man seemed to ignore Sam and rapidly picked several items, judging apparently by price and size—on both counts, the bigger the better.

As they walked to the cash register, the man continued to talk. "Well, that's everything for them, but it's too bad about that sweater, I really wanted to get the girl something nice."

Suddenly the man stopped, "Hey, how much is that record player, that looks real good."

"Twenty-nine, ninety-eight."

"Oh, I remember her always mooning around the house, 'how come we can't have a stereo, everyone else has a stereo and I never have anything.' Yes, that girl would really be happy with a stereo. Is that one a stereo?"

"Yes. Yes, it's a stereo." Sam had always wondered about that record player. He had a stereo, had bought it several years ago at Daryl and Diane's insistence. He had let them pick it out at a store then he had bought what they had specified from the wholesaler. He knew little about stereos, but knew his was complex and imposing and expensive. This one was small, plain and cheap. He somehow suspected this one could only be included in the same genre by the most elastic definition of terms. But he had read the label carefully; he trusted labels and knew about the laws against false advertising. "Yes, it features genuine stereophonic sound."

"Hey, that's really great. That's better than a sweater any day. Her always complaining about not having a stereo. She'll really be happy when she sees that." The man was genuinely excited now. "Where'd you say those records are and, Doc, you got a box for that stereo?"

The man walked hurriedly to the record counter and Sam began to put the stereo in its box. Sam understood it all. Of course, it was a stereo, but it wasn't what the girl meant by a stereo. And she wouldn't be happy when she saw it. She certainly wouldn't be pleased by the records the man laid on the counter with the other items. She would appreciate much more one record by Elvis than all of the twenty original hits as sung by the Hollywood Voices he had in the store.

Sam suddenly understood this. He understood that this man wasn't going

to make anyone happy. She wanted a stereo like his children, Daryl and Diane, had. Not some $29.28 record player from the drugstore across the highway. And the boy, if he wanted guns, knew exactly what he wanted. Some versatile, massive gun he had seen on T.V., not some crummy tommy gun from the drugstore. And the baby boy, if he knew the names of the animals on T.V., also knew his tractor and dump truck had never had and had no hope of ever receiving the blessing of appearing on the screen before his wondering eyes.

Sam had learned this years ago. His children knew what they wanted and their gifts had not come from the drugstore. He was even willing to pay retail prices for certain important items if absolutely necessary, if his wholesalers could not provide exactly what was needed. He wasn't quite sure what his children were getting for Christmas this year; he trusted Madge in this area. But he was secure in the knowledge that the boxes she had wrapped so carefully and they would together place under the tree tonight were appropriate and genuine and would please everyone, especially himself.

And he never felt guilty selling his items to his regular customers. They were like him and they knew the same things he knew. If they bought his products there was some good reason and it was better for him not to interfere. They understood these things and understood the old saying, 'buyer beware.' No, there was no guilt involved in that. He was helping them save money.

But how could he explain that to this man? Could he explain anything to this excited man, excited with the happiness he thinks he will create? Would the man's bewilderment at his children's lack of excitement, their failure to make his excitement and happiness over his gifts their own, be the cause of yet another fight between the man and his wife? Would their failure to relieve him of his excitement make him find another outlet for it? Would the cologne and bubble bath end smashed on the trailer floor? Somehow in Sam's mind, fights in the trailer court always ended with broken glass.

He automatically rang up the price of each item as he thought of these things. Sixty-three dollars and forty-seven cents. The man was not surprised by this and carefully placed two twenties, two tens and four ones on the counter.

Would the man understand if he refused to take the money? How could he explain all of this to the man? How could he persuade him to return to the bar where he had conceived this insane idea of surprising his family on Christmas Eve? That it would be less sad to spend $63.47 drinking alone than to go to that trailer with these expectations?

Sam looked at the man, but he was smiling and thinking of the moments ahead and no longer thinking of Sam or the drugstore. Sam slowly picked up the money and laboriously counted out the change.

"Sixty-three forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty and fifty makes sixty-four."

The man put the box with the 'stereo' under one arm and carried the sack with the rest in the other. He walked to the door, paused, turned to Sam, smiled and said, "Thanks a lot, Doc, for everything and Merry Christmas."

Sam gently closed the cash register drawer and said, "Thank you and Merry Christmas." He walked to the back and turned off the lights. As he walked back to the front through the dark aisles, he noticed the empty spot where the record player had been. He forgot his recent sadness and confusion and smiled to himself. He was glad the record player was gone. He had always been a little ashamed of it. He had felt it was somehow out of place in a drugstore and resolved not to re-order that particular item. He stepped through the front door and began to lock it. Suddenly, he re-entered the store, walked purposefully to the candy counter and selected the largest box of Fanny May Christmas candy as a special surprise for Madge and his family.

He locked the front door, feeling satisfied and again justified in his decision and sacrifice to remain open Christmas Eve.

Letters To My Enemy, Psychological Man

JANET RASH

Letter I
Dear Psychological Man;

I don't know your name. I don't know what you look like. I have heard that you want to be the 'new man', the model for a humanity that will usher in a new era doing away with the emotional miseries inherent in being human. You want to construct a new culture based on psychological 'understanding'.

I am quite sure I've met many imitations of your character model. You are an 'intellectual', and I think we can agree that this means you put intelligence above all other attributes of being human. Your intellectualism takes the form of 'intelligent understanding', what you call insight and what Freud would call 'conscious control'. You divide everything and everyone into components and units that can be fitted into statistical norms and group profiles and behaviour patterns, for these groupings and patterns bring about the possibility of prediction and of understanding the human condition.

You are not committed to any institutions as we have understood them up 'til now, for these are repressive and demand loyalty to something other than yourself. You avoid attachment to whatever would command your emotions and you allow yourself only the interested investigation of these objects of possible attachment, maintaining an attitude of ultimate indifference. To you, commitment is a curse, an irrational drag that ties you down to a pedestrian life of doing what other people expect from you. You wish to remain independent of all this, uncommitted, free of embarrassing and debilitating emotional ties that will only be broken, or worse yet, will not be.

You now understand life and death, for you have analyzed both, and you have formulated a simple desire for 'more' to fill out those boring hours between your entrance into and exit from this world. Now that life has been reduced to its simplest units, there seems little else for you to do but desire 'more' to keep you entertained.

These seem to be the most outstanding character traits of your representatives. If my perception of you is accurate, then I must tell you that you are my enemy, for you will surely destroy me if you become dominant in the world of the future. I think you must be a man. I have never noticed these traits in women, unless they have fallen under your spell and taken up your values. I would like to know what your position is, and why you think these things. Will I hear from you soon?

Cordially,

.....

Letter II
Dear P.M.;

I got your letter today. You were so surprised to find out that I think of you as an enemy. You hadn't known you had any enemies, and you put up a very good defense for intelligence, combined with understanding. You conclude that it is,

indeed, the highest attribute of being human. How could I disagree, unless I were one of those typical anti-intellectuals, jealous over not being in 'the elite' and fearful of that same elite which determines the way of culture? You think I do not realize that understanding of the human condition is not possible without intelligence; otherwise we become misled into miserable neuroses that prevent actualization of our individual attributes and talents. Shouldn't conscious control replace the irrational pursuit of unconscious ends?

In answer to you, I would like to point out that by criticizing your placement of intelligent, and therefore conscious, understanding above all other attributes of being human, I have negated neither intellect nor understanding. I have criticized only your ranking system. It seems to be inherent in your nature to rank everything in order from 'higher' to 'lower' as you set your priorities for accomplishment, and there is no room in your ranking system for shifts in priorities or for equalization of them. You fought a much-needed battle against the priority of the irrational for so long that you seem to have forgotten that conscious human understanding is not total understanding. Your consciousness has run amok with its arrogant implication that the human mind can know everything, understand everything, and control everything. Your victory has gone to your head, so to speak, now that you have gained some control over the terrified innocence of unconscious, irrational existence.

I congratulate you on your Platonic solution. I call it Platonic, even though your solution doesn't extend out of yourself to some 'higher' form of contemplation. Your object of contemplation is your own intelligence and consequent understanding, not that of some Other; but it's the same old story repeated. Where a Platonist reached for understanding of the Forms to understand all, you reach for understanding of Yourself. You are your own Other. Well, I still don't believe in gods, whether you've kept them in your own head or placed them elsewhere.

I will not allow you to discard my criticism with your implication that my disagreement originates within some neurotic need of my own. It is such a typical response that I can't even take it very seriously, for you are clearly trying to confine my reactions to your own system of definitions and explanations, thereby excluding me if I do not accept your offensive terms. It may surprise you to learn that I, too, value my intellect as an attribute worthy of cultivation and that I, too, want to understand all those things and events which are discernible through the intellect. Your conclusion that I am advocating regression is patronizing in the extreme. I object to your placement of intelligence in its rank at the top of attributes because you have narrowed your own experience to that which is knowable with the mind. You have actually set limits on knowledge by wishing to ultimately confine it to the conscious mind. In doing this, you will also limit my experience and knowledge by the mere fact of your interaction with me and your negation of those things which may exist in me but are unknown to you.

You cannot escape interaction with me if you want to live your fulfilled life, for I have ideas and notions and reactions that entertain you; and the entertainment comes about in your achievement of understanding, which means knowing me. You can leave no mystery untouched and existent in itself; understanding is the name of the game. Therefore, you must see me as something to be analyzed and understood and known. By your reduction of my emotions through your 'understanding' of them, you have changed me into a bug under your microscope of analysis and I automatically become the 'trash', one of the objects in your life.

"But", you counter, "my understanding is of me, not of you!" I know that's what you believe, but can you honestly say it is possible for you to confine your analytic understanding to only one aspect of a total situation? Doesn't your own

value system and your own game compel you to try to understand the whole, of which you are only a part and I am also a part?

Has it ever occurred to you that I do not wish to be 'understood'? It is humiliating, for this tells me I am not unique (and I still like thinking I'm unique), but rather only another unit to be adjusted in your mind and administered according to the situation. You have turned me into a facade that you can grasp, just as I can grasp the facade you present to me. There is a tyranny in your understanding that is far more subtle than the tyranny of a czar, for it sets up no opposition and makes me completely controllable as far as you're concerned.

I perceive your understanding as your power grab, as a continuation of all the institutions you have ever created. And now you know that I think you are creating a culture of understanding that will be every bit as repressive as any of the previous and present cultures, and within it, you will be understood, too. Should your new era come about, the mystery of yourself will be reduced to the 'rational' self-image that keeps you peaceful, and I have serious doubts that your deepest desires and mysteries can tolerate the lie that conscious analysis is complete knowledge of yourself.

I am most anxious to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

.....

Letter III

Dear P.M.;

If I read the meaning of your most recent letter correctly, you are puzzled over my logic in my perception of intelligent understanding as the beginning of another repressive culture. Your definition of a cultural institution is "an organization of erotic energy (love) which binds people together into a communal, and therefore 'higher', purpose." You object to such cultural institutions, and would see a culture with no such binding institutions to cause people to place moral demands on themselves and others, consequently lowering the demands on the energies of individuals wanting fulfillment. As you see it, our pluralistic culture now has no symbols which can bring us together in love, and you see no future communal organization beyond that based upon indifference.

I quite agree with your definition of cultural institutions. I quite agree with all your statements about the repressiveness of previous and present cultural institutions and their ability to snare people into loyalty traps that are destructive, imperialistic, and cruel. Where I disagree is when you would begin to construct a culture with indifference as the mode of personality organization. You would transcend both love and hate by being indifferent, which is all very nice and quasi-Taoist in its approach, but it does not seem to take the facts of human existence into account very well. You would transcend "primary group moral passion", which originates in the family, through indifference. You would have no commitments to any institutions that make moral demands outside yourself and your fulfillment, because you have transcended any need to meet such demands.

Since I have already postulated that you are creating new institutions, I will first follow up on that point. Your needs for entertainment and fulfillment imply that you will create ways of meeting these needs. The ways you devise will require some structure in order to meet your demands. I think the ways you devise will evolve into new cultural institutions, with the symbol of The Fulfilled Self present to evoke your emotions. Of course you deny that The Fulfilled Self is a symbol that can carry your emotions outside your individual self, but perhaps you have noticed that the notion of The Fulfilled Self is already at work in our

culture. I believe the pervasiveness of this image is responsible in large part for the adolescent whines that come from our cultural suburbias when it becomes apparent that your simple desire for 'more' has led instead to depletion. Thanks to this desire for The Fulfilled Self, people seem to expect it as some kind of 'right', and I do not think it would be very realistic of you to believe this desire will necessarily be guided by intellect just because the desire itself has been reduced to its least complex form. People get pretty emotional over the notion of The Fulfilled Self, particularly when something stands in the way of its fulfillment, and I submit that the symbol already exists for your utilization. With the need, the symbol, and the means available for meeting the need, your new institutions will come into being. Erotic energy (love) will bind people together in meeting the moral requirements of these institutions, the requirements of 'understanding' and 'being understood'. You will be completely understandable and knowable to me, and I to you, in the name of 'love'. The purpose of your game will have reached its end. I do not think you can avoid institutions of some kind if you would be completely fulfilled, for the meeting of your needs requires the presence of others devoted to the same purpose, and I have already accepted your original definition of a cultural institution.

I don't know what you propose to do about the practical matter of the family. Presumably we learn our moral passions in primary groups. We are born into a primary group of at least mother and ourselves. I don't know how you would avoid this distressing fact unless you want to be born out of a test tube, and I hear you're already working on that! I don't know how you would have your mother treat you—with indifference, or perhaps as a minor nuisance in the pursuit of her own fulfillment and fun. Are you assuming she will find her fulfillment and entertainment and variety in the experience of raising you to be a person capable of indifference? Is your mother also to be certain she never succumbs to the horrible trap of love and attachment, that she transcends love and hate and analyzes you as an experience to be 'enjoyed'? She might well analyze you right out of existence after deciding that the institution of the family does not require her love and loyalty. You can opt for an alternative form of the family, which I also find a highly desirable possibility; but your options for escaping primary group relationships are pretty slim, and I somehow think even your indifference would prefer humans raising humans instead of machines raising humans.

Perhaps I am most disturbed by your assumption that both love and hate must be transcended to build your new era. I understand your points about the 'love' that is commanded by institutions and the 'love' that binds communities to a higher purpose. It is clear that you dislike the commitment demanded by cultural institutions, and that you think this commitment is derived from the love-hate personality mode that originates in the family relationship.

To avoid all this, you will have to avoid me. It is when you and I come together that the possibility of a family comes into being. If we are both indifferent, it is also quite possible that we can have an ersatz rubbing together of bodies and/or minds in the interest of entertainment and variety. Nevertheless, both possibilities exist; your indifference and your assumptions about me cause you to see only one.

I must close in haste, with the wish that you will write again soon.

The best to you,

.....

Letter IV

Dear P.M.;

Of course I realize you think I'm being emotional...what else could you

think in defense of indifference? Perhaps we can coin a new phrase and call my position 'intelligent emotion' or 'emotional intelligence'.

You are quite right in your analysis of my last letter, where you decided that the reason I don't like your attitude of indifference is because I want commitment from you. But accusing me of binding you into institutions that are repressive, for my own ends, is unfair, and I might add, a typical male response. I don't see how you can connect that accusation with your belief in Freud's definitions of repressive civilization, for Freud didn't give women any credit whatsoever for helping create culture and its institutions. At least Freud let me off the hook in that respect and said it was all your fault!

I do want a commitment from you. Your indifference is a threat to my whole being. I cannot love my child and be indifferent to you or expect nothing from you at the same time, and I cannot be indifferent to my child, at least not before the test tubes take over. You cannot psychologize away my love for my child as 'attachment to an object' or as a displaced fulfillment of my desire to be like my father. You cannot psychologize away my hatred of those who would hurt my child, or my delight in my child's smile, or my grief at this child's illness or death. You cannot dismiss my own tragedies that arise from this relationship as a 'neurosis' that you 'understand', for you haven't the slightest idea what if feels like to have this mode of experience and I don't know upon what basis you would 'understand' it.

"Aha", you say, "it appears your fulfillment is in your child, as it has always been, and it is possible for you to really enjoy it in the new era of 'more.' You do not need me in this venture, so we can be indifferent to each other."

You are wrong. Until now, this primary mother-child relationship has commanded my largest commitment. The survival of the human race was carried on this way, until medicine kept so many of us from dying, and biology really was my destiny, often against my own wishes. Even in those times, though, it was the two of us who were necessary for creation, and now it is our dualism that can create fulfillment. I propose that it is your avoidance of this basic dualism that has created repressive culture in the first place, along with all its hateful institutions.

You no doubt remember that Freud came up with an answer for neurosis which was labeled the Oedipus complex. A boy, rejecting his mother as a sexual object, identified with his father, and it is through this father identification that men have created culture. Freud posited a primal crime against the father as the source of guilt in the sons, which the sons both repeat and try to expiate.

Freud forgot all about the primal mother and her daughters in a disarming display of Victorian chauvinism. He went so far as to claim that the penis is the primary sex organ, with the female clitoris being only an inferior imitation. Perhaps he didn't know that the clitoris is the only sex organ yet found in any creature that serves no function other than pleasure, and there were few women at that time with either the academic credentials or the inclination to dispute him. I think you can agree that Freud's explanation of how the little girl overcomes the Oedipus complex is both convoluted and inadequate. The explanation assumes that it is the father who is the culture-bearer forming the girl's super-ego; yet it is the mother who initially teaches a child to speak a language, loaded as it is with all the meanings and symbolism of a particular culture. The mother, also, creates culture and passes it on.

For good or ill, the duality of you and me has created human experience. Freud did not assume two primal modes of experience, only one; he resolved the duality of male and female by assuming a time of original bisexuality in each individual. You, also, have assumed all experience of love and hate within one entity—yourself—just as Freud did. You have avoided being in touch with my

experience as if it were a disease, and you have constructed your 'enforcing' cultures to insure the avoidance.

Would it surprise you to learn that I have observed you for a quite a long time? You've gone through quite a few changes in developing your avoidance techniques. I saw you first as political man, engaging in a world of other men in which the feminine influence was stilled except for its usefulness in a Dionysian underground that allowed you occasional emotional orgies, but all the time keeping your mind apart for its work in the world of culture building and worship of your ancestral fathers. You kept me at home to provide you with sons who would, in turn, worship you.

Then I saw you as religious man, committed to a community while working your way toward heaven. In that community, the feminine was the work of the devil, responsible for your disgrace on earth but nonetheless very attractive. You still kept me at home, but hunted a few witches on the side and perhaps got an erotic thrill in watching an evil creature scream and burn at your instigation while you dutifully praised God for being saved.

Then you became economic man, working off your disgrace in a spate of activities that proved your worth to yourself as you diverted your natural eroticism into the gray seriousness of buildings and industry and money. This time you put me in a little corner for your entertainment in your spare time; I was amusing to you and frequently a proof to the world of your worth.

Now I see you as psychological man, expanding my entertainment value while avoiding anything that might be labeled 'love' between us. At least in previous times you loved something; now you love nothing. Your new name is only another name for scientific man, divider of knowledge into 'ologies' that dissect and analyze and separate and explain.

You have always had a need to expiate something, to relieve some disgrace. Churches have called it sin. Freud called it guilt over an original primal crime against the father. Perhaps the 'sin' you want to expiate is something quite different from that; perhaps it is avoidance of a mode of experience that is not directly yours but is crucial to you.

With that thought, I will close, and wait for your next letter.

Love,

.....

Letter V

Dear P.M.;

You have raised a number of questions about my last letter which I think I can answer. I find the questions well justified. You pointed out that I never answered your charge that I am trying to bind you into institutions for my own ends, and that I didn't adequately tell you how 'enforcing' cultures are a result of your avoidance of male-female duality; and you do not see how your unwillingness to be committed to an institution that evokes your emotional response is indicative of an unwillingness to have personal commitments to other people.

I am afraid you have gotten the idea that my wish for a commitment from you necessarily leads to your being tied into institutional controls that will drain you and deny you your own fulfillment. It is of no advantage to me to bind you to something repressive for both of us, and outside controls that force us to conform in presenting predictable facades are in no way an affirmation of the love that can exist between people. The desire to be joined with other people and committed to someone else, with a reciprocal desire and commitment coming back, has managed to keep the human race going for a while, and that kind of

exchange is dying from the very hatred that concerns you. It is irrelevant to me whether this exchange indicates 'need' for someone else, for I have assumed this all along and thought that your own advocacy of fulfillment was predicated upon need. Perhaps you could stand the thought of your own 'need for others' better than you can stand the thought of a moral imperative to meet the needs of others, and could approach the reciprocity of the situation in that way. I think you are denying the obvious by emphatically ignoring it. I might also point out that your assumption that I prefer institutions repressive to you is an indication of your one-sided view point; I haven't enjoyed being isolated at home for childbirth and your entertainment, while you satisfied yourself in your hateful institutions.

On to the point about 'enforcing' cultures being a result of your avoidance of male-female duality. You will have to admit that our culture has had little, if any, place for women in creation of all those things that have been projected into what we know as history. Even ancient Hesiod thought women were useless creatures, with no economic value, and those humanistic Greeks exposed far more girl babies than boy babies on the mountain sides. I have thought a lot about your propensity for devaluing me as a sexual and intellectual being, and I have no great theoretical systems to propose to you as my explanation for your behavior. But it seems to me there could be a combination of elements at work in the situation, from my point of view of you.

You are born from women. Birth isn't a pleasant business to watch, with all that blood and sweat and tears, and all you can do is watch and wait for the new little creature to respond to you. Perhaps birth reminds you of your own finiteness; perhaps it disturbs you that now there is a primary relationship going on in front of you in which you take no direct part. Furthermore, you can't avoid being born; it is such an animal thing to have happened to you, and I am always there to remind you of something that doesn't fit your image of yourself as the creature of intellect. You have labeled me the animal portion of our species, an animal to be kept under control, while reserving intellect for yourself. You controlled me by building up societies in which you have been the enforcer of mores,usually to your own advantage. Doing this occupied your energies while I was involved in my more immediate and demanding relationships that excluded you. Now you don't like what you've done, for your hatred of me has turned itself on you, too.

And consider that I am the 'passive' partner in a sexual relationship and am delightfully equipped for a great deal of pleasure with little, if any, effort on my part. It is you who must be 'active' and perhaps you resent this. I am complete expectation, always cognizant of your activity or lack of it. This, in a sense, means I can pass judgement on you. What better way is there for you to avoid some possible judgement than to devalue the source?

I don't 'know' that these are the elements at work in your psyche, for I am not you—I suggest them as possibilities, for this is the way it looks to me and I have become quite accustomed to looking past your grand words.

Considering your past habits, I am quite doubtful that any new era would actually be any different than any of the past ones you have constructed, for you have not resolved your relationship with me. This brings us to the point about your unwillingness to be committed to institutions being an indication of your unwillingness to be committed to other people. You have never been committed to me; rather you have avoided me and have placed your commitments in institutions with those of other men. Now you would do away with that, too, completely erasing any hope for a culture based on love that could resolve our duality. You are moving farther away from me, rather than nearer, looking for a self-fulfillment that simply means 'more'; at the same time, I at last have the choice over whether I will spend my life continuously bearing your children and

excluding you, or whether I will now equalize my own priorities and include you where you belong.

I invite you to join me in seeing where we can find meaning for our individual existences in a joint effort. There is no guarantee that we can resolve the ambivalence of love and hate, but we can at lease erase the fence between us and apply the intellects of two different modes of experience to the task of searching out the commitments of love. The invitation is open. When will I hear from you?

Love,

.....

Ode to an Angler's Son

HARRY E. GOODYEAR, JR.

My apologies son,
for the damage we've done
by what we define as progress;

For fish we might catch
and those that would hatch
had we not made the environment a mess;

For lost summer days
of fishing a maze
of idyllic pristine waters;

For the brooks' decline
and polluting the brine
where many sport fishes quarter;

My apologies again
for as your kin
the legacy I leave is sad;

For we've fouled the air
and the water nowhere
is clean enough not to be bad;

In twenty years
there'll be no tears
for the rivers that are dead and gone;

And the fishes we knew
we quietly slew
and sent to the "great beyond";

In the future, think when
you were only ten
and your father took you fishing;

It may ease the pain
and relieve the strain
of your then, current day wishing.

Mr. Boyle's Junk Yard

FLORENCE MILLER

As Mable looked out of her kitchen window on Monday morning and saw the junk pile that passed for a back yard, she set her jaw. "I've had enough," she thought. "Somebody's got to do something about that mess, and I guess it will have to be me."

When she had moved into the cottage early last summer she had hardly noticed Mr. Boyle's yard, back to back with hers. She had been thrilled with finding a small home, much easier to keep up after the monstrosity she had lived in for thirty years. The street was quiet, her neighbors about the same age, nice people, who puttered about enjoying the past immensely, the present tolerably, not thinking too much about the future. After all those years when she had neither the time nor the energy, she could at last take up gardening as a hobby, not a chore.

With the honeysuckle on the fence and the syringa bushes at each corner, it wasn't really too noticeable at first. About August, the pyramid of bald tires grew higher than the fence. The following month she realized that a wisteria vine was actually trained over a teepee of metal pipes of varying lengths. When the leaves began to fall she noted the clump of bright yellow mums sprouting from an old gray Maytag.

Mable's inquiries were subtle but revealing. Mr. Boyle was a pleasant enough man who drank a bit too much (his father was an Irishman) and never threw anything away (his mother was a Scot). In earlier days he was known to have a rock collection, a butterfly collection and a fine stamp album, so this new hobby did not surprise anyone. During the winter Mable did no more than "tsk-tsk" with the neighbors she met at the supermarket, and pray for snow.

But now spring was here and she expected to be in her yard enjoying the flowers. Soon she would get the new lawn furniture from lay-a-way and invite some of the girls over for lunch. She took her second cup of coffee to the kitchen table, found a pad of writing paper and a pen in the drawer and set about her unpleasant task.

"Dear Mr. Boyle," she wrote. "We the undersigned are sorely distressed at the condition of your property located at 417 Grove Avenue. The accumulation of rusty metal, tires, packing boxes and other trash is not only an eyesore in this area but also a health hazard. It should be removed at once for the sake of safety and the beauty of this neighborhood. Very truly yours," and she wrote her name in a bold script, leaving plenty of room for additonal signatures.

Mable had signed many petitions in her day, but she had never written one before. As she changed clothes and got ready to make her rounds of the close neighbors who would most appreciate some improvement, she thought about her few encounters with Mr. Boyle. Last June, when she had just finished unpacking and was burning the boxes and wrapping paper in her yard, Mr. Boyle had come to the fence and offered her a spray of pink roses. She thanked him, of course, but she was tired that day and too dirty to be seen by strangers and then she pricked herself on the thorns while putting them in water. He came to the fence again the first time her little grandsons visited. They were playing catch in the

yard and were quite noisy. He retrieved their ball more than once from his yard, so she called them in and told them they mustn't annoy Mr. Boyle. In the fall he gave her a clump of peonies and she gave him some Bells of Ireland she'd been thinning out. He seemed almost too grateful for such tiny plants. They nodded and spoke when they passed in the street or met at the A & P. As far as she could tell, it was the same with all the other neighbors.

She picked up the petition and two pens, then looked for something firm to write on. The latest issue of her *"Better Gardens"* magazine had arrived that morning and was the closest thing at hand. "If I had any sense at all," she thought, "I'd stay home to read this and ... and build a brick wall out back."

Mr. and Mrs. Weaver, next door north, both signed eagerly. Mr. Weaver said, "It's a shame it has to be done this way, but that junk has been piling up out there for years. He's always been a quiet, stay-at-home man and worse since his wife died, though we haven't seen much of him since."

Old Mrs. Robbins and her daughter, two doors north, also signed and agreed, "It's about time that someone got after him. Mrs. Boyle always used to fuss at him to throw out old broken things they had no use for. She kept him in line, she did, but there's no one to do it now, God rest her poor soul."

The Foltzes weren't home but Mable was sure they would have signed. Turning west at the corner of Fifth Street, she was surprised when Mrs. Roth said, "Of all people to let his yard go to seed! Why, it used to be a showplace. Mrs. Boyle always took care of the house and kids and he took care of bringin' in the money and doin' all the yard work. He was better at the latter than the former I can tell ya, though she never seemed to mind that. She was such a cheerful, friendly woman. Everyone liked the Boyles."

Next Mrs. Howard signed for herself and her husband. "I remember," she said, "how beautiful his flowers always looked up on the main altar. You could sure tell Patrick Boyle's week! But we never see him or his flowers at church since she's been gone. Too bad, isn't it?" Old Mrs. Braxton signed without reading it, as her favorite television show was on. The next house was Mr. Boyle's. She counted nine signatures. Mable reread the petition, studied the front of his house, bit the end of her pen, thought about it a few minutes more, then made her decision.

She marched up the three steps and knocked on his door. Mr. Boyle pulled back the dusty gray curtain, then opened the door wide. "Well, if it isn't Mrs. Harris from over on Blake Street!"

"Hello, Mr. Boyle. I've been out walking in the neighborhood and I'm a bit worn out. May I just sit on your porch a while to catch my breath?"

"I wouldn't think of it, Mrs. Harris. Come in and sit yourself down where it's comfortable. I'm getting ready to have some tea and I'll make enough for two. I'll only be a minute.

He disappeared through a door and she sat straight up in the chair, a bit amazed at herself. She glanced over the petition one final time, then carefully ripped it in half, crumbled the pieces of paper into a tight ball, stuffed it into her purse and snapped it firmly closed.

Mr. Boyle returned with the cups and spoons, then made a second trip to the kitchen for the tea and kettle.

"Let me help you with that," Mable said, measuring the tea and water into the pot. They settled into chairs pulled up to the small table. "I just finished reading my garden magazine and thought perhaps you might like to look it over."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Harris. I'd like that very much."

Mable slowly sipped her tea then said, "I can see that you're interested in flowers, Mr. Boyle. I wonder if you know where I might get a start of some nice yellow mums?"

Madness And The Majority: Trilling's "Of This Time, Of That Place"

ELLEN EINTERZ

The poet Emily Dickinson wrote,

> Much madness is divinest sense
> To a discerning eye;
> Much sense the starkest madness.
> 'Tis the majority
> In this, as all, prevails.

Madness is a social classification and a subjective concept, and a man can be termed "mad" only if he differs in some way from the majority. However, every man of every time and from every place is an individual and he does in some aspect of his character differ from the majority. From this follows the conclusion which is the theme of Lionel Trilling's "Of this Time, of that Place": that there is a madness in every person.

The novelette is a chronological arrangement of incidents which comprise a school year for Joseph Howe, an instructor at Dwight College. Trilling's narrative technique, therefore, is scenic, except for occasional comments indicating passage of time during the year or from the past. Such comments explain Howe's summer absence, his education, and his past literary success—all of which are briefly and summarily mentioned in order to establish the identity of the character. Joseph Howe is the protagonist, and the reader learns the story through his thoughts and actions. For example, when Howe is trying to decide on what grade to give "his strange student, Tertan," the reader sees Howe's questions, and must debate the problem as Howe must: "what did one 'give' such a student?...what should a mind under suspicion of madness be graded?" When another student, Theodore Blackburn, becomes angry with Howe, his wrath is felt as Howe feels it; that is, Howe "became conscious of Blackburn emanating wrath."

Joseph Howe is one who is easily satisfied by the pomp of the academic life, by the officiousness of a working institution, by the routine of a school year. He thinks of the long indoor days of winter and feels glad of his profession; he is pleased that the influential Bradbys might see him admiring their row of asters; he is happy for an occasion to wear his academic gown and his mortarboard with its gold tassel. Howe is impressed by small happenings and basic appearances, and as such, his poetry is attacked for its "precious subjectivism." On this point, Howe and his "mad" student, Tertan, are opposites. Tertan is little concerned about outward appearances. His clothes are dirty and shabby, his hair is long and uncombed. In conference, when Howe is interested in discussing Tertan's official work for the class, the student dismisses such discussion because the work was by force and was therefore insignificant, mere duty. He is more interested in discussing papers he has written by his own choice, papers which deal with religious optimism, humanism, and the dangers of materialism. His expressed ideas are unique in comparison to those of his fellow students, and his speech is elevated and distinguished by a large vocabulary and euphuistic phrases; yet

both his ideas and his speech are cryptic, inconclusive, and incoherent. To the topic, "Who I am," he answers, "Of this time, of that place, of some parentage, what does it matter?" In discussing a play, the question of whom to blame is asked. Tertan again questions the question, asking in a wildly verbose speech, "From the sense of determinism, who can say where the blame lies?" Howe at last discovers in a revelation Tertan's real problem, that he is mad.

Theodore Blackburn—vice-president of Student Council, manager of the debating team, secretary of Quill and Scroll, former English major who confuses Wordsworth and Wadsworth—is another student of Howe's, and another whom Howe proclaims mad, although this time the statement is more of a threat said in desperation. Blackburn is a politician who places ultimate success well above personal morals. He begs on his knees that Howe give him a passing grade, he confronts Howe with threats of blackmail, and rather than perform to achieve a grade he schemes and flatters to gain favor with the instructor.

Other characters of the story are minor, but as stereotyped as the politician Blackburn. DeWitt is the science student who believes that science is not only more worthwhile than the arts, but that in fact it provides an answer to every problem. Stettenhover is the football player, the big, tough body with no brain. Casebeer, on the other hand, is the average B minus to C plus student who states "Who I am" quite simply (in contrast to Tertan's answer): "I am Arthur J. Casebeer, Jr."

Even on the literal level of the story the protagonist undergoes changes in both situation and knowledge. The situational change is the progression of the school year, from the first day when Howe is a stranger amidst strangers, to the day of graduation when he has acquired a certain intimacy with each of his students. In addition, by the end of the year, Howe's situation has changed by his promotion to professor. In knowledge Howe's change involves the sudden enlightenment that Tertan's themes and speeches cannot be criticized for poor diction, sentence structure, or vocabulary; Tertan's mind is at fault, and his grammar is only an identifiable by-product of his madness.

On a slightly higher level of meaning, Joseph Howe is not simply a college instructor living a school year, but he is anyone who, as a leader of a group of people, must try to understand and communicate with those he leads. A person in such a position inevitably meets one whom he cannot understand, one who seems quite comfortably described as abnormal. Although the Tertans may not be as numerous as the Howes, they are nonetheless equally universal. Tertan in this sense is not just a student who is analyzed and determined insane, but he is any person who in any way has looked beyond the surface of life, beyond the "environment and heredity...the rags and old clothes of practical life...the name and the instrumentality of livelihood," and who seeks instead the meaning of pure existence—"existence without alloy"—and who, in so doing, is alienated from the majority because the majority can understand neither his search nor his discoveries.

From a psychological viewpoint Trilling's story realizes its final and most revealing level of meaning. For here the story delves more deeply into the characters; it is concerned no longer with concrete events or personalities but with an abstract concept, madness. Howe, who in overall impression is nothing at all like the exotic Tertan, is the first judge of Tertan's madness. Yet the two characters are in fact very much alike. Howe is a poet, an intellectual, a scholar; Tertan, too, is a writer, a thinker, "a man of letters." As Howe is troubled that Tertan is not understood by other students, teachers, and Howe himself, Tertan, too, is concerned for that aspect of Howe "which is driven and persecuted by the lack of understanding in the world at large." Furthermore, in discussing Frederic Wooley's harsh criticism of Howe's poetry, Tertan dismisses the essay for having

been written by a "critic who admits *prima facie* that he does not understand." Even the handwriting—the written fingerprint of an individual—of Howe is described in the same way as that of his student. One sees first the "carelessness of (Howe's) scrawl," then the "unformed headlong scrawl" and the "impatient scrawl" of Tertan. The likenesses are such, in fact, that Tertan clings more and more to his own ideals which he sees realized in Howe, and in the process, Howe becomes a Jungian Shadow—a positive rather than negative Shadow—for the student. Tertan projects his potentials on Howe. He calls Howe a humanist, and later defines the term as his "nomenclature for making a deity of man." He writes a letter to the Dean, praising the unselfish attitude and unsurpassable influence of Dr. Howe. Howe also sees something of himself in Tertan. He protects Tertan when classmates are impatient and bored with him. He debates reporting Tertan's strange behavior to the Dean, then later regrets his action for being a betrayal not only of "a power of mind but a power of love." Tertan in his behavior and ideas is not understood by an instructor and is therefore labeled mad; Howe in his creativity—his poetry—is not understood by a critic and is therefore accused of writing from a *tour d'ivresse.*

Such is the meaning of the story. A man is not understood because he differs from the norm, and he is, in this respect, mad. So it is not only with Tertan, or Howe, but with every man—as the title suggests—"of this time, of that place." Theodore Blackburn is the politician of today; Stettenhover is the Greek athlete of classic times; Tertan himself is marked for his strange medieval bow and his cavalier habit of rising when he speaks. His mental state, moreover, is described by the psychiatrist as "a classic case, a classic case."

Each of these characters of Trilling's novelette is a fanatic of some sort; yet each must face the ever-present observer and recorder, Hilda's camera, which appears throughout the story as a seemingly minor element. Each character must be seen by it against the natural world where light is not too bright, nor shadow too dark—the world as it normally is, the world as the majority has made it—and his fanaticism must be glaringly evident when seen by such an eye. And then madness is no longer the question; it is the statement.

Haiku

J. E. MEANS

The sea echoed shells,
  waves whispered of destruction.
A gull soared upward.

Sun beat down the sand
  and baked a rotting fish.
The tides rose, rising,

Its tidal eye searched—
  carrying the fish back to sea.
The sea echoed shells.

Andy Gumps, You Are and You Ain't

TOM ROBISON

I been here two months now, Andy, two months today...here at Central...two months I been watchin...standin next to this window, keepin my forehead on my wrist...and it up against this window, watchin out, standin right here all the time except when I'm eatin or restin...standin here watchin...out this window two months now, Andy. And...Gumps—Andy—you come and you go, you are and you ain't, you stand here close, or sometimes you run off....

Standin here at this window, I'm watchin with you, with you watchin, or without you, watchin the river...river slowly flowin along and little kids goin to school and comin from school, kids comin and goin, little children...like Janie.

Standin here, Andy Gumps, you are and you ain't, here at this window watchin and talkin...talkin to you, talkin to me. Watchin the red lights...them red lights that call the nurse, flashin, reflectin on my window, goin on and goin off, reflectin on my window...front of my eyes. Watchin out, Andy, I watchin out my window, watchin the snow fall, first snow this winter, new and white and clean. But the snow won't....

Look, Andy Gumps, out there, by the river, it's a rat, I bet? See? Just like the one, Gumps, just like it—a little smaller, a little thinner, but just like when I was a kid...that one!

...Mama and that rat of mine—when she saw that rat of mine, I remember how she'd screamed and called it ugly and dirty and run from it, and Bill wouldn't pay no attention to it. You know, Andy, old buddy, you know...Bill was right! Every kid gotta have a big ole rat...or a small one...or a mouse, or at least somethin like a rat. And he never said nothin about me and my rat...as long as me and my rat stayed outa his way, he never said nothin. Bill'd tell Mama to leave me alone—he'd tell her, "for Christ's sake woman, keep your mouth shut, quit screamin at that rat. The kid isn't botherin anyone when he's watchin that god-damned rat. There's fifty of em around this buildin, and there's nothin we can do about it—for Christ's sake, shut up!"

Bill was always screamin at Mama, always screamin at the older boys, ya Andy, he was always screamin at em...that was the way you could tell he cared. That's what Mama said. And he was right, too! Little Janie and me wasn't hurtin anybody watchin our rats. Besides, Gumps, you gotta admit that little kids ain't gonna get in no trouble watchin their rats, no trouble atall...isn't that right, Andy Gumps? Right, old buddy?

For Christ's sake, look at it snow...for Christ's sake, Andy, what was I sayin to ya? Since I been here at Central, I keep losin my place, forgettin what...for Christ's sake...rats...ya, rats! I was a kid, Mama and...that's right, Gumps, when...

When I was a kid, Andy, in our three-room place in the downtown...three rooms and a kitchen. The front room had gray paper that was comin down in shreds. Mama's and Bill's sleepin room had brick walls, and the older boys had paper that was lighter gray than the sittin room. And it had a kitchen—little Janie and me slept on a cot in that kitchen, and it had black walls that caught the

grease when Mama used the stove. It wasn't a bad place to be in, for a kid. Ya, Andy, Janie and me had our own room by ourselves. And, then—after little Janie....

Look out there, Andy, it's a blizzard! Andy Gumps, I keep...forgettin... what...rats...I was a kid, that's right.

When I was a kid we lived in this apartment downtown, and I remember that time. It seems that the times I remember best there are in the fall and in the winter...dead leaves, bare trees, cold, snow—not much snow in the downtown, and what was turned black. When the older boys hit me with a snow ball, it left a black spot on the white jacket I got on my birthday. By the first snow, Andy, it was spotted—by Christmas my jacket was black.

Those older boys! They were really somethin. They were really funny. Oh, Andy, one time, one ole time, those ole boys of mine missed my white jacket and got me in the head, in the forehead, above my eyes. And I went home and Mama saw the black spots from the snowballs, on my head, and, oh, oh, Andy, she screamed, Mama screamed and stepped back from me. The same way she screamed at rats. She said I looked like I was retarded or somethin. And one of the older boys heard her and said they should call me Retardo, Tommy Retardo, Tommy Jo Retardo, and it rhymed and it rhythmed, and they laughed, and I laughed, and, for Christ's sake, Andy, I couldn't stop laughin—I couldn't stop. For Christ's sake....

I was a kid then. No...? Andy Gumps! No, Andy, I wasn't a kid no more. Things all changed, little Janie was...things was all changed. Bill lost his job and Mama got pregnant. Things was all changed. Janie was...Janie...

It was spring then, I wasn't in school no more. I wasn't a kid no more, things was all different. Bill was sleepin in the afternoon and screamin at Mama and the older boys at night—all night screamin; makin so much racket and throwin things—so much noise my rats wouldn't come out so I could watch em...much. He was even yellin at me that my rats could go to hell...I didn't know how they could...and I still don't see how they could...do you Andy Gumps?

But I could see the trouble I was causin him...an all. Bill was...Mama was...Janie was...no, Janie wasn't....

By then it was spring. Was I 15 or 16? Old enough to be a man. I figured it was time I went out by myself and quit botherin everyone. While Bill was sleepin, in the afternoon, the next afternoon, on the first day the leaves was comin out on the trees and grass was gettin green, I rolled—I remember exactly—two shirts and a pair of the older boys' green workin pants—they didn't use em—I rolled em all up in a rag, and left the downtown, for the south...the country.

I was walkin south, almost out of the downtown, and I couldn't get over how wide the sidewalks was and how big the trees was. And, Andy, old buddy, there was this dog, big big ole dog, big as life, Andy, that run up on me and jumped on me and licked me and barked like he knew me, like he was my dog, like he was waitin on me all day. Actin like he wanted me to chase him, and...I did, and then when I'd stop, he chased me, big ole dog chasin after me.

And when I started walking again, Andy, that dog walked right beside, then in front of me—fast—and I had to run to keep up with him and every once in a while he would stop and jump up and lick my head and take off again, over and over. By the time I had time to stop and rest and think about where I was and what I was doin, Andy, it was gettin to be evenin, and me and that dog had done enough chasin and walkin and runnin and headin south for one day. Me and that dog layed down in the grass in this field. Layin down in that grassy field with that big big ole dog layin next to me, layin there, tired and sleepy as me, layin there and lookin at me, and Andy, you know what, I never knew dogs could smile, but he could, layin right next to me smilin. We just went on to sleep that way, I guess.

In the mornin, the sun was just comin up, and I reached over to pat that

big ole dog, and he was gone. That darned dog. That darned big ole dog was gone. And I was all wet—my face, my hands, my clothes, all over I was wet. That big ole dog had been lickin my face. I smiled and scratched my head and said out loud to myself that that was the doggonest thing I'd ever heard of. And, Gumps, you know, it was...

Then I looked around that field. Where was that ole dog? I was lookin all over and I couldn't find him. I started walkin down the road, still headin south. The sun was bright and warm, warm on the side of my face, and I saw, next to me, you, Andy Gumps, and I couldn't figure where you come from. Andy, ole buddy, you just was there, smilin at me, like you'd known me all my life. And, Andy, you remember that, you know we didn't say nothin to each other—we just went on down that road together.

We got to that big farm house, remember Andy, buddy? And you said, just like you knew, that the farmer there needed help. And you opened that yellow gate in the fence and pushed me on up to him, on up to in front of him. And I don't know why, but he gave me a job. He hired me! A job, a real job of my own, and a place to stay...a bed with white sheets in the corner of that glass buildin, that glass buildin with all them flowers—that's right, Andy, a room, a bedroom in a greenhouse. It was me and you, buddy, with all them flowers, in that greenhouse.

And I didn't know much about workin in a greenhouse, didn't know much about stackin the sacks of seeds in the right order or...well, I didn't know much about nothin, did I? But you and Farmer Mr. LeMaster kept me goin. Over and over he'd make me do my work till I learned, and, when I got tired and wanted to play with the chickens, Andy, you wouldn't let me. You and him was keepin me goin. You'd say that whatever I did, I had to do first things first—first things first, first things first. Everyday, Andy, everyday work first, and I didn't go to the chickens till the sun was goin down and the chickens was roostin to go to sleep.

I learned! I learned, didn't I? I got so I could tell the difference between them seeds and then the difference between them plants. And I liked it too. I liked Farmer Mr. LeMaster and his Mrs. and his little Annie. And, Andy, I liked livin in that greenhouse with all them flowers that was smellin good and growin...so good. And, Andy, you was right there everyday tellin me I was doin good and growin into a farmer—a Farmer, my ownself, Andy! And you was there, everyday, tellin me I was doin good and keepin me doin good too.

And that's the way it was all spring and all summer. And Farmer Mr. LeMaster and his Mrs. said that I was a good hand, remember, Andy, they said they had faith in me...had faith in ME, Andy, and that they knew, that they knew for sure that I was gonna be a good farmer. And on Sunday, on every Sunday, we'd dress up and the five of us—Farmer Mr. LeMaster and his Mrs. and little—little An...Annie and me and you, and go to Sunday School and Church. Little Annie in her white summer dress with the little pink lambs on her collar and me dressed up in that light tan suit with that black string-tie and you, Gumps, walkin right beside us, walkin right along side, smilin your big Sunday smile.

And, after church, after we'd all had our Sunday dinner, Farmer Mr. LeMaster would take his Mrs. ridin into the city for a hour. And, Andy, those McFarland twins would come over to help watch little Annie. Those was the twins that was born on the same day, Debbie was seven minutes older than Dawn, and with the same birthday. And we'd take Annie walkin. Annie and the twins and me and you, Gumps, walkin on Sunday afternoon. And Annie was a real little angel, Andy, wasn't she? She had that same smile, that same smile that made me think back about little—made me think back—just like it.

That little Annie, she was a good little kid and she had a knack for doin what I said to her—doin it right now, Andy. And on those Sunday afternoons,

Andy, we'd go walking along the road and we'd sit on top of the rain ditch and watch all them city cars go by. And we'd sit there and watch em, and some went so fast that you couldn't see the car—just a fuzzy blur. And Annie would let out a little scream, and I'd look at her, and she'd look sorta scared, and I'd smile and kiss her on her nose, and she'd giggle and wouldn't look scared nomore.

Andy, we had good times, didn't we? Farmer Mr. LeMaster was talkin about how good I was and how I knew all about growin and stuff. And in September, four days after the holiday, he called me up to him and tole me that I was slow when I started for him, but that now he couldn't tell me from a country boy—one been born and raised on a farm—all his life.

And, Andy, ole buddy, I was doin good, too. Farmer Mr. LeMaster and his Mrs. liked me good, and Annie, little Annie, she was somethin. And you made sure I did my chores and my work, over and over. And they had faith in me and left me on Sunday afternoons, with the same-day twins, to watch little Annie for that hour.

And one Sunday we was watchin cars. Like always, them city cars were blurrin by. Blurrin by the way they always was. And Annie, in her white Sunday dress with the lambs on the collar, and the twins and me and you was watchin em speed by. And when them city cars wasn't comin and the road was empty of em, she saw this flower, one flower, just one, acrost the empty road, the last wild flower of summer, growin...pretty and tall. And I swear, Andy, I swear there wasn't a city car for miles. We let her go acrost the road to pick it. Andy, she got in the middle of the road and stopped. Little—little Annie turned around and smiled at me. She was in the middle of the road smilin at me—still smilin the way she always did.

And then I saw it. Andy, you saw, you saw! The twins saw! A city car was comin at her. She was stopped dead in front of it. She gave out that little scream. That little scream she always did. And, Andy! You—I couldn't move, Andy, Andy, you know, you saw me—the twins saw—frozen, Andy, frozen. We was all frozen. And just as that city blur was up on her, Andy, I jumped and I grabbed her and I rolled with her and we landed in the ditch. I'd hit little—little Annie's head on the pavement. She was bleedin, Andy, she was cryin. I kissed her, I kissed her on her nose, and she wouldn't stop—she wouldn't stop cryin. The twins were there. Her nose and mouth wasn't bleedin, much, Andy, not like little—not as bad...and she wouldn't stop cryin. She wasn't bleedin like JANIE. Not like Janie. For Christ's sake! For Christ's sake! I couldn't stand it.

I ran, Andy, and I kept runnin, and you was tellin me to stop, Andy, you kept tellin me. I was runnin back and them city cars, them city cars was blurrin south to the country. I ran and I ran and I ran. I got to some stop lights. And those cars was stoppin then goin on again, I couldn't stand...I couldn't stand it, for Christ's sake! Rocks, I threw rocks at em, and they kept goin. They'd only stop at lights—stop lights at that corner. Not long. Comin from the downtown and blurrin South. But not long. Not long enough. Stop. Stop just a minute. Red. Then green. Goin. Goin. Goin. Red. Stoppin, just a second. Then green, again. Goin on. Andy, they wouldn't stop. I ran out in the street in front of them, and they honked their horns and went around me. Goin on, South to the country.... I ran up to this black car and beat on it, on its window. It didn't stop. Wouldn't stop! It went blurrin on South. I caught another one, a white one. I beat on it. The guy drivin got out—he knocked me down. He said he said, was I crazy? I was crazy! And, Andy, I couldn't stop him either. He drove on. He wouldn't wait. And that light was changin, changin, green, red, green, lettin them cars blur on. Red. Green. Green, Andy, green! Then red. Then I got one. I got one good! I broke its window. Ran my hand through its window. Hit the driver. Hit him hard—hard, hard so he couldn't go! With both hands I grabbed its wheel. With both hands, I

did. Holdin on. Both my arms bleedin. Screamin and holdin on that wheel. Screamin, Andy, screamin, Andy...and then, and then...and then...

Snow...out...side...Andy Gumps.... Look...all that...snow.... Andy Gumps .... You come, Andy, and you go, Andy...you are an'you ain't.... Look at it snow, Gumps...like when...like when I was a.... it's a blizzard....

I

RICHARD EILER

Seek out the patterns of the skies:
Mars rides with reddened eyes.
Venus, throned above the plains
Dallies with celestial swains.

The Moon is solemn to the night
Saturn drives in ringed heights.
Comets cluster in a swarm;
Neptune circles far from harm.

The depths where Jupiter reigns,
Expand eternally as he deigns.
The Sun holds Mercury on a string
Forgetting that his thoughts take wing.

Uranus keeps with banded glee,
Science dangling on his knee.
Icy Pluto keys the urge
To open mankind by his purge.

Latent powers move the sky.
Can they quiet our endless "Why"?

A Rainy Morning on Michigan Street

MARY HAYS

The tired ribbon of grey, wet concrete
slides beneath my tires
The sad scope of the town is painted
on a canvas of flurry morning sky.
My heart repeats in my brain the
melody of poverty my eyes see.
The racking paint of the ancient
home, a xerox of the rest of the block.
The wet behaggled limbs of the trees, looking
like a soaked feather.
Scattered groups of bony children walk
their paved, wet sidewalks to school.
Tired old women, on the street corner,
clad in white uniforms wait for their bus to take
them to their restaurant jobs downtown.
A skeleton of a dog searches for
bits of garbage to fill its empty stomach.
I drive on. I know what's to come.
The cold, moist air makes a film on
the glass of the dark store windows.
Sprouts of grass, grow unattended
between the cracks of the sidewalk.
The sign above Jack's Tavern illuminates the black
sky in profound, radiant words - Cigar - Beer - TO GO.
Dirt-colored pigeons perched on the gutters
survey the traffic below.
The hardware store gutted by fire
stands its physical shape charred and black.
Comely billboard signs swell from the ground, advertising
the jazz of their product.
Half filled bottles, part alcohol
part water, lie strewn, upset on the window ledges.
A bell rings, an ebony coal train blocks the traffic,
then sluggishly sputters on.
I drive on. My wish is that perhaps tomorrow will
bring the sun to invent a new picture.

Transition and the West Ridge Blues

PHILIP DEAVER

Six in the morning in one of the summers after the days when the elms died, one of the damp, weedy summers whose mornings whined to the cutting of the power saws and mourned at the crunch of falling trees, the baring of small town shaded avenues. Indoors, one of the Jarman Memorial staff physicians was making his rounds. Unshaven, slightly slumped, Dr. Lander worked thru the first floor wards, entering each room, approaching sleeping patients with quiet efficiency and marking their charts. He spoke to Warner who had awakened about that time and to the floor nurse as she passed with a cart, and at the nurses' station he checked his watch with a clock above the desk.

Lander was a graying man. He'd been practicing for fifteen years in the same town. Under the doomed, then dying elms, his children had grown and grown distant, his wife was waiting and being consumed by the wait, and his ever-broadening practice gave promise of continued long nights and cold dinners, the thousand numbered interruptions and aborted beginnings which were signaling failure at home. Then the time had arrived when he vaguely deplored going home, and after that the time had come when he wasn't sure where home was.

Surely he knew the halls of Jarman better than he knew his own home. He knew the nurses, he knew the clamps, the syringes, the wooden surgical scrub brushes, the cracks on the steps in the matrix marble stairwells, he knew the rumors and the facts from coffee shop talk, he knew where the tufts of grass were and the heavy concentrations of pigeon turd in the old staff parking lot. He knew the nooks and back ledges of the basement, the easy access spots in case one might want to hide something. Jarman Memorial Hospital was his home.

A little past six, and he set his watch. At the end of the first floor hall was the intensive care unit. The doctor parted its double doors, one of which bumped a box filled with cotton and gauze, sending it skidding. There were boxes of medical supplies everywhere, hastily labeled with black markers, and the janitors were letting the paint chip and the pipes clog. Before long Jarman was to be abandoned for the efficient, boxy structure rising out of a new hole to the west.

The doctor startled the recovery nurse out of an early morning daydream.

"How're we doing here?" he asked. A woman named Bertha Harlan was on the high steel bed.

"You look bushed," the nurse said. Her name was Mrs. Froman.

"Well," he said, gesturing for her to help him turn the patient on to her side, "this isn't my shift." Afraid she would take him seriously (doctors don't have shifts, he thought to himself), he guarded himself with a smile.

"Has she slept all night?"

"All night," the nurse answered.

"That's good." He was feeling along the lower back with the tips of his fingers. Then he examined a fresh shallow incision, dark and tightly sutured. "OK, let's let her down," he said, rolling her carefully back.

Mrs. Froman watched him take the patient's hand in his, feeling for

warmth. He touched open one eye, then lightly pressed the patient's abdomen in several places. With his stethoscope, he listened to the muffled tones of the heart and the low irregularity of traumatic breathing.

"How did Bertha's exploratory turn out last night? Have you heard?" asked the nurse. The specimens were in the pathology lab.

"Do you know the Harlans?" he asked.

"Well, I know Charles—Mr. Harlan—he farms some of the Hollows land over by Westridge, where my folks live."

"Charles was my first patient. Damn near lost his thumb in a corn picker. He was just out of high school then." Lander pulled Bertha's sheets up to her chin. The room had the familiar nip of alcohol over the bland, crisp smell of bleached linens.

"I didn't even have an office here yet. There he was on the front porch with a towel around his hand and he said, 'I heard you're the new doctor.' We fixed it up in the kitchen."

Dr. Lander heard himself telling the story again. He had told it for years, how an examination for broken bones, a good scrubbing, and twenty-two immaculate stitches had brought the first five dollars of his general medical practice, how he and his wife had optimistically framed and hung the bill above the refrigerator in the old house on Buckner, and how soon after they had been forced to bring it down again for groceries. He heard himself retracking the tale, using timing and balance to set up the final irony, like telling a joke; and though he couldn't recall how it was exactly, he was sure it didn't happen that way at all.

"Now Charles has three daughters and a dying wife."

Mrs. Froman looked up at him. She leaned onto the steel chrome bedrail, carefully adjusted Bertha's sheets, then walked to a high lab stool near the double doors and sat down.

"The exploratory came up positive on all three counts," Lander said quietly.

He walked away from the bed to a window across the room. The frosted glass obscured the detail outside, so he opened the window about four inches, leaned down and peered out. The morning was blue. Rain.

He sat down on a wooden stool, feeling the fresh air against his face. Finally he leaned back from the window and rested his back against the wall, let his head hang and closed his eyes.

He liked Bertha, he thought to himself. He knew that he was tired and that he got depressed easily when he was tired, but this sort of thing was supposed to be easy for him. He was, after all, an ordained administrator of Health, capable of objectively tinkering with the body in order to bring it into tune, straightening the bones, relieving the mysterious tensions; from abscess to abortion, the problems were his, the weight was on him. But he was forty-five and thirsty. He pictured himself huddled behind the lockers in the doctors' lounge, having a nip, or slipping the bottle into an airless nook in the elevator shaft. Charles would make it OK. The farmers have to make it, he thought to himself. Toil keeps them going. The early light in the barn, those incredibly long dusty miles back and forth across the ground, the gasoline cans rattling and the motors popping, the crops; hosing out the chicken house. And the girls were growing up. They would help. He dozed. He started, half awake again, brought his head back against the wall.

Well, death is the doctor's enemy. It was that elementary. It was the fireman and the fire, the policeman and the crime. And in a small town, it always struck a friend, someone he knew; there was no anonymity. And if he guessed wrong in a guessing situation, or slipped somehow, it took exactly eight minutes for the coke-line at the drugstore to know about it in detail. The theory of the profession was so neat, like Harlan's stitched thumb, but these were his friends he was touching. For years he had watched and struggled to stop it, but illness

and accident had turned over the population of the town as a disc plow turns over the soil. Or maybe he was just tired. He tried to open his eyes.

He used to look for patterns. Who would be next? He found himself always trying to imagine who was being stalked for tragedy, who harbored the cellular promise of fatal disease. Did deaths come to him in threes? (He remembered a nurse mumbling in the hallway after the mayor died, "That's two for Lander, I wonder who'll be third.") As when he was small and a garage burned on Bighorn Street back in Nebraska and the whistle roared downtown, bringing out the volunteers. The spotted horses brought the flaming red pumper into the yard amid excited smoky gestures of the running neighbors—pointing, ducking to see and talking fast above the barking of crazy dogs, maybe someone lit it, who's would be next, the dogs bayed at the rising cloud, the mourning was there, the clatter, the ash and mud, deep, deep, but who knows anything about a burning garage. What?

He woke up when Mrs. Forman touched him on the shoulder. Another woman, Mrs. Endsley, was talking and reaching to close the window.

"...Mr. Harlan and his daughters are in the waiting room. He says you wanted to talk to him this morning about Bertha's surgery last night."

"I could have him go down to the coffee shop and wait if you'd like," offered Mrs. Froman. "He's been up most of the night," she said to Mrs. Endsley, making excuses.

Now, even with the window closed, the drone of the city men sawing the elms drifted into his mind.

I can talk to him. Last night I told him to get in here early this morning and I would pass along our findings.

Mrs. Endsley was looking around. She didn't often come into the intensive care unit. She wasn't a nurse and she felt uncomfortable. She worked at the waiting room desk. To Mrs. Endsley, Bertha Harlan was a patient in the hospital, evidently resting comfortably, under the competent and mysterious care of professional medical people. Like a librarian, she tip-toed reverently across the wooden floor, carefully dreading the creaks as she went, but the creaks came anyway.

Dr. Lander followed Mrs. Endsley down the hall to the waiting room. As he approached the doorway, he could see Carla, the youngest Harlan girl. Skinny, in a flowered dress, she was looking toward her father. Her pretty blond hair was uncombed. She was seven years old. Her hands were folded in her lap and her feet didn't reach the floor. And on the floor, Lander could see the farmer's black, crusty boot, the rest of him hidden by the half-open door. The doctor's spirit was dry and he thought of the relief one drink would bring him. "Charles," he thought to himself, "I wouldn't give you this news for anything if I could help it." Since the last time he was in the hall, an hour before, the burden of light had shifted from the tinkling fluorescent lights hanging from the ceiling to the natural light of day, streaming in the waiting room windows in spite of the rain. He walked straight into the light.

"I wonder if I couldn't see you out here in the hall, Charles, if the ladies will excuse us." On the other side of Harlan were the older two girls, ruffled and worried. Lander nodded to them. He noticed that the oldest girl had the same dullness in her eyes Bertha had always had. He didn't know what it was. It was as though there was a small gap right behind the eyes, a space between them and whatever came next.

Harlan stood up stiffly. In his gray-blue bib overalls, he was shaped like a gray-blue brick standing on end, a thick shouldered, middle aged tenant farmer, a guard on a forgotten Westridge High School football team who turned out to be a tenant farmer like the Harlans before him. He would be OK, Lander thought to

himself.

In the hall, Charles looked for a sign in the doctor's eyes, and the doctor felt him looking and waited. He sensed Charles was on the edge of realizing it, and he let the process take place. Finally, there were tears in the farmer's eyes. As they slipped down his face he quickly caught them, wiping away his entire expression with a nubby, calloused hand. The scar flashed into the doctor's mind—a glimmer of it as the hand brushed by. A long neat and narrow whiteness passing through the thick muscle of the thumb. Fifteen years had jumbled and rolled stupidly down to this:

"I'll just tell you, Charles, that we are going to lose Bertha very soon. She's dying."

The farmer made a circle with his work shoe on the wooden floor. Now his arms were tucked in behind the bib of his overalls. His face was tipped and looking down.

"Shall I help you tell the girls?"

"They know," the farmer answered. "Bertha already told us."

"She knows?"

"Somehow she knows."

The farmer kept staring at the floor. A long minute passed. The saws out on the street were whining, and the work crews were mounting the scaffolding on the new hospital to the west.

"I'll just tell the girls what you've said. No need you going in there." He turned and started back into the waiting room. Then he stopped.

"Could we see her this morning?"

Lander pointed down the hallway.

"She's in intensive care. She's probably still asleep, but you can see her. Shoo Mrs. Froman out of there if you want."

Charles was staring at the floor.

"Come in to the office this afternoon, Charles. There are a number of things we have to talk about. This is going to be a hard time for all of us, but there are some things we can do to make it easier, to help your family through." He put his hand on the farmer's shoulder. "I'm sorry I had to tell you this."

"Yup," Harlan said, and he walked into the waiting room. Dr. Lander stood in the hallway absolutely alone. His hand came up to his face, and he half coughed. He was tired. He turned, walked to the stairwell, and started down to the coffee shop, but then he noticed through the stairwell window that the rain had stopped, and suddenly he decided he would step out to his car for a drink.

Wave

DINAH ROCKWELL

Without warning mounted
One lone strong wave
On the silent inland sea.
Moving without acceleration
Or sign of diminution,
It rolled across the
Long-stilled expanse
Toward a barren shore:
Elements that had bordered
But never joined.
And the sea thrilled
That it had, after all hope
Had died, begotten this stirring.

The wave surged onward
Toward the receptive
Yet unexpecting sand,
Bearing fruition to the trilogy
Of sun and sea and land.
Crystal froth shot forth,
Its movement culminating
In the birth of sound.

Building constant force,
The crest shattered itself
On the lap of the shore—
Engulfed by the unquenchable
Thirst of sand.
Annihilated by its being.

The sea was lulled
Once again by the silence,
Uncaring in that moment
Whether it would bear another.

Death in Venice

DAVID FAVROT

Der Tod in Venedig (1911) is a key expression of certain themes that preoccupied Thomas Mann from the publication of his first important work, *Buddenbrooks,* in 1901 (in the character of Little Hanno and his schoolmate Kai), to *Doctor Faustus* in 1947: the loneliness and anguish of the artist, the conflict between discipline and freedom as equal elements in the creative process, disease as the frequent twin of genius, and the artist's typical fascination with morbidity and death. It is typical of Mann that he does not distinguish between artists: Gustave Aschenbach is an author, little Hanno is an aspiring composer, Adrian Leverkuhn an accomplished one, but their problems are often the same. The consistency of the artist's dilemma is further shown by Mann's practice of melding the characteristics of two or more actual creators into one fictional character: Leverkuhn's poor health, aloofness and eventual death from syphilis are taken from the life of Nietzsche (who is at least as much a creative writer, even a visionary, as a philologist or philosopher), while his musical works correspond to those of Wagner (both men, for example, wrote operas based on Shakespearean plays) and his musical theories to Schoenberg's. Similarly, the author Aschenbach takes his physical appearance and habit of overwork from the composer Gustav Mahler (as well as his first name).

On the literal level, *Death in Venice* tells the story of an aging, respected author's abandonment to a homosexual passion for a young boy while on vacation in Venice, and his death from plague in that city. Purely on this level, it is a story that engages one's deep sympathies as the great man is mastered by a foolish infatuation, degrading himself so far as to wear rouge and to dye his graying hair. However, even the most superficial reading of the story reveals suggestions of a deeper meaning.

One important theme is the isolation of the artist. Aschenbach's willful aloneness is repeatedly mentioned. Although he had married and sired a daughter, his wife soon died and the mention of his family occupies only four lines in a fifty-nine-page novelette. He receives letters, but they come from admirers in distant lands, not from friends. Indeed, the peculiar power of *Death in Venice* comes from its claustrophobic concentration upon a single man, a man so alone that he finds it perfectly normal to make a holiday journey by himself and to spend weeks in a hotel surrounded by strangers. "By medical advice he had been kept from school and educated at home. He had grown up solitary, without comradeship," Mann says, and the solitary habit continues into adulthood. Aschenbach shuns society to concentrate on his creative work. Mann tells us that every word of his protagonist's easy-flowing prose is painfully, carefully worked out; Aschenbach works out of dogged determination, not inspiration.

The work matches the character of the man. As befits his name (Gustave, from Augustus), his writings have what can best be called an Augustan tone. Aschenbach is a classicist, suspicious of rampant romanticism, of inspiration without the check of form. In his youth he "turned his back on the 'mysteries,' called genius itself in question, held art up to scorn," while in middle age his

prose "showed an almost exaggerated sense of beauty, a lofty purity, symmetry, and simplicity, which gave his productions a stamp of the classic, of conscious and deliberate mastery." Aschenbach purposely represents the voice of Reason, of moderation and proportion, against the forces of uncontrolled enthusiasm.

However, his surname (Aschenbach, from Aschen, "ashes" and Bach, "brook"—literally, "stream of ashes") indicates the meager satisfaction the creator derives from his fame. He goes so far as to make a virtue of his own spiritual infirmities:

> Aschenbach had once given direct expression—though in an unobtrusive place—to the idea that almost everything conspicuously great is great in despite: has come into being in defiance of affliction and pain, poverty, destitution, bodily weakness, vice, passion, and a thousand other obstructions. And that was more than observation—it was the fruit of experience, it was precisely the formula of his life and fame, it was the key to his work.

A page later, Mann says: "Gustave Aschenbach was the poet-spokesman of all those who labour at the edge of exhaustion." Thus in Aschenbach, physical weakness serves two functions. It goads his work, through his own determination not to surrender, and it shapes his aesthetic attitude along austere, scrupulously rational lines.

Aschenbach pays for years of neglecting the daemon within him. Mann was never shy about grafting his own ideas onto the plots of previous authors: his short stories "Tristan" and "The Blood of the Walsungs" are modelled on Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Walkure,* while his *Doctor Faustus* draws on both Marlowe's and Goethe's prior treatments of the Faust legend. Similarly, in *Death in Venice* Mann borrows elements from one of the oldest and best fictional treatments of the consequences of excessive rationalism: Euripides' *The Bacchae* .

The story of The Bacchae is simple: Dionysus comes from Lydia to Thebes to win followers, and drives the women of the city mad when he is resisted. King Pentheus, an unimaginative rationalist and sceptic, imprisons Dionysus and is subsequently lured to his death by the god, whom all Thebes then acknowledges as legitimate. Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), made the enormously influential distinction between the Apollonian spirit of moderation, reason and individuality, and the Dionysiac impulse toward emotional excess, blind obedience to instinct and self-annihilation in the Oneness of the universe. Nietzsche, who loathed Euripides as a rationalist profaner of tragedy, passed this judgment on *The Bacchae* :

> The opinion of the two old men in the play—Cadmus and Tiresias—seems to echo the opinion of the aged poet himself: that the cleverest individual cannot by his reasoning overturn an ancient popular tradition like the worship of Dionysus, and that it is the proper part of diplomacy in the face of miraculous powers to make at least a prudent show of sympathy . . .

Thomas Mann takes the Euripidean view of the Dionysus-Apollo clash in *Death in Venice:* Aschenbach has scorned the antic god, and his impiety brings his death.

The parallels between *The Bacchae* and *Death in Venice* are numerous. Like Pentheus, Aschenbach does not recognize the legitimacy of the Dionysiac spirit; he imprisons it, not in a cell, but within himself. Like Pentheus, he meets a manifestation of Dionysus and is enchanted by him. The similarity between the Dionysus of *The Bacchae* and Tadzio is too great to be accidental. In the Arrowsmith translation of Euripides' play, Dionysus is soft, effeminate, beardless, and has long, curly blond hair. Compare Tadzio: "His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture—pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-coloured ringlets...Tenderness and softness, it was plain, conditioned his existence." Dionysus was an Eastern deity; Tadzio comes from Poland, to the

east of Aschenbach's native Germany. Dionysus charms Pentheus into dressing like a woman and sneaking off to the mountain rites of the god. Aschenbach's attraction to Tadzio quickly becomes obsessive: he follows the boy through the streets of Venice, spends all day on the beach watching him. He eventually dyes his hair and wears rouge, giving himself an effeminate appearance. In all this he acts like a man bewitched, and rightfully so: as he did with Pentheus, Tadzio-Dionysus is making his former enemy ridiculous before slaying him. The adage, "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad," applies here. The most obvious evocation of *The Bacchae* comes in Aschenbach's dream of a Bacchic revel, in which he finally surrenders to the general frenzy. Here is revealed to the protagonist what is already clear to the reader: Aschenbach's total psychological submission to the repressed Dionysiac impulse.

It would be a mistake to assume that the Dionysiac element here is working with an altogether unwilling victim. Early in the story, Aschenbach has a vision of a gloomy, rank fever-swamp in which bright-eyed tigers roam; the phantasm is repellent, but it has a fascination for Aschenbach, too. Once his urge to wander is awakened, he goes immediately to the sea. His motives are lodged deep in his psyche: "His love of the ocean had profound sources: the hard-worked artist's longing for rest, his yearning to seek refuge from the thronging manifold shapes of his fancy in the bosom of the simple and vast; and another yearning, opposed to his art and perhaps for that very reason a lure, for the unorganized and immeasurable, the eternal—in short, for nothingness."

Nothingness awaits Aschenbach: his impending death is signaled throughout the novelette by intriguing figures who appear and then vanish mysteriously. Each is described as beardless, snub-nosed, a foreigner (both in Germany and in Venice) with a prominent Adam's apple. The first such figure appears to Aschenbach as he meditates on a cemetery, and gives him the initial impulse to travel. The second is Aschenbach's gondolier. This man insists on taking Aschenbach to the one hotel where Tadzio awaits him. The third is the musician whose street-band plays for the guests at the Lido. Who are these men? They partake of two identities. First, they are manifestations of Dionysus (it is here important to note that Euripides' play never positively identifies its blond wonder-worker as Dionysus: there is some indication that he is an agent for the god and that Dionysus possesses him to work his miracles. It is common in the rites of fertility-cults for one worshipper to assume the role of the god: in the Pan festivals of Joujouka in Morocco, for example, a village boy is chosen each year for the part of Bou Jeloud, the Father of Skins). Tadzio is a manifestation of Dionysus the Beautiful, a promise of sensual pleasure, a thrill of beauty, a strangely knowing boy whose frequent sidelong glances both entice Aschenbach and keep him at a distance. The various apparitions of foreigners represent Dionysus the Terrible, a god who does not shirk from the dismembering of his foes, a god who deals in blind-eyed frenzy. They are a recurring reminder of Aschenbach's mortality.

Secondly, they are messengers of Death. Dionysus-Tadzio promises the extinction of the spirit through sensual indulgence and abandonment to hidden desires. The three apparitions are harbingers of the ravaging of Aschenbach's body. When Aschenbach sees the first such messenger, "the man had a bold and domineering, even a ruthless air, and his lips completed the picture by seeming to curl back...they laid bare the long, white, glistening teeth to the gums;" he stares at Aschenbach with undisguised hostility. When Aschenbach boards his first gondola, Mann takes pains to associate that vehicle with death: it is "black as nothing else on earth except a coffin...lacquered in coffin-black and dully black-upholstered." Once Aschenbach takes his seat, he immediately surrenders to the smooth ride, rousing himself only when he notices the gondola is making

for the open sea, that symbol of nothingness, of death. He recoils from the gondolier; another Dionysus type—blond, undersized, a foreigner. Later Aschenbach is told that the gondolier is a "bad lot, a man without a license. He is the only gondolier without one." Of course he has no license—has Death, or Dionysus, ever needed one? Aschenbach gets his gondola trip for free, since as Flannery O'Connor's Misfit observes: "there never was a body that gave the undertaker a tip."

Aschenbach's third Death-messenger, the musician at the hotel, continues the suggestion of illegality. When Aschenbach asks him about the plague-rumors, he responds in feigned astonishment: "...perhaps our police are a plague!" The musician (Nietzsche takes pains to associate Dionysus with joyous, unrestrained music of the sort the musician plays) smells of carbolic acid, an unpleasant, clinical smell, but only Aschenbach notices it: the musician is a Death-messenger only for him.

In *The Bacchae*, the old men Cadmus and Tiresias have the prudence to take up the worship of Dionysus despite their advanced years. In *Death in Venice,* their part is taken by the old man whom Aschenbach meets and condemns on the cruise-ship to Venice—an old codger who dresses like a young man and who wears false teeth and rouge to hide his age. The youths who surround him do not share Aschenbach's rather Puritanical condemnation of their aged companion: "they were used to him, it seemed; they suffered him among them, they paid back his jokes in kind and the playful pokes in the ribs he gave them." Like Tiresias, this old man has taken up the worship of Dionysus; as Aschenbach leaves the ship, the old man wanders up to him, dead drunk (a suitable Bacchic pastime!), and bids him *au revoir.* Aschenbach, of course, later puts on rouge himself in an effort to please a much younger male, but his effort is unsuccessful because he is driven by the frenzy of Dionysus and not by his own inclinations, freely accepted. Death finds him instead, a plague-death born in the East like Dionysus, and the fever and weakness that precede his lapse into unconsciousness and then extinction are the physical counterpart of the Dionysiac madness that has drawn him to Venice to work his downfall.

Poem of Sudden Disgust

MARSHA MEARS

I planted a seed in a pot
Believing it would grow,
But guess what?
All I got was a seed in a pot!

Oil Spill

EDMUND BYRNE

On the beach at Santa Barbara
A white girl, fat and freckly, glows with joy of black girl friend,
whose animated gestures distract attention from emerging nipple
buds that brother's tee shirt was not meant to hide.
Three generations of Japanese on a picnic—cutleried children
and parents at table; grandparents,
shoeless and with chopsticks in hand, sit upright on a bamboo
mat spread even over the sand.
Young boys arm in arm come walking smartly along the ebbing mix
of land and wave, where
A gull
wings spread broadly in the speckled sand,
pain eased by peaceful bursts of breakers,
Lies dying.
"Throw him in the ocean."
"Let him be."
"We can take him home with us."
"You'd better leave him where he is."
"He'll die."
"He'll die anyway."
WHAT DO CHILDREN KNOW OF DYING GULLS?
From beyond the breakers, beyond the eyes, comes a dull thump-thump
of ever pounding drills.
From a beachside bench one lonely crying flute responds.
Another gentle breaker washes speckled froth upon the gull.
Oily patches on my feet, I lunch on cheese and bread.

Excerpt from "Wonder Magic"
Chapter 2, XXIII

MICHAEL HERSCHEL

there was no light in the room at all
and
the shadows danced on the walls—
they snickered
and
jeered
because
they knew they couldn't be seen—
they laughed
it was hideous laughter
the child heard it
the little one in the big bed
in the room with no lights at all
then the laughter went away
she thought it died
no—
they were playing now
it was their turn to play
they'd never played before
recess at a party
they played wicked games
it hurt her
the dark things
bit her neck
and
made it bleed
she screamed—
my god,
she screamed her horror
to the damned
the damned laughed
the shadows played
they knew they couldn't
be seen
by anyone at all
the room had no lights
and
after all
it was recess
what did they care
they couldn't die—
(they couldn't die?)
at all
they scratched her eyes
and
poked
playfully
at her heart
until
it stopped bleeding
they all laughed together
what did they care
or even why
recess is supposed to be fun
and
the little girl
played very well
they loved her very much
she couldn't scream now
her voice is gone
they've taken it too!
what fun she was
i wanted to play
but
they wouldn't let me
so i laughed
i laughed a thousand times
my ribs shattered
and
i still laughed
hideously now—
hideously—
gloriously hideous
i laughed harder than ever
my head hurt
and
i laughed
then i heard

no one laughing
with me—
i could see them now
they're here with me
they won't go away
and
i'm afraid
i say,
"Shadows are harmless.
They are funny people.
I like them." But
it's quiet
i can't hear anything
yes!
i hear silence ringing
all in my head
it hurts
me make it stop
i don't like it
i'm scared mommy
help me
it's dark
the funny noise hurts
me
all in my head
i hurt
here

no
i hate you
i hate you
i hate you
bad shadows
you hurt me
i'm gonna tell on you
no
go away
i hate you
i hate you
bad shadows
devils are bad
i hate you
your horns hurt
my side
stop
i don't like it
anymore
go home
go away
i want my mommy
you hurt me
go away
I HATE YOU
leave me
alone

My Buddy

FRED JONES

—Are you goin' fishin' this weekend, Charlie? asked a woman from a screened-in porch overlooking a gravel driveway.

A man in his early fifties bumped the door of a car shut with his hip. He had several items gathered in his arms.

—Yah, Kate. I think this weekend's gonna be nice. I don't want to miss the first good chance of the year. I already got my bait.

—Well, your supper's ready. I thought you might be gettin' home from work a little early. I got some sandwiches wrapped too for out in the boat. Give a yell, and I'll bring'em down to you.

Charlie nodded and walked into the basement. He placed his packages on a work bench and looked around. He'd spent all winter fixing his boat and preparing his fishing gear. The boat had been in the river a week. The poles were neatly laid out on the floor. The tackle box was open in the corner. It was full and precisely packed. Everything had its proper place, and he took pride in keeping things in their proper place. The entire basement was clean and orderly. He pulled a cooler out from under the workbench, rinsed it in the laundry tub, and put it on the floor. Several cases of cokes were stacked beside a small refrigerator. The top case was half full of empty bottles. He placed it on the floor and took a full case over to his cooler. All twenty-four bottles fit in the cooler, but they didn't leave much room for the sandwiches and bait. As he tried rearranging the bottles he shook his head. Cokes. He'd forgotten what a beer tasted like. There. That gave him more room. He walked over to a small freezer opposite the refrigerator and took out a bag of ice. Hadn't it been three years since his last beer? Yah. Three years. With a short rush of air from his nose and a shrug of his head, he walked back to the cooler. He was spreading the ice evenly over the cokes, when the basement door opened. Charlie looked around. His grandson stood in the doorway.

—Can I go fishin' with you, Grandpa? Can I? he asked panting to catch his breath after a hard run.

Charlie turned back to his cooler.

—Not this time, Randy. I'm gonna be gone all weekend, and you don't seem to have much patience for that kind of fishin'.

—Ah, please, Grandpa? I promise I won't ask to come home. I'll stay the whole weekend. I promise. Please?

He turned and looked the little fella straight in the face.

—You said the same thing last summer, but you never kept your word. I'm sorry, Randy. You can't go, he said in a calm but stern voice.

The boy looked at the floor. A tear trickled down his cheek.

—Fishin' is for old men with lots of time to think. It ain't for little boys with ants in their pants.

Randy turned and ran leaving the door open.

—Wait a minute! Don't you go runnin' out of here cryin' to your mom and grandma.

He stopped and turned his head back toward Charlie. Tears were running down his cheeks. He wiped them away with the back of his hand, as Charlie stood up.

—I still got a jar of those pickles left that I canned last fall. You want one?

The boy managed a faint, shy smile. Charlie walked over to a closet. He opened the door, pulled the light cord, and hunted around. The pickles were in a dusty Mason jar. He ran it under hot water and dried it off with a towel.

—You want to open it?

The boy nodded and walked up to his grandfather. Charlie handed it to him.

—I can't Grandpa. It's too tight, he said frustratedly.

Charlie bent down on one knee, took the jar, and opened it. The pungent smell of dill spread through the air causing both of them to swallow. Randy took a pickle, picked several thin stalks of dill off the side, and threw them on the floor. Charlie frowned at him.

—Where do those stalks go! he demanded.

The boy picked the stalks up quickly and put them in a wastebasket. As he licked the side of the pickle, his mouth puckered. He bit the end off, and his eyes started to water.

—Grandpa, those sure are good pickles.

Charlie nodded and replaced the lid. As he set the jar aside, he took a handkerchief from his hip pocket and wiped his grandson's face.

—Blow your nose.

He folded the handkerchief and wiped around his nose again.

—You go on outside and play now. I've got things to do.

The boy obeyed, and Charlie went back to his preparations. He hadn't lied to his grandson. Fishin' was for old men. He took four small pails of bait out of one of the sacks. There was more to fishin' than just catchin' fish. A boy couldn't understand that though. He wrapped each of the pails several times in cellophane. Fishin' meant peace of mind. It was a chance to get away from everything. A chance to be alone and think. He carried the pails over to the cooler and placed them on the ice. When he was alone in his boat on the river, he felt closer to God. His boat was a holier sanctuary than any church he'd ever been in. The door opened again breaking his reverie. It was Kate.

—I thought I'd bring your sandwiches down. I figured you'd be ready.

—I was just makin' room for 'em.

She handed him a stack of sandwiches wrapped in waxed paper.

—Thanks.

The sandwiches were placed neatly in a tray and laid on top of the ice.

—Do you know what today is, Charlie? she asked after a momentary silence.

He looked at her thoughtfully and shook his head.

—I didn't think you did. It's our anniversary, she said showing her hurt openly.

He pursed his lips and walked to the workbench.

—How long've we been married, Kate?

—Thirty-one years.

He took a package wrapped in gift paper out of a sack and handed it to her.

—Oh, Charlie! I'm so proud of you! she cried taking the package in one hand and hugging him with the other arm. And you know it's been three years since you stopped drinkin', she whispered in his ear.

She relaxed the hug, stepped back from him, and turned her head giving him a questioning side glance.

—At least I don't think you've had a drink in three years.

He started to say something, but he began to cough. He was coughing violently. Why didn't Kate help him? He was choking. Why didn't she help? The lights. It was dark, and he was coughing. He gagged and from what seemed the depths of his lungs came a thick mucous filling his mouth.

Charlie Hubbard sat slowly up in bed. His feeble hand reached instinctively to the left feeling along the crowded surface of a nightstand. He found the coffee can, brought it up to his mouth, and deposited the mucous in it. He took a deep breath and then another. The wheezing air suddenly ceased to move. He coughed and then gagged again. More mucous flowed into the can. Air passed freely through his nose now. He put the can back on the nightstand and picked up an aerosol container inserting its curved glass tube into his throat. Pushing the button down, he felt his windpipe grow larger and his lungs expand. He removed the tube and breathed deeply. The cool air cut the sides of his throat, as it filled his lungs to their maximum capacity. It was one of the few experiences that he enjoyed in life now. The abundance of oxygen brought on dizziness. Thoughts of his childhood came back to him. Running in the cold, wintry air had been similar to what he was now experiencing. He wiped his mouth and chin off with the back of his hand and eased his head back to the pillow. Those days were far behind him. Had he been dreaming of his childhood? No.. No... What had he been dreaming of? His memory wasn't what it used to be. As he stared at the ceiling his eyes began to adjust to the dimness which a nightlight provided the room. He had retired seven years ago. Seven years. At sixty-two he had been very healthy. What had happened? Some people said drinking was his problem, but he didn't believe that. Drinking didn't cause emphysema. As he reached behind his ear to scratch, he yawned. It wasn't the drinking, but it could have been the cigarettes. He rubbed the palm of his hand across the sparse, stiff bristles of his short hair. He had been a heavy smoker from his youth until three years ago. That was when he underwent Cobalt treatments for throat cancer. The treatments had been effective so far. He took a deep breath, rounded his lips, and blew it out with a soft whistle. His job hadn't helped his health either. As a pipefitter he had been exposed almost daily to the fumes from welding and soldering pipes. Those fumes were worse than cigarettes, but a man had to make a living somehow. It was too late to worry now. The damage was done and irreparable. Done and irreparable. Why? He thought about it a lot. There wasn't much else he could do. Since his retirement he had plenty of time to think, to watch TV, and to sleep. Maybe he had too much time to himself though. But that was why he had retired, so he could spend his time as he pleased. His leisure had been enjoyable at first, but in the last few years everything had changed. Television shows bored him, but he watched them anyway. The same old plots had been worked over and over. Mostly, he fell asleep when he watched TV. But he wouldn't even sleep anymore, at least not peacefully. His sleeping hours were filled with recurrent dreams. Some were pleasant, but others left him uneasy. Thinking wasn't the same for him either. Reflecting and reminiscing had been a source of satisfaction, but now they were a burden to him. He wished that he would never have to think or dream again. He shook his head gently. A faint grin appeared on his lips, and a short, soft laugh came from his mouth. What the hell had he just been doing! He laughed at himself again and wondered what time it was.

He slowly pulled the covers away and sat up on the edge of the bed. Resting there, he took several deep breaths. Every movement required a concentrated effort. The details of the small bedroom were barely visible. Opposite the head of the bed was the room's only window. The curtains were drawn open inspite of the frosted etchings on the windowpane. Charlie breathed deeply again. The dim nightlight and the barely glistening frost provided a

meager barrier against the total darkness outside. At the foot of the bed stood a green blur, which he knew was an oxygen bottle with a black rubber mask lying across the handle. The front edge of a cedar chest was visible at the foot of the bed also. In the corner beside the window stood a wooden wardrobe. Both pieces were damn near as old as he was.

Charlie closed his eyes, reached back to his left above the bed, and pulled the chain of a wall lamp. Bright light shone through his eyelids. He opened them slowly allowing them a gradual adjustment. Reaching for his glasses and putting them on the image of a weary, old man appeared distinctly in the mirror attached to the back of his closed bedroom door. His present appearance never ceased to amaze him. He took a deep breath. What age did to a man! His jaws were slightly sunk. His once full and round cheeks were now prominent cheekbones. Through his thick lenses his eyes appeared much larger than they actually were. His upper lip protruded slightly over his lower lip. Both adhered closely to his bare gums. The skin of his face and neck hung in loose wrinkles. His collar bones jutted noticeably out in spite of the thick, long-sleeved undershirt that he was wearing. The sleeves fit loosely around his thin arms. He looked at his hands. His fingers were thin too. There hadn't been a callous on them for years. He turned them over. The loose, wrinkled skin displayed the blood vessels and tendons by which they functioned. Only his rough, scarred nails testified to his hands' former use. He looked up at the mirror again and shook his head slowly from side to side.

—Things have changed. Things have changed a helluva lot, he mumbled.

Finally, he reached for his watch. Eight o'clock and it still wasn't light out. It had always been that way in December. Winter used to be a refreshing change, but it was only dark and dreary now. He cleared his throat and spit into the coffee can. He had to piss, but damn he hated to walk that far. Those twenty-five feet to the bathroom would take all his energy and still require a rest halfway there. If only he hadn't forgotten his jar. He took a deep breath. Kate had to get up soon. Maybe he'd just wake her up early. After a long pause he reached above the headboard and struck the wall firmly with his open palm several times. No answer. He struck it again.

—Charlie? Charlie, is that you? asked a sleepy voice from the next room.

—Yah, Kate. I need some help. Can you come in here?

His voice was soft, raspy, and not altogether intelligible at a distance, but he knew that she understood him. She soon opened the door and stood there in her bathrobe with one hand shading her not-yet-adjusted eyes.

—Are you okay, Charlie? What is it? Did you forget your inhaler?

There was a note of worry in her voice. He looked at her with a calm expression on his face. He knew how she would react.

—No. Nothing like that. I need my jar, Kate. Could you bring it to me? he asked directing his words toward the floor.

—Your jar! For cryin'-out-loud Charlie! Can't you even walk to the bathroom? You know the doctors say that's half your problem. You don't get enough exercise! You'd think you were a damn baby, who had to be waited on hand and foot!

She was wide awake now. Her anger didn't move him though. His expression remained calm and patient. After a short, silent pause she turned and walked quickly away. He noticed the living room light came on. She returned with the jar.

—Here!

There was still anger in her voice. He looked at her wrinkled face. She was two years younger than he was. Age had changed her almost as much as it had changed him, but somehow she had maintained her lively spirit. It was the same spirit that had caught his attention as a young man. He admired her anger. It was

something which he couldn't express with feeling anymore.

—Thanks, Kate.

—Thanks, Kate! A helluva-lot-a-thanks I get! Waking me up because you're too lazy to go to the bathroom.

Her sarcasm was penetrating, but the expression of his face did not change. When he finished, he put the lid on the jar and offered it to her. She stood there. Her anger was subsiding. As she stepped forward to take the jar, it gave way to pleading.

—Charlie, you know what the doctors say is right. Don't you care anymore? You don't do anything. You haven't been out of this house in four months.

They had been married forty-eight years. The pride of those years together stirred within him, but he was unable to express it outwardly.

—I know, Kate. I know, he said and then breathed deeply several times.

—It wouldn't be like this though, if you'd kept active after you'd retired. If only you'd taken a walk each day! Anything that might've kept your body strong!

She stopped talking. Anger was rising in her voice again. It was no use. This had been a several-times-a-day conversation for the past few years.

—I'll put some coffee on, she said as she turned and walked away.

Charlie said nothing. He knew she was right. The emphysema and cancer were beyond his control, but he probably could cope with them better if he were stronger. He pushed himself up with both hands, shoved the door shut, and was facing the mirror again. His body was slightly bent over. The muscles in his back were too weak to hold him erect. His long underwear were baggy around his thin legs. It was hard to believe that he'd been an all-state football player in high school. He took a deep breath, rounded his lips, and exhaled with a soft whistle. His pants were draped over the partially opened door of the wardrobe. He removed them and sat on the bed again. Putting his pants on didn't give him much pleasure. It took effort, and that meant harder breathing. When the waist was just above his knees, he stopped to rest. Finally, he stood, finished pulling them up, and buttoned the waist. Using the nightstand and bed for support he stepped into his slippers. His breathing was quick and shallow now. Congestion prevented him from taking a deep breath. He cleared his throat and spit into the can. He placed the glass tube in his throat and pushed the button down twice. Taking it out he inhaled deeply. God, that felt good. If only breathing was always that easy. He put two pill bottles in his pant's pocket. The coffee can was placed between the arm that held the inhaler and his chest. With his other hand he picked up the Bible. His steps were slow and short, as he moved toward the living room and his easychair. The walk of twelve feet took almost a minute. His breathing was heavy, as he arranged the things on the snack tray beside his chair. A box of kleenex, a glass of water, and his empty jar were already there. A wastebasket stood under the tray. He sat back in the chair trying to recover, pushed the reclining lever on the side, and was partially lying on his back.

—Charlie, are you ready for your coffee?

He wanted to answer, but he couldn't. She stepped in the doorway between the living room and kitchen to see if he was all right.

—No. I'd—rather—have a—beer, he said with great effort between breaths.

She drew her lips to one side with displeasure and walked back into the kitchen. It was always the same. He had to coax her into giving him a beer. Before, he drank whenever he pleased. In the last four months she had rationed him to six beers a day, and he had to beg to get those. He took the coffee can from the tray and spit into it. Six beers a day. He didn't even have the strength to hunt out her hiding places anymore. His breathing had returned to normal.

—Kate.

She stepped back to the doorway.

—Come on. Give me a beer. You know I get six a day.

She walked away without speaking.

—My buddy, he said drawing each word out a little longer than normal.

It was his favorite way of teasing her in just that situation. He heard the refrigerator door open and shut. She brought him the beer still in the bottle with the cap already loosened.

—You only get five today! I let you have seven yesterday.

—Well, I suppose seven beers is gonna kill me, he said still using his teasing manner.

She drew the beer back from his reach.

—You won't get any if you get smart!

He managed a playful frown, and she handed him the beer even though she didn't appear to be playing. Finally, she smiled. He took the cap from the bottle and sipped.

—I've got to take a bath and get ready for work, Charlie. Do you need anything else?

—Just the telephone and turn the TV on as you go out.

She placed the phone on his tray and went to turn the TV on. There were some things that age couldn't change in a woman. She went into the bathroom. Kate always had been good to him. Well, a little upset with him at times, but always good. She'd always needed people around too. That's probably why she worked. The money she earned working sixteen hours a week as a part-time nurse and secretary helped out, but it wasn't necessary. Their social security, his union pension, and the medicare took care of their needs. He sipped from his beer again. She still needed people and activity. He hadn't needed either for a long time. He took a long swallow and placed the cap back on the bottle. Setting it on the tray he took a deep breath. The television was on channel six. That was the only station worth watching. Jeannie was playing one of her usual tricks on Major Nelson. It must be after nine o'clock. He tried to maintain his interest in the program, but he felt drowsy. His eyes became harder and harder to keep open. They were beyond his control as were the thoughts in his mind. He heard a voice.

—Charles! Charles Hubbard, you get out of that bed now. You get out of that bed. You're gonna go to church with the rest of the family.

It was his father's voice. A young boy about twelve years old threw the covers back and jumped out of bed. He ran to the door and stuck his head out.

—I'm goin' to Mass with Mctavishes, Dad.

—No you're not! You're goin' to the Lutheran service with the rest of the family. Now get down here and eat your breakfast. Everyone else is finished.

The boy stomped back to the bed in the darkness. His anger mounted with each step. He wasn't about to go back to that Lutheran church. His father could beat him; he didn't care. He sold newspapers after school and had money of his own. He could take care of himself, and he would choose what church he went to. He sat there imagining what it would be like to be on his own. He heard heavy footsteps coming up the stairway. How long had it been since his father yelled at him? His pants? They were on the bedpost as always. The footsteps were slow but steady. His father was angry. He knew he was in trouble. The footsteps were closer. He'd better hurry. His shoes! Where were they? Where? He was frantic.

—Charlie? Charlie?

Someone was shaking his shoulder. It wasn't his father's voice.

—Charlie, I've got to go to work.

He slowly opened his eyes. It was Kate.

—My ride's waitin' outside, Charlie. Your lunch is in the icebox. Eat it today.

Will you? There's another beer on your tray and one in the icebox. I'll be home around five-thirty. Is there anything else you need?

—What time is it, Kate? he asked drowsily.

—A little after eleven. Where's your watch?

—I must have left it in the bedroom, he said sticking a finger under his glasses to rub his left eye.

She went out of the room. Charlie reached under the neck of his undershirt and pulled out a rosary. He wore it around his neck, because he lost it frequently. His father had never understood, but they had always been close. She returned with his watch.

—Thanks.

He put the watch on the tray and picked up the half finished beer. Kate was putting her coat on. The beer was warm. Still, it tasted good.

—I may be a little late tonight; it's Wednesday, she said walking over to him.

She kissed him on top of the head.

—Be sure and eat your lunch, Charlie.

He nodded, and she turned and walked away. His stare followed her out of the room. The door opened and closed. He finished the warm beer and dropped the bottle in the wastebasket. A quiz show was on the television. He wasn't really paying attention to it. He was thinking about the dream. He had never been a good Catholic. Even as a boy he had never attended Mass regularly. He hadn't even raised his own children Catholic. He hadn't been to church in years. A parish priest, Father Arman, had stopped in to see him from time to time, but he had been transferred to another parish six months ago. None of the other priests ever came around. His last confession had been six months ago. His chin dropped to his chest. Growing old could be very lonely. Talking to a priest had always been easier than talking to a God, who didn't answer. He raised his head up slowly and reached for the full bottle of beer on the tray. His windpipe clogged as he drew in a breath. His hand jerked back covering his mouth. He began to cough violently. Blood gathered in his face. The coughing made his eyes water. Finally, the thick mucous filled his mouth. He breathed deeply through his nose and reached for the can. He let the mucous run down the side of the can, so it wouldn't splash. After two shots from the inhaler he was breathing freely again. He wiped his eyes with a kleenex. Only dying could end misery like that. Then, he wiped his mouth and chin. He reached for the beer again. Kate had already loosened the lid for him. He sipped the cool liquid. A drink and a good breath of air were the only things to look forward to. The cap was replaced, and the bottle was set on the tray. A different quiz show was on TV now. One of the several stars sitting in the boxes was answering a question. The contestant disagreed. An "X" in that box. People did some of the dumbest things. He watched the show through half-opened eyes. His thoughts drifted toward nothing in particular.

—Hey, Charlie, that damn commode back there's stopped up again. Can you fix it?

A heavy set Jew was talking from behind a bar to a lean, muscular man in his late twenties.

—Yah, Abe, I can fix it, but what's it worth to you?

—The usual. A couple o' loafs o' bread and some hamburger for the family and six beers for yourself. But fix the damn thing so it don't stop up again! Okay?

—Look, Abe, I can't help what people throw down your toilet. Your toilet stops up, fine, I'll fix it. But I ain't no goddamn magician. I can't keep it from stoppin up.

—Okay. Okay. Just fix it.

—I'll be back. I gotta get my tools.

Charlie hurried out the door. His toilet's stopped up. He grinned broadly. He knew Kate would be happy to have the extra food, and he damn sure needed the beer. He hurried his pace.

—Which john is it, Abe? he asked as he walked through the door.

—It's the men's again.

He carried a plunger, a coiled-up metal tape, and his box of tools into the rest room. For a while he plunged the toilet, splashing the mixture of urine and water around noisily. He took his time. Then, he slid his box around on the floor and began taking tools out of it. With his sleeves rolled up he removed a straight pin from the top tray of the box. He placed his hand into the stinking mixture in the toilet bowl, found the outlet, and stuck his hand as far in as possible. Several air bubbles surfaced in the bowl. His hand was withdrawn, and the toilet was flushed. The popped balloon, which he had placed in the toilet a few hours before, went down the drain. Charlie smiled. The way things were he had to find some way to get extra food for this wife and kids. He hadn't worked in three months. There just wasn't any work. What the government gave a guy wasn't enough! He wasn't the only one pulling tricks like that. Where was that noise coming from?

The dream began to fade. Charlie didn't want it to fade. Those days had been hard, but they had been good days. He wanted to dream the same dream again, but the images wouldn't return. Whose voice was that? Where was it coming from?

—Grandpa? Hey, Grandpa?

He opened his eyes just as one of his grandsons walked through the doorway. His reasoning was still foggy.

—Did I wake you up, Grandpa? asked the young man with a concerned voice.

Charlie's eyes focused. It was Randy.

—Ah, don't worry about it. I was just takin' a snooze, he said in light, almost joking manner.

He looked at his watch. Five minutes till one.

—I don't suppose you brought me a beer.

He was teasing now, just like he did with his wife.

—You already got one three-quarters full on your tray.

Charlie managed a faint grin, but his grandson grinned broadly.

—You know I always bring you a beer.

He removed his coat and took a beer out of each pocket. He put one on the tray and opened the other one.

—How've you been feelin'? I haven't seen you in a couple of weeks.

—Ah, 'bout the same. If that damned dehumidifier was fixed, I might be able to breathe easier.

The grandson was sitting forward on the couch with his elbows resting on his knees. He took a drink from his bottle. Charlie turned toward the window beside his chair. The panes were frosted over.

—What's it like outside today? he asked.

—This early cold spell's gettin' me down. It must be zero out there. I can't remember when the sun shined last.

—You just can't figure nature out sometimes. It might be fifty degrees next week. You never can tell, Charlie said, looking back at the TV.

They were silent for a while. Charlie liked the afternoon talk show that was on. Sometimes they had some interesting guests. The grandson took several long drinks from his beer. It was almost gone. Charlie sipped at his.

—Hey, I just noticed somethin'. You're startin' to look like a hippie. Your hair must be a quarter inch long. When you gonna get it cut?

—Me? Why, if I had the strength I'd get you down and shave your head right now. I can't even remember what your ears look like. I always did have to keep you in line.

The grandson laughed, and Charlie managed a smile. The young man finished his beer and reached in his coat pocket for another one.

—You been holdin' out on me, huh? he said teasingly.

—Holdin' out on you. That full one's still sittin' on your tray, Grandpa.

He made the same playful frown, that he used with his wife. The grandson smiled, shook his head, and took a long drink.

—I just remembered. You been promisin' me a little nip of white wine. I bet you forgot again.

Randy nodded with a sorry look on his face. He drank several times from his bottle. Charlie stared at him.

—You know I can't bring you that wine, Grandpa. Why, Grandma'd kill me, if she ever found out.

—My buddy, he said drawing each word out longer than he normally would.

—Look, Grandpa, I don't want to do anything that might hurt you. I don't think you could handle any wine. You know what happens, when you get drunk. You usually end up in the hospital recuperating for a couple of weeks.

Charlie turned to the TV silently. Several minutes passed. The grandson took a long swallow from the bottle. It was empty. Charlie leaned over and spit in the can.

—You're mad at me, aren't you?

He looked at Randy with a calm, patient expression.

—If you say you're gonna do somethin', do it. A man's no better than his word. I always tried to teach you kids that. And if you do somethin', do it right the first time. Don't be half-assed about it.

His tone had been one of anger diluted by years of experience and patience.

—I know, Grandpa. You taught me a lot of things, he said feeling ashamed of himself. But I can't give you any wine. Honest. Don't you understand?

Charlie looked at the TV. They were silent for a long time. Finally, Randy got up and started to put his coat on.

—I've got a class in a half hour. I gotta be goin'. I'll come over next week and see you again.

He walked over and dropped his bottles in the wastebasket.

—Tell Grandma that I said "Hi".

Charlie nodded, let him get halfway out the door, and called after him. Randy stepped back in.

—Just a little nip, he said holding his thumb and index fingers slightly apart. I haven't had any for so long; I've forgotten what it tastes like.

He was begging. Randy looked puzzled, and finally, he nodded.

—Okay, Grandpa. Just a nip the next time I come.

Charlie took a deep breath and turned back to the TV. He hadn't expected to get his way. The door opened and closed. He reached for his beer, tipped it twice, and threw the bottle in the wastebasket. His favorite soap opera was on. It must be after two. He looked at his watch. Five after. Soap operas were okay. This one was more interesting than the others. He leaned over, spit into the coffee can, and picked up his jar before sitting back in the chair. Christ! What a helluva way to piss. He capped the jar and put it on the tray. Soap operas moved so damn slow. There was just enough to the story to keep you tuning in day after day. In some ways he liked the slow pace though. You could miss two months or so and still be able to keep up with the action. Too bad life wasn't that way. He took his beer off the tray. The cap was too tight. His undershirt served as a pad. Damn,

they were hard to get off. He sipped from the bottle and put it between his legs. There wasn't much happening in the story today. He laughed to himself. Nothing much ever happened. It was reflection on what had happened before that gave each episode meaning. He shook his head and took a long drink from his beer. Finally, the show ended. During the commercial he sipped from his beer and thought about his grandson. They'd shared a bedroom together when he was a little fella. How old had he been? Five, six, seven, eight years old. Yah, they'd shared that room four years. He'd taught him a lot. Taught him how to tie his shoes and hang his clothes up. Taught him how to shoot a basketball when he could hardly throw the ball ten feet up in the air. He'd even got him to eat pickled pigs' feet. And taught him how to write compositions for grammar school too. The years sure flew by. He drank from his beer. Another soap opera had just come on. He watched it for a while, but he started feeling drowsy again. He couldn't keep his eyes open. He dozed off.

—I'm sorry, Dad. I couldn't stop'em. I tried. Honest, I'm sorry.

An old, gray-haired man stared into space seemingly oblivious to his young son's words. Both were lean, muscular men. Only gray hair and wrinkles distinguished the father from his son. They were sitting on a wrought-iron bench in the middle of a large, neatly cut lawn. Before them the lawn stretched to a distant row of scattered trees. Beyond the trees concrete pillars jutted out of the ground at even intervals, and between the pillars were perpendicular lengths of black metal completing the image of a fence. Behind the two men stood several red brick, multi-story buildings. The young man was sitting forward on the bench with his elbows resting on his knees and his palms pressed against his face.

His father sat back on the bench with one leg crossed over the other and his hands folded in his lap.

—Talk to me, Dad. Please? begged the boy his voice quivering with emotion.

The blank, old face stared unflinchingly into the distance.

—I couldn't stop'em, Dad. Neither could Mom. Honest. You've got to believe me.

The boy stared between his fingers at the ground waiting for an acknowledgement.

—Goddammit, Dad! Will you talk to me? cried the son with tears running between his fingers and down the back of his hands.

—Don't curse at me, Charles, said the man calmly, as he turned slowly toward his son.

He placed his hand gently on the back of Charlie's head.

—I know you didn't have anything to do with this. I know who did it. I'm not crazy, Son. I may get a little carried away sometimes, but I'm not crazy.

—I—know—, said the boy between heaving sobs. But—how—could—they —? W—Why?

—I don't know. I truly don't know, he softly replied and paused to reflect. Fate never ceases to amaze me, Charles. Never. I always thought I was prepared for anything, but I never imagined this.

—I'll get you out of here, Dad. Just wait. I—will—, he cried bursting into sobs again.

—Okay. Okay, Son, comforted the man as he patted the back of the boy's head. But you take care of your mama. You take care of her. Don't neglect her worrin' about me.

Charlie nodded his head.

—But I'm gonna get you out of here. I am. Goddammit, you're not insane. You're not. You're not...you're not.....you're.....

The images and dialogue of the dream began to repeat themselves. He couldn't stop the repetition. He wanted to, but he couldn't. Over and over the

images flashed before him. Again and again the dialogue haunted his mind. Things began repeating out of sequence. Over and over. He had to wake up. He couldn't stand it any longer.

—Wake up. Wake up. Wake up, he heard himself mumbling.

Charlie slowly rubbed the back of his hand across his damp cheeks as he opened his eyes. Christ, why did dreams have to be so vivid sometimes. He shook his head gently. In all those years he'd never been able to reconcile that guilt. His eyes closed momentarily. His father had died a broken old man in Central State hospital, before he could get him out. Goddamn, life could be cruel! Sometimes it just didn't make any sense. As he took in a deep breath, his windpipe clogged, and he began to cough. The coughing caused his eyes to water again. Coughing and choking came alternately until he gagged, and the warm mucous filled his mouth. It even trickled out of his nose this time. He leaned over his can. The mucous slid out of his mouth. He coughed and spit some more out. He even blew his nose into the can. For a moment vomiting seemed inavoidable. He reached desperately for the inhaler and had trouble getting it in his mouth. What if the glass tube broke? There. He pushed the button down hard and breathed deeply through his nose. The welcomed air flowed through his windpipe. His body relaxed more with each breath. God, that had been close. He could've choked to death. He took several kleenexes and wiped his face off. He took another deep breath and wondered what time it was. His watch showed six o'clock. Where was Kate? Maybe she'd stopped at the store. What day was it? He thought for a while. Wednesday. Yah, she said it was Wednesday and she might be late. He looked at his pants. Both legs were soaked with beer, but the bottle was still half full between his legs. He picked it up and drank from it. The news was on TV. It was the same thing day after day. He took another drink. Fate never ceased to amaze him. The sound of Kate's voice broke his train of thought.

—Charlie? Charlie, are you awake?

—Yah, he mumbled in a soft voice.

He hadn't even heard the door open and close. That sounded like grocery bags being put on the table. Kate was breathing hard as she stepped to the doorway.

—You are awake. Why didn't you answer?

—I did. You just didn't hear me.

She frowned at him.

—You're not drunk, are you?

—How can I get drunk on what you give me? he asked teasingly.

She frowned again.

—Did you eat your lunch?

He didn't answer. He sat there with a calm, patient expression on his face. Kate walked out. The refrigerator door opened and closed. She walked back into the room scowling at him.

—Charlie, dammit, you can't live if you don't eat! You're impossible. What can I do? Why should I help you if you won't help yourself?

His expression didn't change. He sat calmly in his chair.

—Well, I'm gonna fix you some soup, and by god you're gonna eat it, she said pointing her finger at him.

She turned and walked out of the room. He took a long swallow from his beer. Two more swallows and he threw the empty bottle in the wastebasket. He thought about asking her for another beer, but he knew he wouldn't get it.

—What are you fixin' to eat?

—Oyster stew.

—Well, if you don't give me another beer, I ain't eatin' any, he said with childish candor.

After a long silence he heard her walking to the doorway.

—You'll get a beer with your soup and not before!

—My buddy.

—Don't "my buddy" me. You're not gettin' a beer now until after you've eaten your soup.

She stood there waiting for an argument. He looked passively at the television. When was the last time he argued with her? He hadn't always sat quietly and let her say what she wanted. His days of arguing were over now. She went back to the kitchen. He leaned over and spit in the can. It would have to be emptied soon. Jesus, he just remembered that he hadn't taken a pill all day. He reached in his pocket for the bottles. If she found that out, there wouldn't be anymore beer. He swallowed two from each bottle washing them down with the stale, warm water from the glass on his tray. He was putting the glass down, as she entered with his soup. Did he look guilty? He certainly felt guilty. She put the soup on his side tray. Then she placed a tray with legs across his lap, where the oyster stew and some crackers were set.

—Thanks.

She didn't say a word. His gaze followed her out of the room. A short, soft laugh passed out of his mouth. Where did her spunk still come from? The soup tasted delicious. She always had been a good cook. The news was still on. He took a deep breath and another spoonful of the warm, milky broth. Kate came back with a snack tray of her own. She sat down on the couch and drew it near her. She didn't look at Charlie. She watched the TV. Neither of them said a word. When Kate finished her soup, she sat back in the couch.

—And that's the way it was Wednesday, December twentieth, nineteen hundred seventy-two.

The news was over. Charlie picked up his bowl and sipped the remaining broth. He put the bowl down noisily. Kate turned her head. She put his dishes on her tray, went into the kitchen, and came back with a beer.

—Here.

—Well, what do you know. I didn't think you'd keep your word, he said jokingly.

—I shouldn't have. You never keep yours.

He frowned at her and then grinned. She shook her head and started cleaning up the tray beside his chair. The jar and can were taken into the bathroom and cleaned. He heard the toilet flush. They smelled of deodorizer, when she brought them back. Charlie was watching a Christmas special on TV.

—Who came over today? she asked picking up the wastebasket.

—Randy on his way to school, he said breathing deeply several times.

—How many beers did you have?

—Just one; he drank the other two.

He took a sip from his beer, as she carried the wastebasket out. The outside door opened. He took a long swallow from his beer. After a pause the door closed, and he heard Kate shiver.

—It sure is cold for this time of year.

He didn't answer. He was watching the television. He sipped from his beer during a commercial. Kate was washing dishes. He drank from the bottle again. It was almost empty. The special was back on. What was that song? Oh yah, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas". That was a beautiful tune. He'd dreamed about a lot of white Christmases. He finished the beer. That one hadn't even gotten warm. Kate came back into the room and turned on a light behind him.

—I wondered when you was gonna turn that light on.

She smiled at him.

—How about bringin' me another beer before you sit down?

Her smile faded sadly, and she pursed her lips.

—Okay, Charlie. This is the last one tonight.

She brought him the beer and sat in her chair a few feet from his. Picking up her basket of crocheting, which was beside the chair, she removed a crochet hook, several balls of yarn, and a half-finished piece of crocheting. Charlie sipped from his beer and watched TV.

—The family's gettin' together at Pat's house Christmas Eve. Are you gonna go?

There was a short pause.

—I don't know, Kate. It depends on how I feel, he said leaning over to spit in the can.

They were both silent. She continued crocheting. Charlie tried to watch TV, but he couldn't keep his eyes open. He could hear the TV. It sounded far away.

Christmas Eve. He got drunk that night when he heard. He hadn't been drunk for years. Johnny had a heart attack. But that wasn't why he got drunk. He hadn't had a drink in nine years. Johnny Mctavish wasn't that old. He died though. Things had been buildin' up for years. You never knew when you were gonna die. Christmas Eve. Work didn't mean much after that. No sense in takin' pride in anything. That's what it all meant. No sense in takin' pride. Johnny'd been dead a few years. Charlie'd been drunk a few years. No pride left. No sense in workin'. What happened to the TV? Where'd the TV go? He didn't want to dream. No, not this dream. Just bad memories. Everything was black. He didn't want to dream this dream. Change. He needed change. It was so black. Where was the light? He needed change. Change. Change....change.....change.....

A gentle, warm breeze rippled the brown-green waters against the small, aluminum boat. A bright glare appeared on the water, as the sun broke from behind an immense, white, puffy cloud. Charlie shifted his weight to ease the numbing in his ass. He'd been in the boat a day and a half. It was a home to him. He'd built a small, aluminum cabin over one end of a fourteen foot rowboat. It provided just enough protection from the elements. Inside, his fishing gear was arranged in orderly fashion. There was a cooler, which also served as a table, and beside it was a charcoal stove. He'd even found an old chamber pot, which was very handy on extended outings. The fish weren't biting very well. He'd caught a couple of channel cats earlier, just before sunrise, but they were nothing to brag about. As he pulled a pack of cigarettes from the breast pocket of his checkered, flannel shirt, he noticed his line go taut and slacken again. Something had been playing with his bait for the last half hour. The big, old fish were cunning. They were too hardened by experience to take the bait and run immediately. Playing a fish was the biggest thrill of all for Charlie. Matching experience for experience, he liked that. He inhaled deeply from the cigarette and blew the smoke toward the sky. The occasional, cumulus clouds had given way to a dark, threatening bank in the southwest. Most fishermen would head in at the first sign of a storm. Not Charlie. Sure, storms scared him. He'd be a damn liar if he said they didn't. There was something richly exhilarating about weathering out a storm. A storm had never driven him in. The thick, black clouds were moving in a quicker than he anticipated.

—Not this time, old Buddy, he said reeling in his line.

The breeze had stiffened. It was time to secure everything. A flash to the southwest and the distant pounding of thunder. This storm was gonna be a dandy. It had moved quickly over his head and filled the entire sky around him. The breeze died down momentarily. Charlie sat in awe of the calmness. The odor of the coming downpour was strong. All hell would break loose soon, and he was no better off than the trees and animals. He too sat defenseless against the coming

fury. Pat. A big drop hit the boat. He looked down river. An occasional drop hit the water radiating small circles from its center. Lightening flashed in several places overhead at different intervals. Rain fell hard farther downstream. As the wind gathered force, the boat began to rock. Boom after boom of thunder rolled across the heavens each time the pitch black sky exploded in light. The rain picked up, and the boat tossed roughly on the water. Charlie gripped his firmly attached seat with both hands. The clean, fresh air cut deep into his lungs. A bright flash to his left was followed instantly by a loud, cracking explosion. That had been a close hit. The trees swayed in far reaching gyrations straining to keep that first fiber from breaking which would mean the beginning of their doom. The waters of the usually peaceful river swelled into small, but powerful, foamy caps. The rain pounded against Charlie stinging his face. Inspite of its heavy anchors, Charlie's boat drifted downstream. His fears mounted with the storm's intensity. There was another bright flash and instant, cracking explosion. His grip tightened on the seat as the boat dipped low to the right and took in water. For the first time he noticed the water was ankle deep. He had to bail, but he was afraid to let go. His heart fluttered suddenly locking him in fear. What was he going to do? His body shook as the boat dipped and took in more water. God help him; he didn't want to die. He wasn't ready. The boat had drifted closer to shore almost among the partially immersed branches of a fallen tree. A large limb jutted out toward the boat. If only he could reach it. If only he could. A strong gust blew the rain hard against his face. To his blurred eyes the branches of the tree assumed an almost human form with a helping hand extended to him. He had to take it. He couldn't just passively sink to the bottom with the boat. For christsakes he had to grab it. But what if he fell reaching for it. He'd still drown, because he couldn't swim. Goddammit, what'was he to do. His body raised slowly. His hands still gripped the seat of the rocking boat. One hand released its grip and reached out. The weight of his body shifted as the boat dipped toward the limb. He was falling. He was going to drown. His arms flailed wildly in the air. He was going to drown. It was black. His arms swung in frenzied strokes at the blackness.

—Charlie! Charlie, wake up! Wake up! Will you! cried Kate as she pinioned his arms against the chair.

Charlie fell weakly back in the chair. He was conscious now and coughing uncontrollably. His chest heaved up and down with each cough. Yellow, slimy mucous oozed out his mouth and down his chin. Kate wiped it off with kleenex. He breathed deeply, but congestion still partially blocked his windpipe. With a crude, rushing, outward gasp of air, he cleared his throat. Kate held the can to his lips, and the mucous was deposited.

—Are you okay, Charlie.

—Yah, he murmured as the phlegm fluttered in his throat. Thanks.

—You must have had quite a nightmare. You almost fell out of your chair, and when I tried to help you, you started swingin' at me.

He cleared his throat again.

—Yah, I guess it was a nightmare. I was dreamin' about bein' in a storm in my boat. Only I was never in a storm like that before. I've been in lots of storms, and I was always scared, but never like I was of that one. It just wasn't real. She rubbed the top of his head.

—Well, it's after eleven-thirty. The news is over, and I'm goin' to bed. Why don't you go to bed too?

—I just don't understand it, Kate. I was never afraid of a storm, like I was of that one.

—Don't worry about it. It was just a dream. You take a couple of pills when you go to bed, and everything will be fine.

—I guess you're right, he said weakly as he took a deep breath.
—I'll take your things into your room.
—Thanks, Kate.

He sat gathering his energy after she left the room. The dream bothered him greatly. Like so many dreams, it was a mixture of the real and the unreal. Charlie shook his head and yawned. It was time to go to bed. How could anyone sit in a chair all day, doze off to sleep from time to time, and still be as tired as he was? God, why did it have to be so hard to carry on? All those years and he was so tired. He took a deep breath, slowly pushed himself up from the chair, and began the long journey to another night of troubled sleep.

Sincerely Yours

JODY GOLLAN

Dear Sir (you have the correct spelling
in your files)
We of Smith-Jones (etc. etc.)
regret to inform you
that your request
(where is that letter? Oh yes.
Here, copy this)
has been denied.
Should we ever arrive (No!)
find the occasion
to acknowledge your sound advice
(a flattering phrase or two,
I think will probably suffice)
appreciate your consideration,
yours truly (No!) Sincerely,
(The usual,
that should do).