



the cottonwood review

the cottonwood review

no. 1

vol. 4

1967

staff



editor - David L. Stewart
assistant to editor - David Melvin
photography editor - Larry W. Schwarm
fiction editor - Steven R. Bowman
poetry editor - Phyllis Goldblat
art editor - Beverly Snedecor
layout editor - David L. Stewart
general staff - Jim Schmidt
 James Scofield
 Corty Stakes
 Conall O'Leary
 Bill Newton
faculty adviser - Roy E. Gridley

visual arts credits

Richard Knox 19
Anthony Hedrick 17, 23
Steve Dykes (Oh Pioneers) 27,
Larry Schwarm - cover 21, 25, 31, 47
John Blasdel 29

address all submissions to:

Cottonwood Review
Rm. 118, Kansas Union
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

An interview with Robert Creeley will appear in the next issue.

there were warm days in June
before the final ending of the year
when we would go together
to that distant dog-leg of the river
with deep woods and fields
and swamp if need be
to shut out such things
as dust of towns and roads
and noise of sweating people
from that far Pan-rich, green-rich
elm-rich bank of secret river
and there were dandle wings
and such strange things
as moles and toads and snakes
and the architectural spider
building dungeons in the grass
and, yes, there was the blue milk sky
above the trees stretched out to dry
and there was the burnished river
bearing broken limbs and leaves
and water-bugs and sun-starts
and then there came the measuring
trajectory, velocity, and thrust
and then there was the launching
slow at first then faster and
take heed that evil-footed root
and then the leap and clear
and catching at your heels
O thou earth-bound boy
to thus become a thing of air
as jackdaws catch the wind
so nearly did you shell a humble-bee
yes, cannonballs from ships at war
but never cannonball that spun so
leaves, sky, and farther shore
river, leaves, and sky again
and, O, the interchange of elements
the cool dim world of mothering water
unbending your tensed cannonball body
O change, now bird now otter
and home to you was each
both air and water
but there had to come an ending

a climbing to the shore
not just June days
but always
for rivers now no longer traffic in
such things as dandle wings and boys

H. Wileman

Lamp light

The lamp-light pledges
Objects to bloom,
As intimations
Finger our room.

The glow that gathers
About her face
Sheds nimbus about
The commonplace.

The fall of her dress
Launches a power
As of a narcotic,
Fantasmal flower,

With emanations
That arise
From foam-white breasts
And among thighs.

A luminous essence
Of something bright
Makes her body
Quote light,

Dissolving our room,
As we embrace,
Where a poem
Is taking place.

Louis Ginsberg

Huey

The only thing that bothered him about reading the dictionary was how to compose the book report. But at least Huey knew what his last sentence would be. "Thus (Huey's last sentences always began thusly) Webster's Dictionary is certainly one of the best works of its kind, but is, unfortunately, rather dry in places." And now, stretching the paper at the end of his stumpy arm, smiling oafishly, and stroking his fat belly, Huey knew that with a last sentence this beautiful, the rest would just be routine. Miss Uptight would especially grub that "rather dry" phrase. It sounded so British, and as everyone knew, Miss Uptight had once spent five days in England as part of a special, super-extra tour of Europe -- economy rates. At the slightest provocation she shared with one and all the astonishing truth about what England was really like.

Huey's mother considered Miss Uptight the most exciting personality in town. (Huey's mother had to be second after that brilliant end-play at bridge club last week.) Huey's father didn't give a shit. Huey's father only cared about football and lying about his age. And except for that one night when he got stoned at his wife's open house and began yelling obscenities at the guests, Huey's father had never spoken a word to Miss Uptight. She was primming on the sofa, tea cup and all, discoursing on the social philosophy of the typical British farmer, when Huey's dad stomped over, smelling of Schlitz, and sneered, "You bony, peanut-assed snob. The only thing that could help you would be a good screw." He then obligingly vomited in Miss Uptight's tea cup, just for emphasis. Miss Uptight prepared to sue, then relented. A scandal might hurt the children. Besides, the judge liked football.

Huey was deeply ashamed of his father, and Father didn't care much for Huey, either. Mother naturally defended Huey. It was clearly the forces of education, intelligence and urban sophistication, versus the proverbial brute. For his part, Father couldn't comprehend this plot to make his only son a sissy. And pleas always succumbed to rage.

"Come on, Huey, why don't you at least go outside and play? Why, you don't have a single friend. And it's time you started thinking about girls, too."

"I do too have friends. Miss Uptight's my friend, and so is the principal. And I don't have time to think about girls. There's a book report due tomorrow."

"You don't have to do all that extra credit work."

"I like it."

And then, face reddened, fists clenched, eyes bulging and burning, "God damn it! Get outside and run around the block. Don't you see you've

only got eleven months to get in shape for football at high school next year? Now get out of here! And do some sit-ups; your stomach is disgusting!"

So Huey ran into the woods, found his hidden Playboys, and went to his secret place. Later tonight finish the book report, then tomorrow in class show them who's smartest -- again. Straight A+'s -- Keith will never match that. Keith, he's not half as smart as I am

Huey makes a bright, perceptive remark in Miss Uptight's class. Keith attacks, and supports an opposite opinion. He's smart, and the class is won -- they laugh and agree. Huey slowly raises his hand and begins a grand defense. With brilliant, rapier-like arguments Keith's ideas are systematically refuted and reduced to absurdity. The class can do nothing but stare in reverent admiration; Keith is beaten and embarrassed -- his girl friend gives him a disgusted glance, then smiles at Huey. Miss Uptight sighs and a long, warm love flows; she was hoping Huey would win.

Bill thinks he's so great in sports -- always has to be the quarterback or pitcher. We're behind 21 to 0 at the half. Bill hasn't moved the team at all, and he sits sulking on the bench. Huey asks to be put in, but the team shouts him down, and Bill tries to start a fight. Then on the first play of the second half Bill is injured and carried off the field. Huey calmly approaches; the coach is tearing his hair. "Hmm. He has a broken neck and a hernia, sir, but he'll be okay in a few days."

With his last strength, Bill mumbles into unconsciousness, "It's up to you now, Huey."

Huey rolls out right to pass, but all the receivers are covered; he's cornered but somehow escapes and reverses field, breaks three tackles, and with an astounding fake leaves the last defender sprawling impotently. Then open field and a tremendous final sprint. Then the enemy rumbles downfield. The defense begins to crumble. Huey goes into the defensive secondary, makes a leaping interception, and races an unbelievable 103 yards for the T.D. With a roar the team comes alive and the tide turns. Huey runs, passes, blocks, tackles, kicks, receives -- and without even breathing hard! The governor is flown in for the last quarter. Final score Scarsdale 69, Purvis 21. The next day a check for \$50,000 arrives from Jack Mitchell of Kansas University -- Huey gives it to his favorite charity.

And Frank, you think you're so good looking and cool. Well

Girlish whispers, "Hey, there's a neat new guy in school." So suave, so good looking, they lust and swoon as Huey passes; he gently caresses with every movement, the subtlest glance. But what's this? One girl resists, the high school Teen Queen, of course. Then his chance comes in a dark corner of the chemistry lab after the Big Game. She struggles, then total surrender. He nuzzles her ear and whispers, "My skateboard's waiting outside."

"Ooooooooooh, yesss," she sighs.

Deep in the woods

"HUEY!!!" The contorted, astonished, anguished, angered, faltering voice of his father.

Three days later Huey got his book report back. It was marked A+, and a note was at the bottom. "Another excellent job, Huey. You're sure to go far."

Steve Dunn

On the Kaw, among the
Refuse of many hands,
A neolithic fort of stone is exposed
In the river cut. The rough bone grey
Of rock foundation gleaming sudden --
Bone white across the dark clay
Of the river bank -- a memory,
The color and valor of long dead spears
Rising through centuries to the light
Chill of day.

To you, now. So much I would,
Could I say those things now/
Buried beneath that --
So much between us.
Whole worlds we never dared admit
To common lover's discourse
Flash sometimes as the river
Has borne gifts.

But this is enough, I could not
Bring your body back, however
Much I call your soul. The dead
embrace clods and, after
The fasion of lovers,
Unite with the soil.
The past is all the dirt we have
To dig our graves in.

Thomas Kellog

ANNIE'S DEAD

On the other side,
of the closed shade
and the cold glass,
I hear night's various engines,
each humming in time
to their separate music;
and I think of destinations
of voices, and footfalls, and headlights
pushed about here and there
by their motors.
I did mistake some for the wind.

Before the pills and holy shampoos,
Before the invisible crawlers
Went over her body, and punished
Her sins,

there were summers and porches,
cold bourbon with mint, and a man,
and one grand magnolia,
green as a god,
she had known since the day she was born.

In another time and another mind,
After the long death or slow decay,
Breathed through the upstairs bedroom
After the dust of the dying
Had settled in her body's
Every pore.

the roots of magnolias
fed in the dark, underground,
and the grey in her hair
swarmed with a life
that had crawled from strange homes in the earth.

We are sorry she died,
To bring us such sorrow.

Behind the shade,
inaudible voices
freeze on the glass,
and melt into midnight traffic --
moving light through my room
from corner to corner;

and I feel myself smaller,
smaller than strangers
and more distant than
strange conversations.
I did think I heard someone singing.

Harry Weldon

to mister

If loving you is carnal
Then dye my stockings red
Tell Nero how I ate the watch
On mad moon-drunk debauches of men
Who swim in saffron seas
To see a lady's knees

If loving you is holy
Then give me as a nun
A desert seascape from a tower
While hands that should be starved to peace
In secret and alone
Will trace your name on stone

If loving you is both
Then hide us in an hour
Where none will think to find us out
An hour that goes with nunnish steps
To reach a scarlet door
The lady, or the whore?

Karen Wootton

Wings of song
Song without words
Words without song
Words without wings

Jeanne Esch

it was a warm day

It was a warm day, the first really warm day since winter had come so many months before. There were only a few people at the beach, though, because the nice weather was as yet unseasonable and could not be relied on.

The beach lay below the dam where the river had, over the years, made large deposits of sand. If you were careful where you looked, so as to see nothing but river water and sand, you could pretend quite easily that you were on a real beach beside the ocean. But not for long, of course, because there was always the faint smell of river, not ocean, and the wind came off the land.

A few people from the town had come out and sat fishing in work clothes along this narrow strip. They were quiet, unmoving, spaced well apart. A flat-bottomed skiff lay at anchor in the deep water directly below the dam, and a man in coveralls could be seen hunched over the bow, his long pole standing out black and still against the reflecting water like the tree branches grounded in the sandy water close to shore. The only other people in sight were farther inland, away from the water. There were four of them, and they were having a party.

The two men and two women wore swim suits -- the bodies of both young women sleek and striking in bikinis -- but none had as yet gone near the water. They sat playing cards and talking under the protecting shade of a huge red umbrella pitched in the sand.

Presently, one of the men in the group stood up and said, "I'm going to get some sun. Don't take all my wife's money while I'm gone."

"Don't worry, dear," said one of the women, evidently his wife, "we were about to start playing strip poker, and you can't lose much at that game."

Everyone laughed very hard; since they arrived they had been drinking beer from a cooler, and it was easy to laugh now. As the man walked down the beach away from the group he heard someone say, "How shall we play? Sudden death?" and there was another burst of laughter.

Sudden death, the man thought, that really is funny.

He sat down on the hot sand, removed his sunglasses, and pulled his sweatshirt off over his head. It was too bright without the glasses, though, and he had to put them on again.

In the middle of the river he could see the fisherman in the skiff, a black shadow against the sparkling silver water. He wondered how the man

could bear looking into the glaring reflections of the water with nothing to shield his eyes.

I suppose, he thought, you can get used to it. You can get used to almost anything.

The man under the umbrella was calling to him.

"Hey, Paul, how long are you going to be out there?"

Paul waved and smiled and shouted back, "I'm communing with nature -- don't bother me." His voice sounded strange coming back to him through the glaring heat -- muffled, he thought, just like in the snow.

In reply, the man under the umbrella threw a handful of sand. He was too far away, though, and it scattered in the wind before it reached Paul.

Good old Tom, Paul thought. Always kidding around -- the son of a bitch, he'll probably never realize that there's no need, no reason. Tom and Paul had been friends through college, Tom had been the best man at Paul's marriage a year before. Sometimes, when Paul had time to think, he wondered why Tom bothered to hang around. He was engaged to the other woman under the umbrella; perhaps he needs to be near a genuinely married couple to keep up his courage and resolve. The poor son of a bitch, Paul thought, and lay back on the hot sand.

The sun beat down on his body like a tangible weight. With his eyes closed he could still see the red glare pushing down on his eyelids. He felt as if he were pinned to the sand. He sighed and slowly relaxed, letting the sun bake him, letting his thoughts wander.

He thought about all the other times he had lain there; not in the same spot, precisely, but in the same manner, and under the same sun. It never changed. The heavy sun, the tiny gusts of breeze that momentarily eased the heat, the pulsing in his temples -- they were always the same. But instead of the steady sound of the water going over the dam, there was the loud splashing at a swimming pool, or the pounding of surf.

Water over the dam? he thought.

Without opening his eyes he could see the smooth glassy surface at the top of the dam, then the broken white rush, and the tumbling turmoil of rocks and water and tree limbs at the bottom. And at his feet, the river again quietly flowing. Water over the dam.

It couldn't flow back again, once it had taken the plunge -- that's what they meant, the people who said, "Never mind, it's water over the dam." But there's more to it than that, Paul thought. The river is a part of life, a raw force, that is not just . . . he could no longer hold in his mind the clear image of the dam and the river. His thoughts became vague. He rolled over onto his stomach and dozed; time slowed and the heat beat down upon him.

Someone was sprinkling sand on his back to rouse him. He turned over and, looking up into the sun, tried to see who it was. A woman's form silhouetted itself black above him, the curves sharply contrasting with the white of the sky, the hair blowing free, the features in darkness.

He grabbed the shadow by the waist and pulled it down to him on the sand, kissing it with lips that were dry with sunburn as they touched the

softer flesh. He started and released the girl. She giggled a shrill nervous laugh.

"Really, Mr. Anderson! What if your wife is watching?"

Paul sat up, incredulous. "I thought it was -- I thought you were my wife. I'm sorry, Ann, you see I was looking up into the sun and all I could see was -- ."

"No need to apologize," the girl said, leaning over him and confidentially putting her hand on his arm. "I wasn't scared a bit."

He laughed, still embarrassed but not knowing what to say. The girl lay down beside him on the sand. She had a fine body, a remarkable figure. Paul wondered if she expected him to appreciate the fact.

Little girls, he decided as he looked at her, are the most vicious creatures. As soon as they stop wearing undershirts, they start wielding their sex like a bludgeon. This sweet thing would think nothing of dragging someone head first through the river for the sake of proving that her breast was the correct shape, had the proper curve. I wonder how many men have been keelhailed on this delicacy?

"What are you grinning at?" the girl was saying.

Paul laughed out loud. "I was just thinking how much fun it was kissing you."

"Oh, you," said the girl. "I bet you were."

"Well, anyway, I'm going to take a swim. Do you want to come along?" Paul asked.

"No," she said, as he knew she would, "I think I'll just stay right here. The water looks awfully cold and dirty."

Paul waved and walked down the beach to the farthest reach of sand, glad to be alone once more. From there he could see, a little downstream and in the middle of the river, a tiny island of piled-up sand. There were many birds pecking along the island's miniature beach, but it was otherwise deserted, cut off from the land on both sides by the river which had formed it.

Without hesitating Paul waded out from shore, and when the water was up to his chest began swimming for the island. There was a light current, and he let it carry him easily. He had not taken off his sunglasses, so he was careful to keep his head well out of the water.

As he approached the island, he put his feet down to see if he could stand. The water was much shallower than he had guessed, and he stood off balance, lurching toward the beach. It was difficult for him to walk in the water, and he splashed and staggered a good deal. The birds flew up at his approach, and it was strange to see their shadows separate suddenly and fly off, black and distinct against the white sand.

Then in one step he was out of the soft river mud and standing on dry ground. He looked around. The shore seemed infinitely far away; distance and the silent barrier of the river made it seem almost a different world altogether. He picked up a rock and tossed it toward shore, and it fell in the water without a sound.

Paul walked the length of the island, counting his measured steps carefully. "Forty-six feet long, more or less," he thought. "I should measure the width, but it varies too much."

He climbed to the highest point on the island, its center, and looked around.

It's just like a real island, only everything's in miniature, he thought. Everything except the birds, of course. He shook his head and smiled.

Paul lay down on the tiny rise. To his surprise it was of shale, not sand, as he had expected. It occurred to him that his island was built upside-down, with the firm foundation at the top and the loose material supporting it at the bottom, exposed to the working of the miniature waves. He wondered why this was so: it seemed so contrary to the laws of nature, a source of needless confusion and inefficiency. He decided that if he had been laying the plans, the island would have been constructed differently.

He felt as if he were the only man alive, living there alone on the sand of his island, squinting up at the distant sun-lit sky. He watched the clouds move in orderly herds. Above him, moving as if they were heading for the same place. But the longer he watched the clouds the more it seemed that they were not moving at all. It seemed as if his island were moving under him, and the sky was motionless. So for a time he pretended that his island had become a boat, and he was steering it down the river. It was a raft, he decided. Perhaps he was spiriting his friend down the river. If they once touched land, their lives would be in danger. Someone would get them.

Laughing at his own nonsense and laughing at the memories that came to him -- the first time he skipped rocks across water with a friend, the first fish he caught (it was also his last) -- laughing at these he rolled over and slept.

Then with a start he opened his eyes. Some forgotten dream had left him sad, and he tried to follow the movement of the clouds without success. He could not regain their sense of motion now, and he sat up knowing that his island would be in the same place and had not moved at all.

Everything was, in fact, the same, except that the birds had come back. They pecked along the beach close to the water, making small bird-like sounds. Talking to each other, he thought.

"My friends," he said, "I have much to say to you today -- ."

He smiled at them and stood up.

At the sight of him and the sound of his voice the birds scattered. And again he watched their shadows, this time with a certain disappointment, as if he had actually expected to tell them something.

He walked down to the edge of the water. As before, he waded out as far as he could, and then began to swim for the land. The current was against him now, though, and it was stronger than he had thought. He was already winded, and the river stretched endlessly in front of him. He put his head down and swam in earnest. His sunglasses slipped down on his nose and dropped. He made a grab for them but missed, and was too tired to dive looking for them.

He thrashed slowly through the water, and finally made land. He flopped down exhausted in the sand. People were around him asking him questions.

"I was on the island for a while and I almost didn't make it back," he said, trying not to gasp as he spoke. Above him the sun bore down; it made him feel light-headed and dazed.

"Oh, Paul, you silly child," said a voice he recognized as his wife's. I was beginning to worry, you'd been gone so long. We couldn't find you anywhere."

"You didn't look on the island," Paul said. He was feeling a little better. He smiled up at the people around him but could see nothing, because the sun was so bright and he had lost his glasses.

"Don't you think it was a little bit foolish to go out there if you couldn't get back?" his wife was saying. "We saw what a time you had getting back."

"There was a current that kept pulling me back," Paul said, shading his eyes with his hand in order to see them better. It did not help much, though, and they were still only black shapes, shadows against the white glare. He felt silly talking to people he couldn't see. "I lost my glasses on the way back, and . . ."

"Never mind that," Tom said. "Get dried off and come have a beer with us -- you need something to get you back in the ranks of the living -- you've been out in the sun too long, old boy."

They were moving away, and he lay back on the sand. His wife was still there, though, leaning over him. He was not sure it was his wife until she spoke, but then he knew. He could see nothing but the sun.

"You haven't been very sociable today," she said. "I thought you'd like it out here and all you do is wander around. We came out here for you, you know." The soft, reproachful voice seemed almost to float, suspended in the still air.

"No," Paul said, smiling up into the sun, "I've been having a fine time."

He wished to himself that the sun were not so close; its dazzling rays smothered him.

"You're getting burned," his wife said. She ran her fingernails lightly across his chest, making tiny white lines appear on the sunburned flesh.

"Don't do that," he said. "It hurts when you do that."

"That's because you're burned," she patiently explained. Then she knelt down and kissed his shoulder, and her hair fell across his arm, irritating the sensitive skin.

"Ow," he said, "would you please not . . ."

"Oh, all right," she said. "If I can't touch you, I'll just leave."

Then she was gone, and he sat up. The sun was hurting his eyes and skin, and he knew he should go get under the umbrella. But somehow he just didn't have the strength to move. So he sat alone on the sand, watching the water as best he could.

In a few minutes a small black dog came shuffling by, half in and half out of the water. He passed the spot where Paul sat, but did not look up. He trotted part way down the beach, then turned and came back. Again he paid no attention to Paul, but hurried along, sniffing, following the shoreline.

Paul watched until the dog disappeared behind a hill of sand, and then he stood up. He began walking slowly in the direction of the red umbrella, guided more by the sound of the muffled voices than anything; his eyes had not as yet become accustomed to the sun.

William D. Knief

charlie tulliver

Daily, there is
that weathercock turn of his head
to see if someone sneaks
behind him. Then the sore
of a smile on his stiff face.
And people say: "There goes
the Tulliver boy, running
loose in the street! They don't know
this child is chained, and the town
is staggering out of sight.
Nobody thinks this child is dreaming
as he drools. Nobody knows
the Tulliver boy is hearing
a Sousa march. And who
would guess there is a cadence
as he grunts around a corner?
"Poor Charlie Tulliver's got
a c r a z y Mother, a c r a z y
father!" But Tulliver
gargles his laughter, and prances
up the street. He's happy to be
his own beast.

John S. Wade

Love poem

Hold me closer.
Let each sense
Pasture on
Our difference.
It is through
Our hands we reach
Secrets that filter
Through our speech.

May the mystery
We had not known --
Disguised before
In flesh and bone --
Extinguish soon,
Within our sigh,
What we thought
Was "you" and "I."

Louis Ginsberg

mine to cherish

My years have vanished like a winnowed leaf
Caught up by vagrant winds and cast away.
My song's once joyous tone is tinged with grief,
And evening shadows spell the end of day.
Ambition's fires are banked, the embers cold,
The books I hoped to write will not be read;
I cease to see fame's face on moon grown old,
My fingers pluck at dreams, though all have fled.

But I have know the thrill of love's first kiss,
Fulfillment in the blooming of our seed,
Which cycled as it flowered, bringing bliss
To strengthen family ties, to fill our need.
My talents lie beneath a mound of sand,
But I am rich, love holds me by the hand.

Edna Day

by third grade children

Once you see a turtle
you'll think it's just a shell
But when you see it once again
You'll think it has legs and a tail.

David Idlemen

a book

All a book is
is a bundle
of pages with
words but one
thing about
that's nice
the words
really mean
something.

Kelly Ritter

I was looking up in the shy
suddenly a rain dorp came down
all was quiet.

Curt Bonewits

frog

What is the thing I see,
That's just about to flee.
It is a frog on land.

Biff Arnold

Hop Hop goes the bunny
Splash Splash
The bunny drowned.

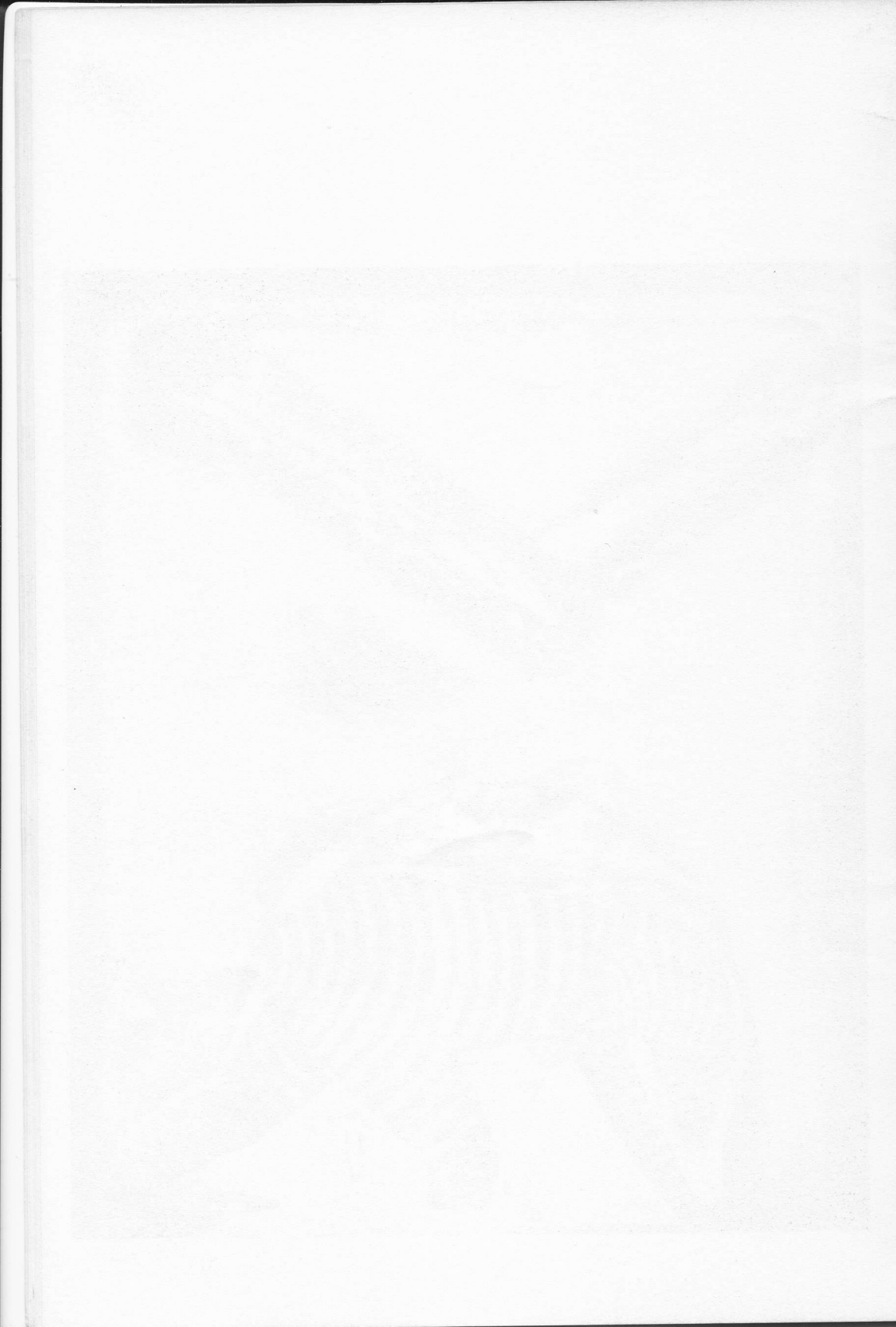
Mary McCue

the sea

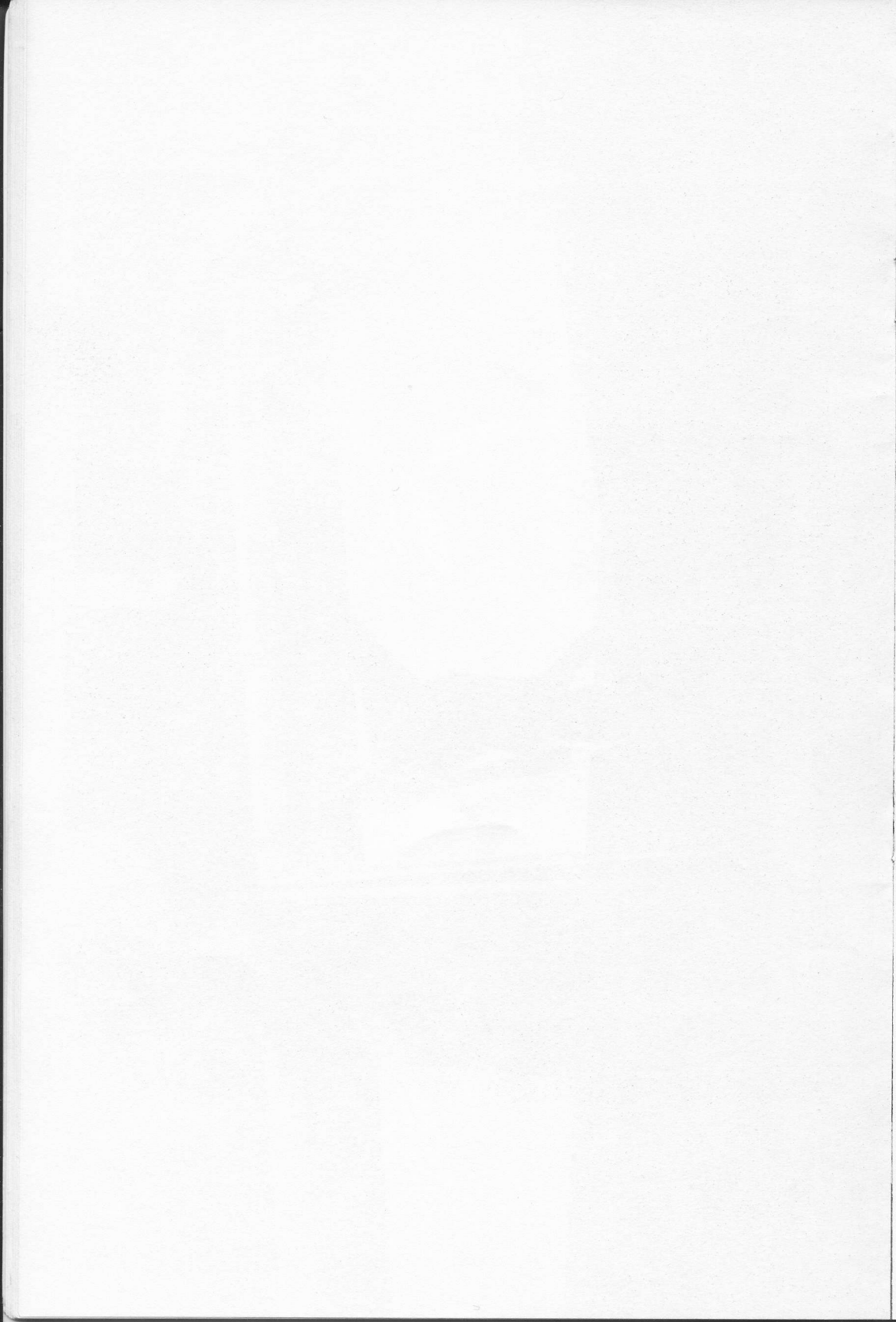
Water water that rolls and
splashes, like a whip that
turns and lashes.

Bill Fiser



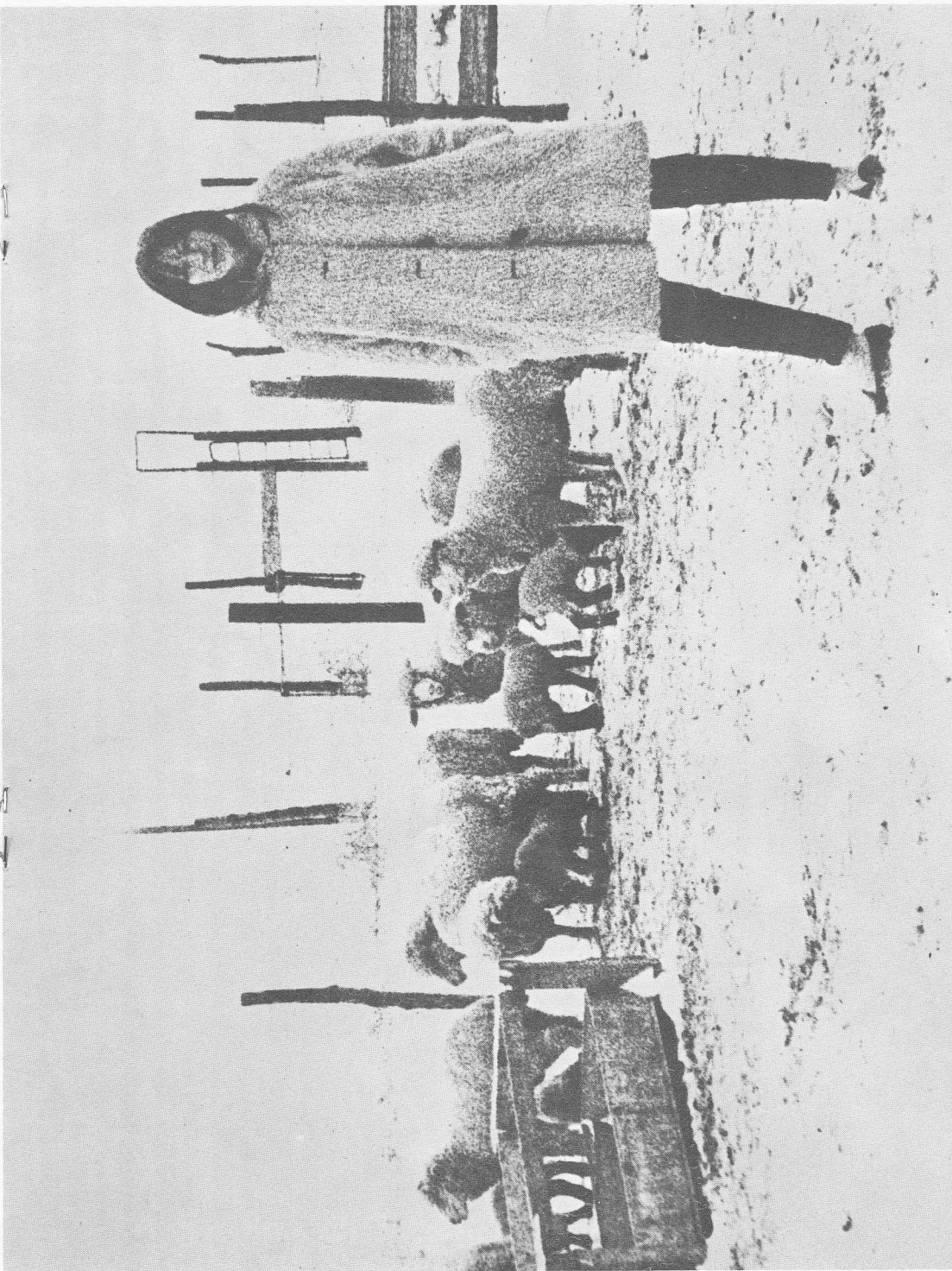


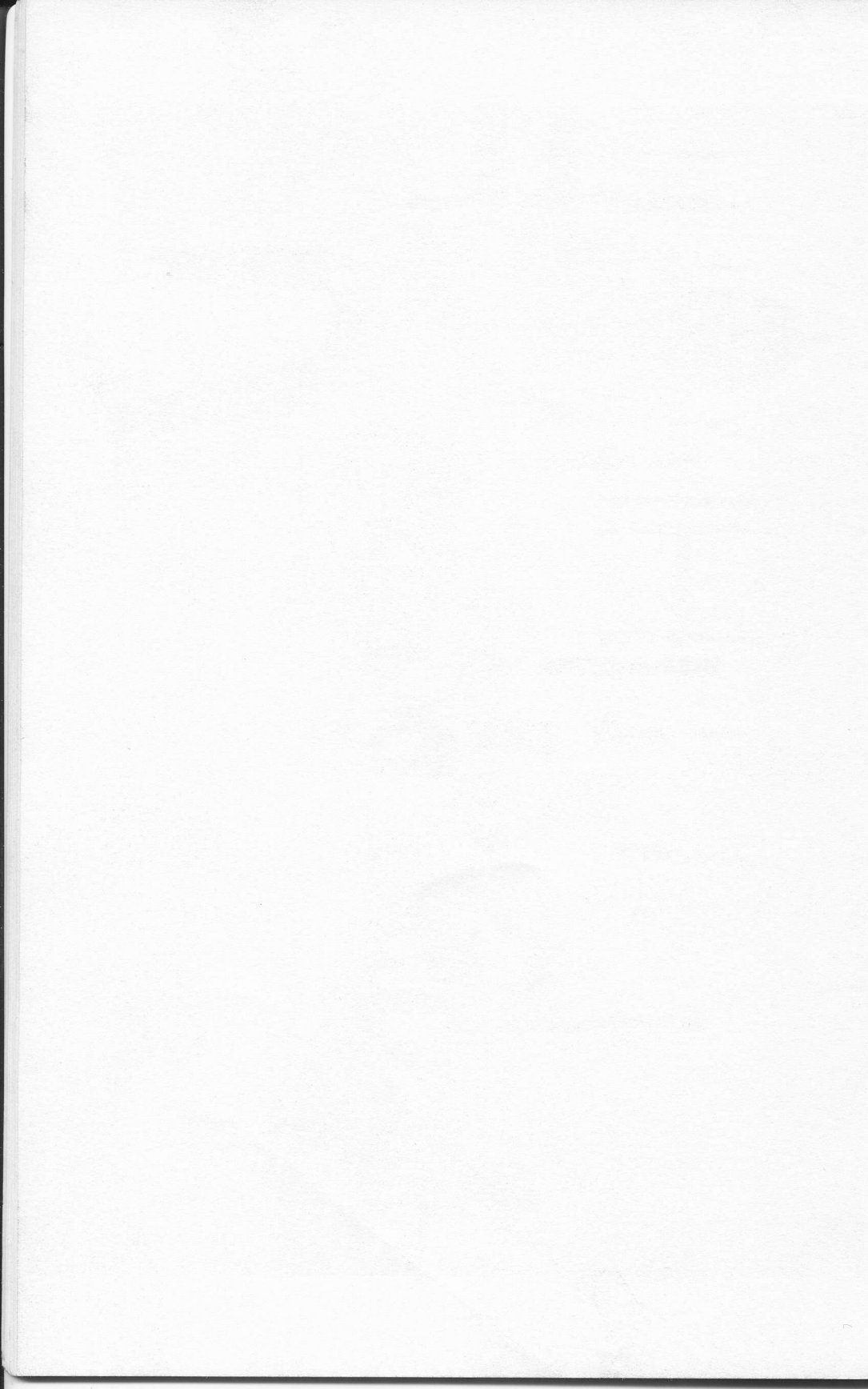




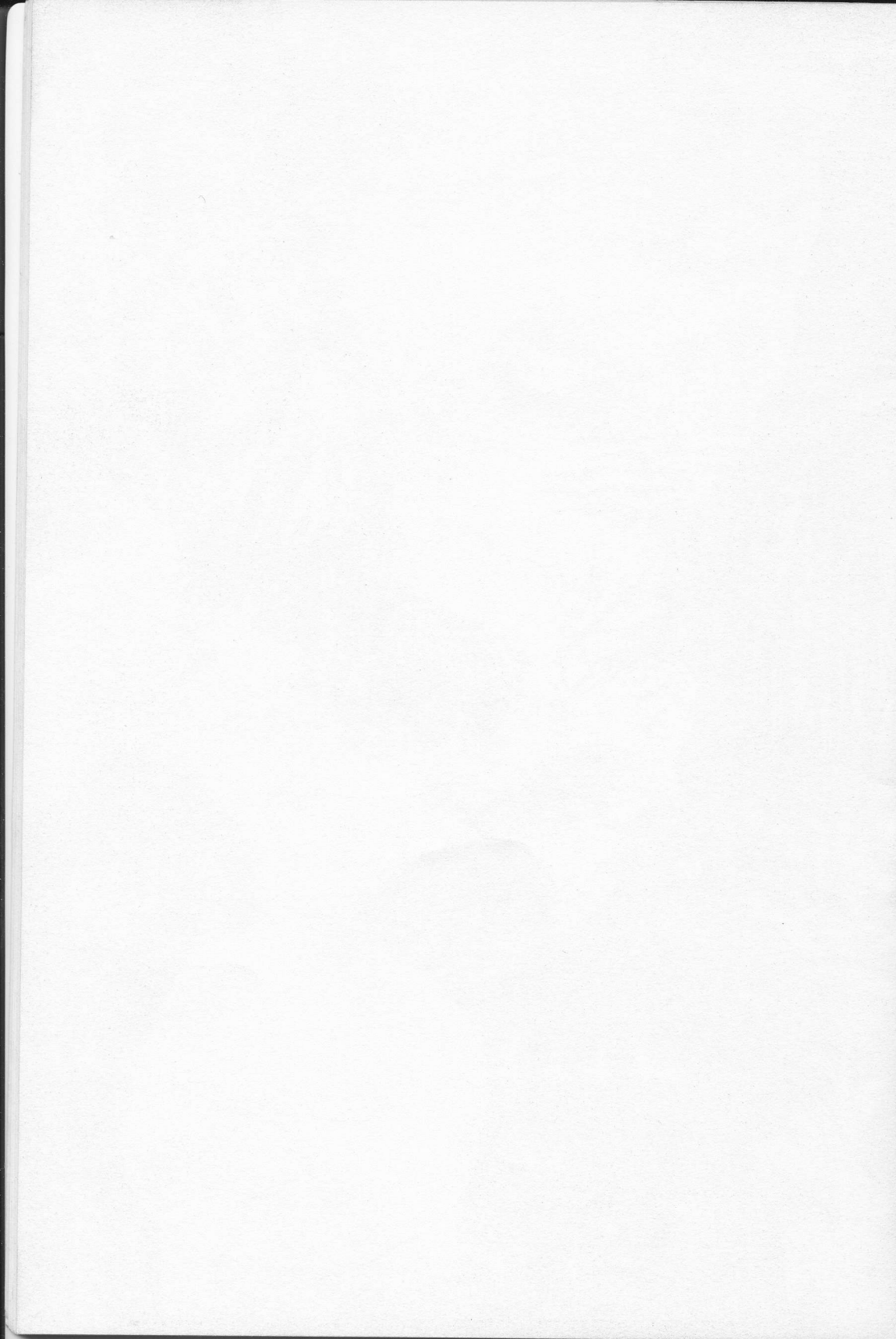


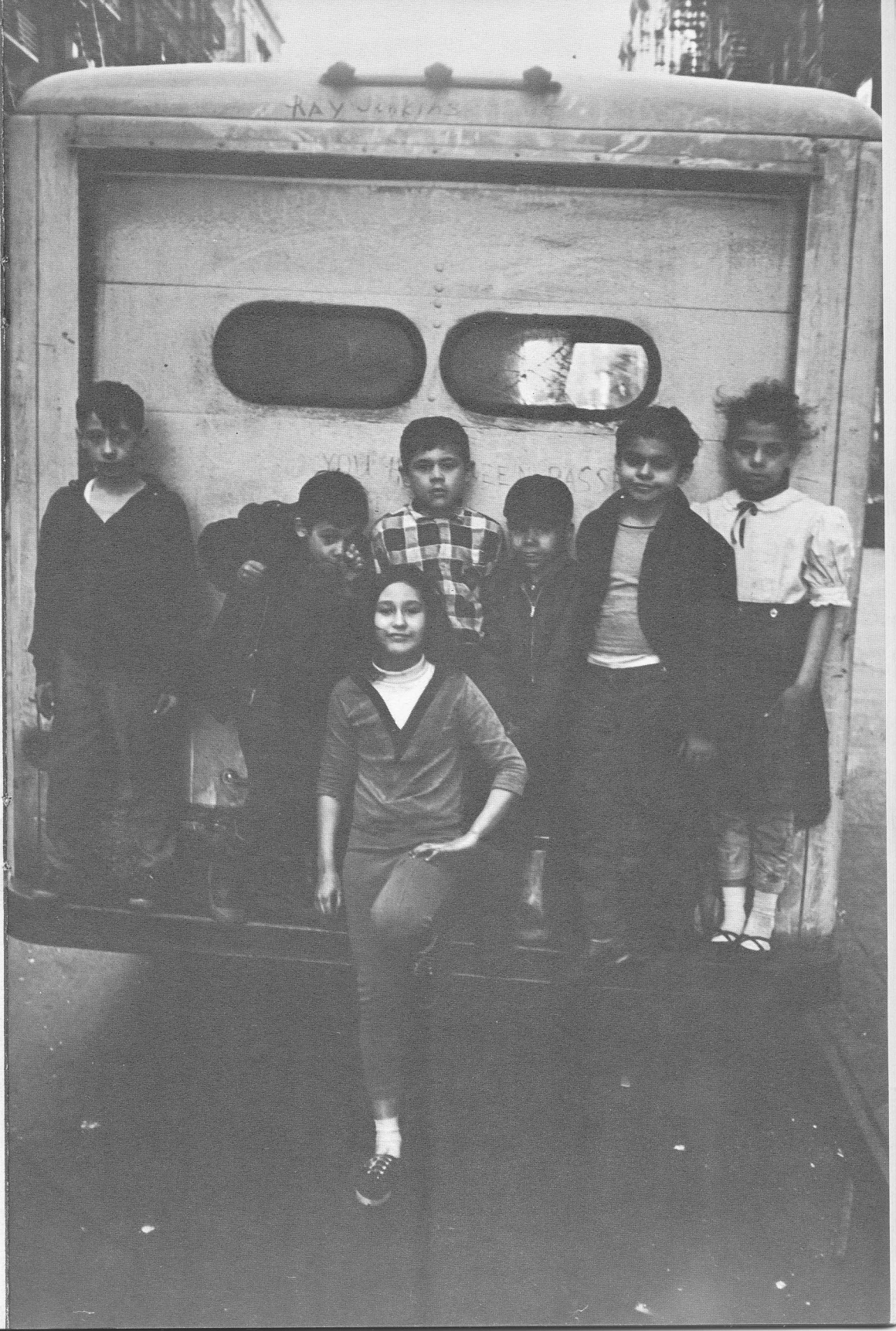
Riva

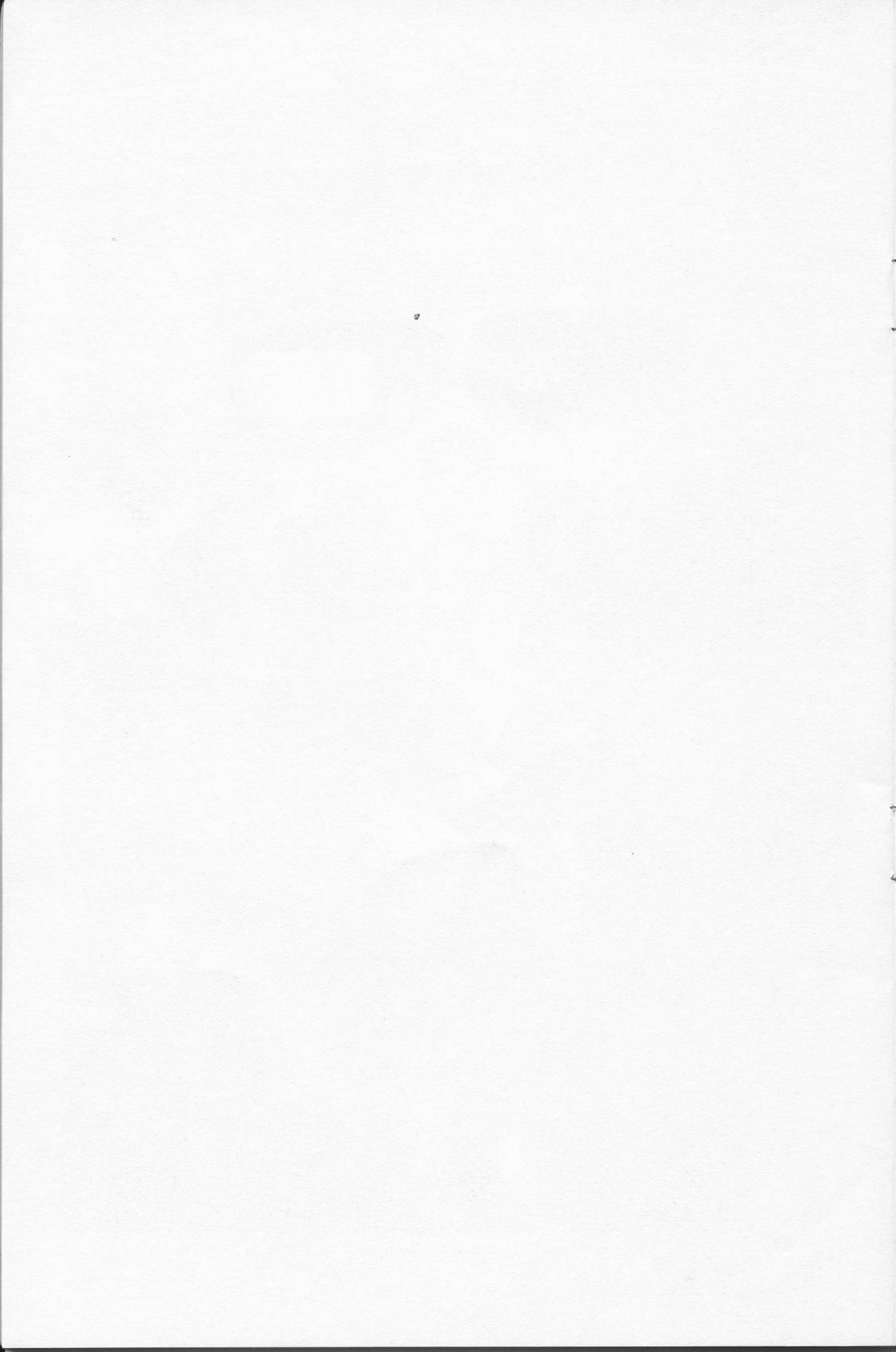




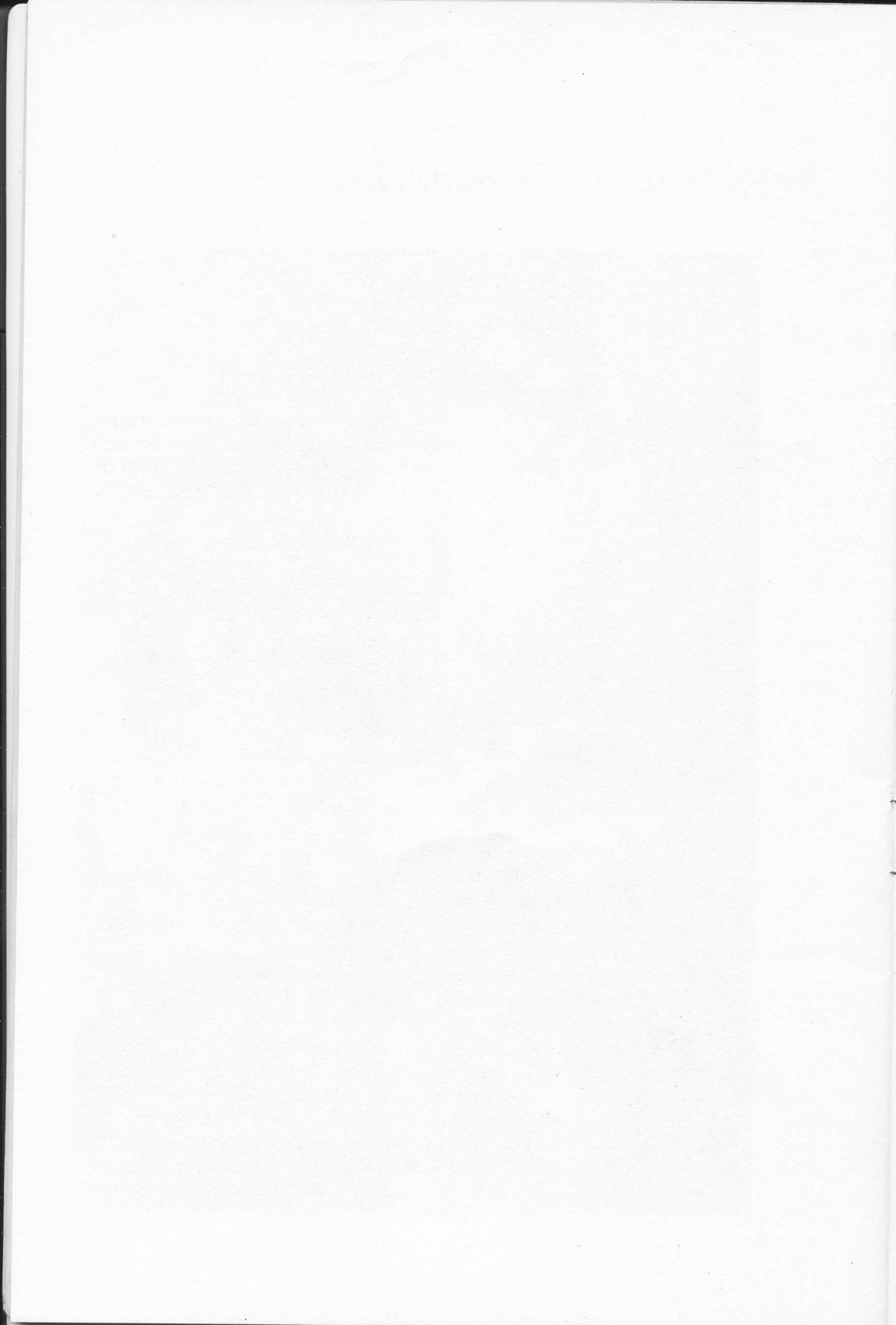












no horns, no trumpets

I gat eels boiled in broo;
Mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi hunting,
And fain wald lie downe.

Lord Randal,
traditional Scottish ballad

It was a green blanket. Martin was under it without a sheet, damp with his sweat and scratchy. Louise, naked and thirty, lay stretched on her back beside him. Everything was tightly uncomfortable; so he thought about the sixth grade and staying home from school with the flu, wrapped in mother's green blankets and soup.

"I don't like that print, Marty," she said, and rolled towards him.

"What print?" he said, rolling away.

"Over there. The horse and the arms and the light bulb. It's silly."

"Maybe," he replied, and started thinking about the time he had the mumps and read three Hardy Boys books in one day.

"Maybe there's something in it that I can't see," she continued, "but I've seen better and I doubt it."

"You're probably right," he said.

She forgot the print and moved closer to him.

"Are we going to see your mother today, Marty? We've been here a week now, and every day you say that you are going to see her -- and you you keep putting it off and putting it off. You know that I want to meet her, and I'm sure she wants to"

"We'll go now." He had been trying to think of the titles of the books, and the woman's talk had interrupted and annoyed him. He got out of bed and began picking his clothes up off the floor and pulling them on.

"I'm sorry I bothered you, but I am concerned, you know. Are you going to wear those again? They're awfully wrinkled."

"The others are worse. Are you going to get dressed?"

"Yes. I'll buy you some new ones. My, you're all hurry, hurry."

"I'll shave while you're dressing."

The bathroom light didn't work, and he cut himself twice. Last night's alcohol made it more difficult. He needed a drink, but there wasn't even a beer left in the apartment. The trip to his mother's would be halfway worth while. She kept plenty of liquor and that was good -- but it was going to be hard explaining Louise. "Mother, this is rich Louise from Wyoming -- with whom I have been jiggling and balling for the past three hot months. I know it sounds shady, Mother -- but it was different when you were young, and she is clean and I am broke, and we can't break the poor thing's heart, now

can we, Mother." Actually, Martin decided he would avoid the subject as best he could. But it was going to be a hard day.

He rinsed his face and left the towel on the sink. Lou was dressed and combing her hair.

"Is this dress alright, Marty?"

"Fine."

"You cut yourself."

"The light's not working. Come on, Lou. Let's get going."

"Fast as I can."

She brushed by him towards the bathroom. He found a cigarette, avoided the lighter she had given him, and lit it with a match. He forgot they were her cigarettes. Then he sat down and waited and smoked.

He had intended to leave Louise in Wyoming. He could have hitchhiked back in a few days. But he never was good with guilty goodbyes. She had spent all that money, and he made the mistake of having a sentimental drunk the day before they left for Virginia. Now they were there. He had stalled for a week. She was two thousand miles from her home and talking about marriage and the drive back to Wyoming. It was supposed to be just what every healthy man looks for -- a truckdriver's paradise -- a rich lonely young woman, a house in a mountain valley, and thirty minutes a night to pay for it all. It was like something out of TRUE magazine, "Gigolo George the Prince of Piece." And it was tempting -- the easiest way out. All except for the negative nothing he felt for Louise. A feeling that, with the morning, approached nausea -- developed into irritating tolerance by late afternoon -- calmed all day with alcohol, then fell all the way to sex to sleep. He could schedule his days in alcoholic ounces. Repeat after me . . . it's not bad after six.

"You look hungover, Marty. But I promised not to talk about your drinking, so I won't." She was back with the sound of the john behind her.

"Thanks loads, Louise."

"My, you are irritable this morning -- wrong side of the bed. We'll change sides tonight."

"You're going to screw up my schedule."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Alright then, nothing it is. Should I wear the green or the red shoes."

"I don't care." Then he smiled. "I guess it depends on the traffic. Do you have any yellow ones?"

Louise turned quickly.

"I didn't bring them with me. Which of these do you like?"

Martin hadn't expected her to catch the pun -- much less take it seriously. He hesitated, then replied.

"Don't ask me. You're the clothes horse."

"Someday, when we have more time, I'll get a straight answer out of you, Marty Craig."

He managed an apologetic grin and affected a Humphrey Bogart accent.

"Good luck, Baby. The odds aw high, but keep pluggin'."

Louise relaxed, halfway, and picked up her purse.

"Well, we had better plug out to your mother's."

Louise led the way down the three flights of stairs, and out to her car.

Part Two

(laughter . . . applause)

"I'm terribly sorry, Mrs. Foley, but that is not the correct answer. A "paradox" is not that at all. A paradox or 'pair of docks' is TWO DOCKS (laughter . . . applause). And NOW since you couldn't tell the TRUTH -- you have to pay the CONSEQUENCES. Pull back the curtain, Ed (laughter . . . applause). Why if it isn't Mr. Foley. NOW -- Mrs. Foley, stand right under this bucket, please. You'll notice that your husband has been given a tray of rubber balls. If he can hit THAT target with one of the balls, and dump THIS bucket of water on YOUR head -- you go home with a hundred goodo, greeno DOLLARS. If he can't, well, there's MORE to come. But first. Ladies, are you tired of that day after day after"

Marty. Since you're up, mix me another one, too. How about you . . . ah . . . Louise."

"No thank you, Mrs. Craig. I'm doing fine, thank you."

"Call me Marge. And excuse me for keeping this nasty television set going, but it's become such a habit. Living alone, you know. I really feel uncomfortable when it's not on."

"Oh, Mrs. . . . Marge? . . . I don't mind at all. I think that there are many things that can be beneficial on the"

(laughter . . . applause) "I'm sorry, Mr. Foley, but you missed with all six balls. Tough luck, but you still have a CHANCE. If you'll just look at Ed, over there, you will see that he's holding a bowl of steaming spaghetti, and IF you"

Martin looked at the whiskey level in his glass, and poured more in. He was getting steadily drunk, out of habit and purpose. Get drunk early today . . . get drunk and pass out. Four quiz shows, two soap box serials, useless skin-tight babble. He hadn't said one word in the past hour. He was drunk, Louise was trying and nervous, and his mother was perched in her armchair, waiting like a priestess for confession.

"She knows," he thought. "She just wants the drama -- the mother-son, bad movie, understanding, tedious drama. A few more drinks, and she'll probably have it."

(laughter . . . applause) "Bad break, Mr. Foley. IF you had gotten that third spaghetti noodle through the loop, you would have won . . . OPEN THE CURTAIN, Ed (ooooooooh and aaaaaaaahhh)." .

"Just put mine here, Marty. Are you sure you don't want another, Louise?"

"Oh, no thank you. I've really had enough for now, thank you."

"Suit yourself, dear. Marty, would you change the channel, please. You should have seen what all that poor couple just lost -- such a shame. The last noodle just missed. That poor man. He could have won"

"Another noodle," he answered, and turned the channel selector.

"Silly Oh, stop. There's Love of Life. Leave it there, Marty. I've been keeping up with that one."

"Fine," he replied. He walked across the room and sat down heavily by Louise. His head was floating and he couldn't focus.

(organ music) "Meg, if you don't do something about Dorothy, I'm warning you, you're going to lose Roger. You're not young any more, Meg. You can't fool yourself like this forever. There's a time of reckoning, a time to face facts. Just yesterday I heard Gladys talking to"

Halfway through a detergent commercial, Martin wanted a bed. So he eased his hand over and picked up his drink. Somehow, he stood up.

"I'm going to ged some sleep. You two talk some . . . talk. I think I'll Wage me up if I'm gone too long."

Both women nodded -- so he carefully walked out of the room, down the hall, and into his mother's bed. He held his nose, lifted his drink, and swallowed until it was gone. The bed floated under him, and the occasional noise from down the hall drifted away.

this is a large house
I have been here before
Quietly, lie quietly or he will hear you
there is nothing here
There are walls and echo both, and bare windows
I lie naked on the floor
and fear my own breath
there are nothing but corners here
He will hear you.
that does not matter
You are a fool
he knows this place
he has bought it and
these are his rooms
Then you must go
that does not matter
he will come through that door
he will carry tools and blinds
he will be my father walking stiff with echoes
Then you must go
that does not matter
he will not speak and will look away
nothing is satisfied
He is blinding the windows
Help him
nothing is satisfied
The windows are high say nothing and want you

The hammer the hammer the hammer and help him
nothing is satisfied
He will be finished with reason to hate
And you will never know
I will help
He is finished

I will run out this door and over this road
across this ditch and on to that field
Behind you, look behind you
She is old and needs help
To be over, get over, be over the ditch
Give her your hand
here is my hand
Pull
you are over old woman
But look in your hand
Look in your hand
There are her fingers, knuckle to nail
And they'll never fit back on her hand
They'll never fit back on her . . . awake get awake . . .

A hand was on his shoulder and somebody was shaking him.

"Marty, please wake up, please. I want to leave. Marty, your mother is drunk . . . Wake up, please."

He opened his eyes and rolled over, seeing first her hand and then her face.

"What did you do, Louise?"

"Nothing. Nothing. Marty, please don't say that. She did it. She's drunk. Called me names. I couldn't help it. I want to go."

Martin pushed himself out of the bed, grabbed her arm, and pulled her down the hall. His head was foggy with sleep and whiskey -- he bumped into the wall twice. His mother was in the armchair, her feet propped on the coffee table. Her expression turned from apology to confusion, and she started to pull herself out of the chair. Her hands were thin and the veins showed. Martin pulled Louise through the door and closed it.

Part Three

Louise was crying and they didn't talk. He drove her car with both hands tight on the wheel. The liquor was wearing off, and he was trying to piece together the last five hours. It wasn't hard to figure out what had happened between Louise and his mother. The strange part was that he hadn't chosen sides. He felt no compassion for either of them. Yet, he should. By all that was moral, he owed them each a part of his life. But then, that's only moral and not in the least convenient. There were no sides. He would finally commit himself -- to non-committal. He would tell

her tonight. I don't want you, Louise -- go away, pack, take your car and you and drive it two thousand miles back to Wyoming, alone. I want no more debts. Leave me before I owe you too much to even tolerate you.

He felt lighter. Take your body, car, money, and go. Wear anything you want. Then he said out loud, "I hereby cancel all my debts."

She stopped crying.

"You what?"

He almost laughed. "I have just committed myself for the first time, and you will be the first to know."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I'm a mean meaner, and I mean to be as mean as my means."

"Don't talk in circles, Marty."

He didn't answer. He sang,

I'm going down that road feeling good.

I'm going down that road feeling good.

I'm going down that road feeling good, Lawd, Lawd.

Cause I ain't gonna be treated this a'way.

"You'd better let me drive."

He moved his head out the window and into the wind, enjoying the beam from the headlights bouncing in the shadows of the trees. It was timeless. In front of the car, under the lights, the road became an immobile white patch. The car was motionless, and the trees danced like a silent movie before his eyes.

I'm going where the water tastes like wine.

I'm going where the water tastes like wine.

I'm going where the water tastes

As if the film had snapped, the panorama jerked and spun. The screen sped past in chaos. The lights smashed out and the theater was dark . . . the silence amazed him.

Then he noticed the pressure of the wheel in his hands. Then he heard the sounds of the night frogs and crickets. Louise was curled beside him, breathing hard, and there was a spiral crack where her head had struck the windshield. Slowly and quietly he got out of the car and closed the door behind him. The grill was pushed into the tires, so he lowered himself to the ground, pressed both feet to a tire rim, and carefully, with both hands, grabbed the metal fender -- and pulled until the veins in his neck swelled, and until his collar button tore open.

Harry Weldon

In my eighth year
Our orchard became a jungle
Overgrown with weeds and vines
Which wildly drank
From the mosquito and skum creek.
It was only wet two months a year
Two wonderfully savage months
When my brothers and I
Hid there from the world
and urinated in tin cans.

Roger Jamison

Parched lips curse dead earth
as the old man gazes
over his scorched field.
The scythe slips silently
through his stubbled throat;
it doesn't grate
on the wiry neck.
Rusty metal is made redder
and the drought is minutely lifted.

Harold M. Nelson

in harmonica country II

on the roadside
a bungling boy stumbles
with hair straight up in stiff maine morning
and on his back a warped and wet guitar
(he had plans for new york)
which i could see was his Life
other than a skinny cat which scratched at his leg

and though i flew with train's gait
i could still smell the rain of last night's storm
upon his blue-jean face.

Lee Chapman

the emperor is ill

" . . . the emperor is ill Sadao; go to him
with his nightingale."

Li Po, Tang Dynasty

Long nights ago, did you see it?
It was coming on him even then,
Sweeping like lit, white dust
From the West into his open face.

And how, among the orchid rows
Ay, nights he walked, upright, with
His hands over his face,
Muttering to the moon.

I tell you Sadao, in August,
The stars fall long and bright down the sky.
What sighs the master begins to send,
Burning his red dress

Burning farther and farther into the
Dark wet fields, the palace,
As far behind him as
A candle to the new moon.

Where he walked, to whom he
Spoke his strange scattered syllables,
Only the lonely gingkoes know.
Go to him Sadao.

Sick and fat, he shall not move again
From his golden bed.
He dreams of dragons and sparrows and
Magicians, fools that they are.

Burn incense to bid his soul.
The emperor is ill . . . and cannot know
That the orchid rows
Will be shriveling soon.

Ron Smith

you want filthy pictures?

Walking along the street, 200 yards across the border, a street of souvenir shops, bars, probably sex if you want it, William, I looked at the sun high overhead Tiajuana. I was hot, sweaty, tired, alone in this dirty border town that I suddenly hated. But it's a foreign country -- land of mystery, romance, Incas. An old lady was selling flowers at an open doorway and there was an ulcer on her arm that had eaten away her flesh to the bone. Before she walked near I crossed the street.

Across the street, on the shady side, there was the first souvenir shop, so I walked in. I nodded to the kid sitting on a high stool behind a glass case full of guitars and junky tambourines, and I picked up a package of cigarettes from the rack on the case. Argentinos. Super. Papel Impermeable. Waterproof paper. Well, William, these would be good to smoke in the rain, in the shower, while swimming the English Channel, or while wading the Rio Grande. Precio al Publico: 60 Centavos. At twelve and a half tin pesos to one dollar that's six cents, William.

"How much?" I gestured to the kid with the package.

"Que?" The kid, twelve, maybe ten years old, took a look at me with one cocked eye, and grinned from his eyrie. His other eye was hidden behind the brim of a filthy sombrero.

"Tu hagas caso, William," I whispered.

"Que?" He leaned forward on his stool.

"Nada, precio?"

"Quarter, Meester," and he leaned back against the huge calendar that read in large red letters, "David's Souvenir Shop."

I turned the package around and read aloud from the side, "Argentinos. Super. Papel Impermeable. Precio al publico: sesenta centavos." I looked up to him, he was still grinning.

"Lo siento mucho, meester. Seex cents."

There were switchblades on a rack behind the counter, over the David's calendar. I put the cigarettes down.

"Los, ah." I pointed towards the knives but couldn't think of a word.

The kid reached over his head and pulled one down. Black and silver. Very nice, very nice. He handed it to me, holding the end of the blade between his small fingers. The butt slipped into my hand. William pushed the release and bent the blade into the handle. It rested comfortably in his hand, his thumb fit over the silver button. Gently, he squeezed the button between his thumb and palm. The blade. I turned from the kid and tossed it towards the wall.

"Muy bien, William," I said as the knife quivered in the fiberboard.

Lynn lifted the knife slowly from its bed of toilet paper. There was a note underneath it. She unfolded the scrap of paper from her perfumed stationery and read the note.

"A present from William, Lynn," her mother smiled. She was dressing for her bridge club -- slipping on her high-heeled gold lamé slippers, and zipping up her slacks. When Lynn began to moan and ran into the front bathroom, her mother ran after her but the lock clicked as her hand touched the knob.

There was the border. Five feet away! Four panel trucks rolled up to customs. They were full of college students. William, you remember when you were a student? About a week ago? The emblems were covered with mud, but I could still read them:

The University of Iowa
1966 Entomology Expedition

Entomology. That's the study of bugs, William. Crawling, slimy roaches. And they came to Mexico, William, like you.

"Senores," I waved as I walked purposefully to the rear of the last truck. A girl was sitting in the back seat, by the open window.

"Hello," she smiled, and she had a million white teeth, William.

"I am sorry, senorita, but I speak no Engleesh." I used my best fake accent, and shrugged helplessly.

"What do you want? Oh, I'm sorry," she twisted her face. "Que quiere Vd.?"

"Senorita," I looked into her blue American eyes and smiled pathetically, "you want feelthy pictures?" I reached into my back pocket, pulled out the envelope, and held it up.

She jumped as if somebody had goosed her. "No, no want feelthy pictures," and she shook her head violently, her bangs bouncing all over, when I pushed the envelope towards the window.

"Ten pesos, senorita?" I bit my lip and looked down. "My fatheer and moother deed all and I must geet mucho money for fifteen broothers and seesters, senorita?"

"They're all thieves and liars in these feelthy border towns, Karen, love," a voice raged from the dark other end of the truck.

"Oh, this one is fairly clean, and he's not even very Mexican-looking," she added.

I smiled proudly. "You buy, Senorita?" and thrust the envelope towards her again.

A deep voice growled from the darkness, "Let me talk to him, Karen."

The older man came to the window and spoke several sentences in very rapid Spanish.

You are fairly clean, clean, William; and not too Mexican-looking, which is too bad because you can't speak Spanish.

"Si!" I exclaimed when he had finished. William, the game is nearly over. But you need the money. Tu hagas caso, William.

The man raised his eyebrows and spoke again.

"Si! Want feelthy pictures, senior?"

He looked at me curiously and then tossed me twenty pesos.

"Gracias, Senior," I said, and handed him the envelope.

The envelope is gone, William. The feelthy pictures are gone. You are safe, William. But it is hot, this crumby border town. It is Christmas. You are rich. You have twenty pesos. You can get drunk. You can get drunk. You can get rid of feelthy pictures, William. There is a bar down the street, three hundred yards from the border, where mixed drinks are a dime, American. And at twelve and one-half pesos to the dollar, twenty pesos is a drunk in the Golden Bull, William. You walk past the lady selling flowers, who has the ulcer on her arm. Then the kid sitting on his stool under knives. And the kid is grinning like he has been for the past week, or eternity to you, William.

As the University of Iowa panel truck rolled over the border, turned onto Route 66 and bounced over the tracks I shoved the bar door open. William, you see that bitch sitting there?

She heard the door open and as the footsteps came closer she wiped her nose. After her mother left she had cried for a long time, sitting at the dressing table, ignoring the knife resting near her jars of make-up. This was the first time she has cried in a long time.

"Lynn?" Her mother tried to turn the doorknob. "Lynn, are you all right, Lynn?"

Lynn half laughed, half cried.

"Lynn, tell me, Lynn? Is it William?"

Lynn reached for the knife. Her arm brushed a jar of cream that fell to the tile floor and shattered there. The knife slipped into her hand. It rested comfortably in her hand. She pushed the release and bent the blade into the handle. It rested comfortably in her hand, her thumb fit over the silver button. Gently she squeezed the button between her thumb and palm. The blade. She wiped the blade with her fingers. There was a bit of fiber-board in the blood groove. She ran her thumb over the cutting edge, shivered, and put it down. Half rising from her chair, she reached up and opened the medicine cabinet.

"Mother!" she screamed, the first words she had spoken in several hours.

"Yes, Lynn?"

"I just swallowed half a bottle of aspirin! I'm going to be sick."

Lynn retched noisily for several minutes.

The door opened slowly, and Lynn grinned weakly, leaning in the doorway. Her face was pale, and streaked with tears.

"I guess you better lay down, Lynn," her mother said, as she turned towards the broom closet to get a mop.

"Yes," she nodded, and walked upstairs to her bedroom.

"Amigo!" The kid blinked and grinned from his high chair, knowing all.

"What the hell am I doing here?" I checked my pockets for the knife. But William, it is gone, long ago, with the feelthy pictures.

"You were mucho, mucho drunk, amigo," he laughed.

"Yeah," I groaned and smiled, "I was drunk alright, kid. I want some scrambled eggs, kid."

I walked out into the sun. It was nearly noon again. Funny thing about that, William. Always nearly noon. And it was hot again. Jesus, William. This is Christmas day and I am hungover.

The kid sat on his stool and looked through the open doorway at William, and he was grinning because he was a kid on a high chair who was always grinning. William, somebody is looking at the back of your neck because it hurts more than the rest of you. William, the kid is looking at you and grinning because he knows, William, he knows tu hagas caso -- you care too much.

I turned on my heel and walked briskly to the counter; I reached up and pulled a knife from the rack, opened it in front of the little bastard's nose. His expression didn't change. I knew it wouldn't.

"Kid?" I touched his nose with the end of the blade.

"Si, amigo," he made his voice quaver but I know by his eternal grin the kid is never afraid.

"Kid, Tiajuana is a helluva place to spend Christmas."

"You want feelthy pictures, amigo?" He reached to a box above the knives. "You want feelthy woman, amigo?"

"No, kid." I gave up and rolled into the corner where I waited for my hangover to pass with the sun. The line of light moved slowly across your leg, William, and you see it comes from the crack in the ceiling. And it was very hot, William. It was very . . . hot.

"Siesta time all these people just go to sleep anywhere the hell they are, Martha. Just any damn place! Saw it in the service. Any damn place!"

I opened one eye slowly to see where the painfully loud voice was coming from. He was a huge tourist in a Hawaiian print shirt. He was trying on a limp sombrero, which would have been ludicrously large on anyone else. Martha was very thin, and birdlike.

"Hey, hey, shopkeeper! Get up! Money, pesos! Gringo buy!" He was motioning to you, William. His wife, fanning herself wearily, smiled apologetically. Reminds you of mother, doesn't she, William. No?

"It certainly is hot, Claude, isn't it," she said wanly. "I think these people have the right idea. They just take it easy, Claude. That boy, look at him, Claude. He is looking at us with one eye there, grinning. He doesn't have a care in the world, Claude."

I closed my eye. You don't have a care in the world, William.

David Melvin

for now

It is true:
there are places where
the moon is larger,
where one can smell a month
of rain approaching,
and the church towers fill
with pigeons.

But for now
I am living
simply,
in familiar climates
among so many stark, concluded faces.

Like an oval
or a wry ellipse
I make by own enclosures,
focusing my attentions
on the grandly insignificant
within my residence.

Human,
I have been troubled
by human matters, by uncertain memories
of rooms I have inhabited
like a skin, uncomfortably close
and worn with age --
a gargantuan planet
in a shrinking galaxy.

Nor have I gone
unworried
by the squeak of hinges,
rusted and obscure,
nor the closing of doors,
nor the sound of keys
turning in locks.

I have been overly fond
of keen ideas, of words
wrapped up in speech;
yet am constantly moved by breathing things
and by the way

the light floats in a wood.

I write letters to presidents.

I speak to birds.

I know the colors of
the bright fox
running.

But there are oceans,
there are gulfs south of the soul
that I have never visited.

Although I am most graciously received
by all I enter, there is a certain hunger,
a perpetual discontent with circumstances
that intoxicates, and drives me on.

I travel, unresolved,
in nebulous territories,
obsessed
by a loveliness that endures,
by voices of clouds,
by smiles.

Don Lowry

realization

Once there has been
the realization
that love
has existed for us
sometime,
onetime,
then we can get along
on that vote of confidence
until the next time
that love
will make the present more
than the task it is.

Conall O'Leary



Song
Lorca's
flower
flame
the
goes
sky
the
into
body
the
of
lightning
the
through
soil
the
From

John Tagliabue

1.

evening textures

Smooth and thick black hair
softly touching kitten fur
rough and blue sweater

April D. Knief

