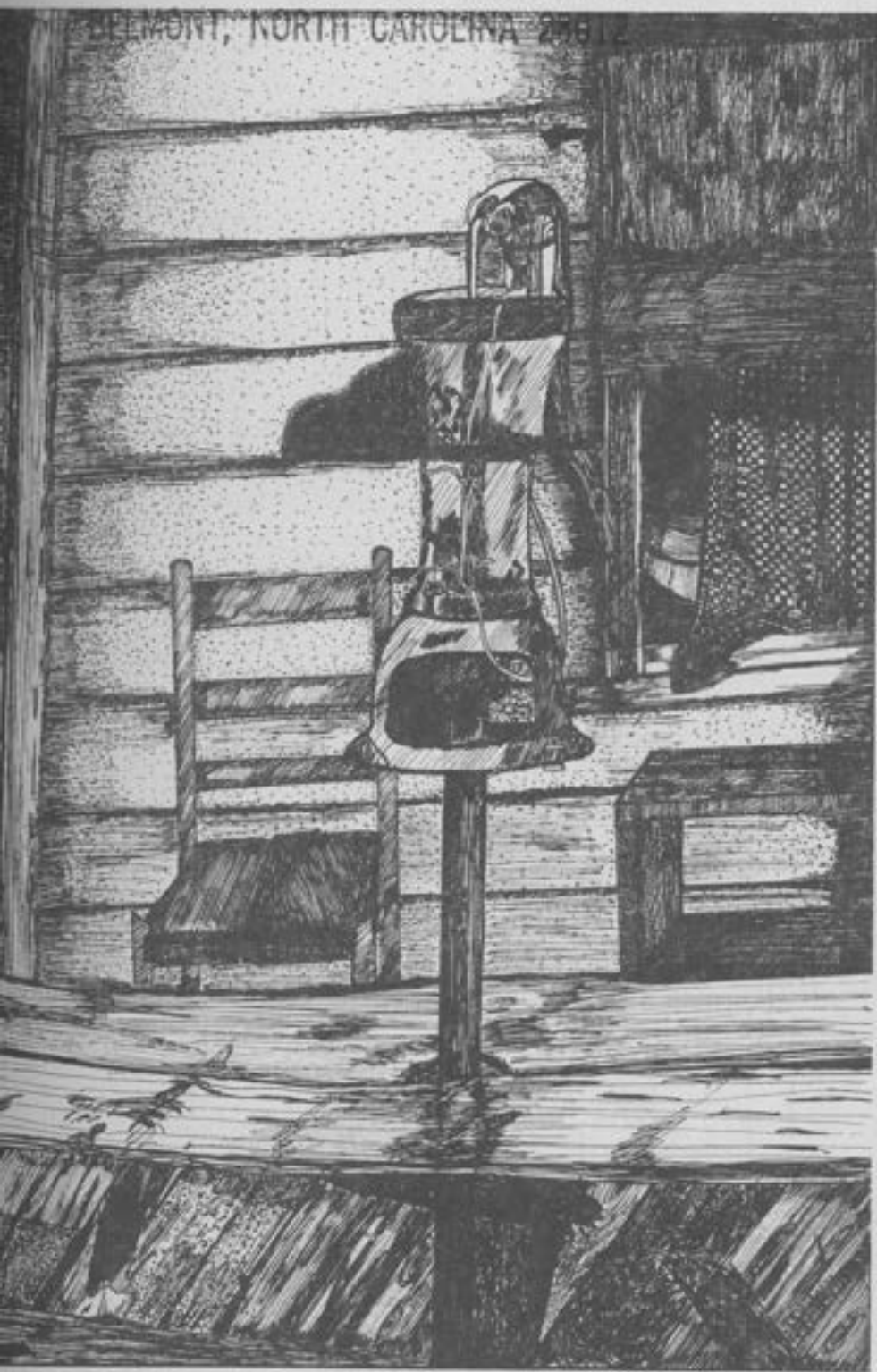


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**Agora**

*Centennial Edition*

MAY 1976 Vol 14

# Agora

## THE SHORT STORY

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THE MOVING FINGER W  
SOMETHING WICKED  
DUTCH TREAT

## THE POEM

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O'GOD, THOU ART THAT  
THE CONSUMMATE ART  
IN THE RECONSTRUCTI  
PROPRIETY  
SEASON CITY STREETS  
THE FAREWELL DRAP  
THE ALTAR  
LOST  
LOVE SONG  
I AM THE MAN, THE LO  
THE TREES STAND SIL  
6 O'CLOCK NEWS  
THE FIRST GAZING OF  
IN THE FLOW OF COU  
NIGHT DREAMS  
YOUR IMAGE EMBRAC

## THE DRAMA

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THE EDGE

*The Agora*  
was essentially  
the plenary assembly  
where  
all the laoi gathered,  
all the citizens  
in the town,  
all the warriors  
in the camp,  
in short  
'The whole mass  
of those who had  
no place  
in the Council.'

G. Glotz  
*The Greek City*

Cover dr  
Phot

# Agora

C91828

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## THE SHORT STORY

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Cover drawing by Lenawati Widjaja

Photograph by Philip Nofal

O' God, Thou art that, a nebulous  
pronoun undefined  
My sight of Thee is blinded so clearly  
in others.

So it cannot be myself which leads  
me to communion with Thee,  
But in all humanity, I undefine  
myself, become a that, and am  
Yours.

B.J.N.

### THE CONSUMMATE ART

when he asked me that night  
did I want a Big Boy  
all my months of hungering  
went out the window and I sat  
there till daylight watching  
the way they went and would not  
crawl between the sheets  
or talk about it  
seething, he said I'd caused him  
to sit up and beg unnecessarily  
it was unwitting: some things  
should not be called at all  
even by their given names  
but just allowed to come and lie  
down and lick our toes naturally  
as for regalement  
best he should do me  
with his eyes as the decrepit  
hound sunning by Day's Inn door  
next morning did his bushful  
of waxwings

Shirley Rader

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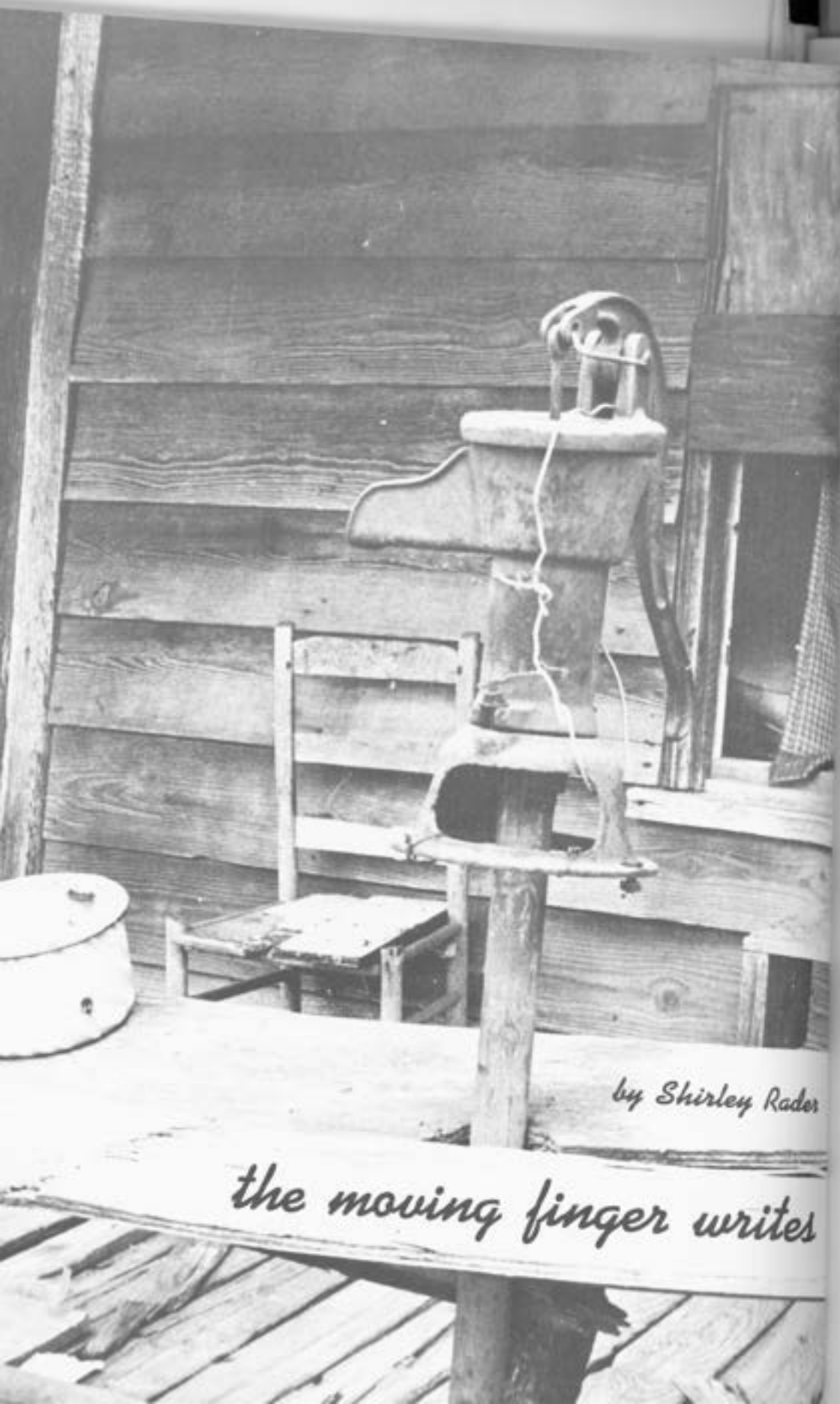
In the reconstruction of spring  
some thoughtless northerner  
has left my door ajar  
surrendering me to  
winter's unnatural breath  
so unlike the rush of cold  
from summer refrigerators  
My potted plants  
living like prisoners of  
clay and pacifying mulch  
fancy some sunlight or  
at least shadow of a palm  
And I'm defeated just like  
in American history class  
when I liked the south better

Tina L. Coleman

PROPRIETY

you meant to ask me  
for my company  
yet propriety  
strayed your tongue  
I meant to help you  
frame the question  
but propriety  
slayed words unsprung  
we could have penned  
exquisite prose  
yet propriety  
became our god  
and in syntactical structure  
parallel nouns  
paging close but uncompounded  
prohibit cohabitation

Grace DiSanto



by Shirley Rader

*the moving finger writes*

7  
the po

"  
be nin  
plain p  
as he w  
one har  
brood c

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roots, p

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The familiar queasy feeling eased itself into the pit of her stomach just as pot of coffee began to boil.

"Oh no, how can it be, Ill just curl up and die, and thank God there won't nine lives to worry about, like the cat," Ollie groaned without sound. The plump facts said: how could it not be? Charlie was as hairy-chested today as he was returning hero-handsome from the trenches of France to carry her in his arms even further back into these hoary hills. Of course, providing for his family of the thirteen was an apple off another tree.

Ollie's butter-and-egg money had become less and less as the number of mouths became more and more. They all just pitched in the harder, digging for blackberries, trying for 4-H prizes, hiring out to hoe and harvest.

"Why do we never get to eat any of the good stuff?" W. M. was always complaining. "Why does it always have to be canned, or smoked, or dried, or pickled in the tunnel?" "Because you get hungrier in the winter," came back the unimpassioned reply.

Warm school jackets were badly needed for the oldest boy and oldest girl, and the year's book fees had to be paid before they could get their report cards. It was to her they looked for these things; Charlie could not care less whether they went to school.

Brushing off a sense of urgency as she brushed her hair, she settled into an easy peaceful reprieve with the creaky porch rocker. Should she accept the offer she would assuredly be offered for making this flour sack burial dress for the neighbor's newborn? The blue forget-me-nots were stitched into the debate. Labor of love — she settled it quickly in her heart. After all, death had this time chosen a door other than her own.

The false euphoria did not last long. She saw Sam at once as he rounded the bend. Either she was half expecting him or she had dreamed it; he had come for Old Spot. The gruff storekeeper spoke to her gently, and, unaccustomed as he was to gentleness, it came out haltingly. There was, in addition, the widely known fact that he had for many years been an ardent admirer of this tiny fighting woman.

"I hate to do it, Ollie, but my younguns 're hungry, too, 'n I'm jes carrin' 'em on the books 'n nobody 's payin' up." She nodded. No words came, and no tear would ever have dared escape the proud tilt of her chin. A thick cloud of orange hair came aloose where she had hurriedly pinned it up when she'd seen him coming. Sam was knotting a rope around the cow's neck and when he turned again he noted how it flamed bright as ever though the freckles were fading, and perhaps the spirit, too, just a bit about the edges. There was much to be said, but none that either could churn up. Slowly, slowly, with a rhythmic swish, the last of the family's "bread-and-milk" swayed a mournful goodbye down toward the bars.

The walls came out of hiding, then as all huddled together on the top steps. With now and then a child wiping nose and mouth back and forth across her shoulder and others one by one catching up an edge of her generous surplice-like apron for sob-smudged faces, they cried her tears for her. That is the com-



fort of children, she thought, and how odd that it should be so.

Old Spot was their very life and even the littlest ones knew it. The black-and-white Holstein was much-loved as any pet, and although it was said by knowing neighbors that her milk was not as rich as Jersey, the supply was bountiful, and each child in his turn learned to milk her, first with one hand, then with two, as the white foam splashed against the bucket's side.

Junior noticed first thing when he came in late from driving his school bus' second load: "What went with Old Spot?" He, like the other school-aged children alternated between mama's book grammar at home and the Old English hill talk that kept them in with their agemates.

As soon as he was inside the door he knew. The younger ones were burying Old Spot. Their endless ashes-to-ashes dust-to-dust games, though usually more merry than morbid, would have harrowed a less hardy soul than Ollie. She herself could gain a strange solace walking up to the hilltop graves: grand parents, greats, short ones, some unnamed. Too, she'd found that "The Old Rugged Cross" sung long enough and loudly enough sure shield against the daily clamor.

The nightly homework session soon settled in, more quietly than usual, with little headlands jutting out into the long kitchen table's sea of knowledge, where the one good kerosene lamp with clearwashed chimney lighthoused its learned glow. The one child not yet old enough for study occupied herself making up a new flybroom by sewing old papers onto a stick and then fringing it. She was proud to be big enough to use the scissors. Minding the flies would not begin for another month, but she remembered it from last summer and already at this tender age had absorbed the family's provident mettle.

As Ollie outened the fire her thoughts went back to Charlie. Tall on charm why wasn't the rogue here now where he was supposed to be, likely out carousing with some low woman, or worse yet, with those two unsavory characters who'd come around last weekend setting plans as to where they might move their salvaged makings and get in a few runs before the revenuers were breathing down their necks again. She prayed he wouldn't join in their furtive operations, knowing full-well, even as she prayed, this trickle of tainted funds was what kept staples on many families' tables. On Sunday mornings she couldn't help reflecting that it surely seemed to bother noone's conscience.

Weak-willed Charlie had made nothing since renting that mill saw and cutting all the timber off this plot of land her papa had passed on. It would take a lifetime of her apologies to set the woodlands right again. He did bring in laughter, trotting the tykes to town on his knee, lambasting all eardrums with saw-hand words to the common tunes that would surely educate them beyond their years! His leisurely worry-free existence was more conducive to wit and good-humor than hers. Goodness knows, they needed that, too.

But when she let herself think about it she couldn't for the life of her understand how he could sit around in his omnipotence and say that every new baby was the will of God, even as the older babies crawled about him crying with hunger. So much for that kind of feeling, now off to bed with all of them. She covered feet sticking out where four lay crosswise under the heavy quilts

on the pallets. Children have a way of growing, she mused, even without food, and the spirits of these did not seem too undernourished.

This was her forte, things of the spirit, and "Much From Little" the story of her life. She flipped the pages back to her schooldays. Graduating high school valedictorian she had gone to Western Carolina Teachers' College on a scholarship. With a love of learning begotten of her roving schoolmaster papa, she'd excelled in all her studies and gloried in her one year of teaching. Now there was a glimmer of hope on her horizon. She'd put in a WPA Application, the man assuring her she had a good chance. Perhaps she could teach some filtering fingers to do the helpful basic sums . . . wrinkled toothless faces might light up at the drawing of their own names for the first time . . . there might even be those she could teach to write poetry, their own Blue Ridge Mountains were formed of it! Adult Education, they called it, and she'd make it a real job. She'd cover Bee Mountain, and Mulberry, and Greasy Creek, and Adako Gap. She loved to walk and she loved to teach. If pregnancy had become her way of life, this she could do also, and love its doing. As a school girl she'd often felt Someone was looking over her shoulder. But her main running force was in indomitable belief that the Lord helps those who help themselves, and it was over her dead body they'd go down and sign up for Relief.

Charlene, the oldest, was as good with the children, if not better, than she, curling the little cornsilk heads that turned dark at puberty, and expertly pinning up the pants. Wilma could put on the beans or mix a batch of corn pone lickety-brindle, and she knew where the sweetest "cressy greens" (as the hill folk called them, with Ollie persistently correcting her family to "water cress") grew along the creek banks in spring. With the rich soil that built up where they threw out the dishwater, they could grow beans in four weeks. Louisa seemed not to mind washing out the sack dummies in the branch before scrubbing all the dirty clothes on the board and tossing them into the boiling black pot. Mildred would leaven and knead the straw tick bedding until even and inviting with the almost-square corner perfection of hospital standards she'd learned from her older sister's nurses' aid work. All the older girls vied for the job of churning, taking up, and molding the soft warm pale gold butter. The older boys kept the crowscaw humming, tacked worn shoes on the last or split fire logs; the younger rounded up washwood, went looking for pig weeds, or did whatever the older told them. Even little Sarah had found her niche, taking out every morning the night's mugs. Ollie was grateful they seemed for the most part healthy and happy. Charlie did appear to love the children, and they him, and on that note she pulled her own faith cover up, even as she heard his step on the path. He always seemed to know when she went to bed.

The thin cornmeal breakfast broth wasn't such good eating without milk, but in the knock-down drag-out of nine of them getting off to school, nothing was said about it.

The breezes blowing through the cracks in the floor were the least of their dressing worries; for the beginning adolescents, attempting to find a half-private corner was particularly painful. All were hardened to the cold in their sparse clothing, and she had told them long ago, and hoped it would strengthen

their character, that when others laughed at their patches to say "at least they're clean."

Sparks were still flying between Wilma and Billy. Either he or the other twin had found and eaten her hidden bread crusts on coming in from school last evening. Ollie could feel the buds of hatred beginning to swell in the breasts of the older one, rooted in the hollowness of fast-growth hunger. When there wasn't enough to go around, she'd sometimes had to say, "Let the little ones have it, they aren't old enough to understand." The intolerance of another's eating sounds was thinly veiled these days, even at times when there was enough for all.

Ollie decided when a nosebleed confirmed her earlier apprehension that she'd have to let Charlene stay out of school with the little one while she walked the ten miles into town to find out for sure about the job. Charlene would graduate in a few weeks; meantime, they'd work out something. It was nigh onto dark when she put up the bars to walk the last little way back to the house. A finger of forlornness poked at her fatigue on passing yesterday's staking ground for Old Spot, the sweet new spring growth eaten clean, bovine and grass scents blending.

But when she came in sight she saw, as always, not the tarpaper shack that had started out as one room and grown to three with the help of sawmill slabs as necessity demanded, but the dream she kept neatly filed in the back of her mind, with every drawer of every cabinet and every flower border carefully thought out.

Charlene had seen to the homework and was just shepherding the flock into Egypt. That's what they called the newest bedroom, the one without a single door or window . . . oh, how Ollie hated it, you couldn't even see to sweep the floor or cobwebs unless you lit the lamp, and that oil needed to be saved for studying. Wilma took over and Charlene went to pour steaming water from the kettle into the foot tub to ease her mother's weariness.

"Mama, a letter came," she said quietly, and reached for the warming closet where she had put it safely away from the children. Oh goodness, yes, that contest she had seized upon, twenty-five words or less, and days and days she'd waited as the deadline drew nearer until she could get a stamp to mail it. "Why I like you Octagon Soap . . ." She had gone over and over each word she had selected until it had become a part of her. She had even felt a small twinge of separation at relinquishing it to the mails. Of course they liked it. Perhaps it would be spoken over the radio. She was quite certain her schoolgirl feeling had been right. Some one was looking. Tomorrow He would go with all of them to bring back Old Spot.

"We are sorry that your name is not among the winners . . . hope you will continue to enjoy . . . redeem the enclosed coupons . . ."

"Don't worry, mama, we'll find a way," Charlene squatted with her arm briefly around her mother's shoulders. Ollie looked for a long moment into her oldest daughter's eyes before she dried her feet and turned to the tasks at hand.

"Younguns, 'member your prayers," Charlene called in to Egypt's darkness.

---

## SEASON CITY STREETS

Hot salted pretzels, chestnuts,  
blinking lights, Salvation Army Voices,  
holiday cheer  
season city streets.  
Skyscraper telescoping into snow and smog  
spits a bullet  
faded white refrigerator skin  
falls.  
First Holy Communion with Asphalt.  
A yuletide of shoppers washes up  
gazes.  
elastic eyes stretch and partake  
a human pizza (heavy on the sauce)  
"O my God"  
    "Don't look"  
A bus slows, traffic dies.  
"Call an ambulance"  
    "He's dead"  
Roller derby shopping  
SCHMEARED newsprint trampled by bus boarders.  
Bussed back home,  
"You wouldn't believe what happened downtown today."  
Michael G. Uhrin

## THE FAREWELL DRAFT

We toasted  
gulping ales  
for mother's soldier dead  
and his embryoed frame  
twisted him under  
hamburger hills  
and yellow sulphur pills  
under barbed wire  
pissing fear  
and dodging leadened fire  
he earned happiness  
when unannounced  
solitude in grey-silver smoke arrived  
poison tipboobytrapped-crude.

Philip Nofal

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### THE ALTAR

toes pointed missionary-like  
curling inward  
arms spread slippery as apple jelly  
beading tiny pearls of sweat  
wing heavenly to pull in your spirithrobbing  
and I in this Lenten season sacrifice  
My body My blood  
so that your spirit your flesh  
will be resurrected

Philip Nofal

### LOST

in a wilderness of people  
amid trunks of unfeeling  
whose branches reach out  
but never touch  
their leaves sing a song  
i cannot hear  
and their movements a dance  
i cannot see  
Lost in the jungle of life  
where vines of friendship  
never seem quite to hold  
the weight of a swing  
over the quicksand of stress  
and all my joy  
deadened by hopeless despair  
pulls me under  
lost

B.J.N.

---

LOVE SONG FOR A PRE-VET MAJOR OR  
WHY I CALL YOU DOCTOR ALREADY

Only you could make me love  
a sprawled cat  
your hand on its  
chemicalsoaked gut  
I become silent  
and peer from behind you  
but it's not feigned interest

Tina L. Coleman

I AM THE MAN, THE LONER

(written in response to "I am the People, the Mob")

I am the man—the loner—the single.  
All the great work of the world is done through me.  
I am the artist, the author, the creator—  
The world's paintings and poetry come through me.  
I am the great men of history, DaVinci, Michelangelo and Caesar,  
I who rule the world—I who live forever.  
Ages pass away. Nations are born and nations die.  
I live on.  
Long after everything has gone out of me—  
Long after death has come to me—  
I live on.  
I am remembered.  
I shake my fist at the sky. I sweat, I bleed to build my house.  
I am remembered.

Howard Suggs

# Something Wicked

JULIA E. BRUSTARES

It was coming on harvest time. The fields of wheat and corn were rich and ready as pop was driving the tractor out. That morning when I dressed, I buttoned up and turned my collar up, there was a peculiar coolness in the air. I remember hearing the back door squeaking open and slamming shut as I went to collect the eggs and milk the cows. Looking back on it now, it was unusually still and quiet, even the hens didn't flap and squawk. They acted like they do when a storm is comin' but there wasn't a cloud in the sky. I didn't make much of it then, but now I see the animals were able to sense what I couldn't. I had to learn.

That day at school there was much talk of the carnival. Why, it was all Stockman could do to keep the class quiet. Our minds were far from our s. Ben Davids, whom I guess you could call my best friend, and I decided together that night. I remember running home from school that day, when rarely I was in no hurry to get home to my chores. I was eating dinner so that night that I ate everything on my plate, without having time to think whether I liked lima beans or not. Ma didn't like the idea of me going to carnival at night and I wanted to get out of the house before she could think reason for me to stay home.

There was a knock on the door and I raced to answer it.

"Hey Ben, come on in a minute."

"Aren't you ready yet?"

"Yea, just hold on a moment. Ma, I'm leaving."

ard my mother yell from the kitchen, "Wait a minute dear" as her foot-came closer.

"Don't you be late."

"Yes, maam."

Ben and I hurried out the front door with ma watching us go down the till we were out of sight. We walked as fast as we could without breaking a run. My hands were clammy and I felt my heart beating a little faster excitement and anticipation.

As we neared the fair sounds of a man inviting everyone to see the wonders n reached our ears. He shouted over and over, "Come one come all, see the magnificent Lola as she turns into a Gorilla. Come one Come all, see Greco the thrower." Having never been to a carnival before, the blur of jerking ous and blinking lights against wound up music set excited butterflies free e me. Although Ben had gone last year, he seemed to be pretty excited to s we passed through the gate and entered into this alien world.

We were surrounded by faceless people pushing us forward into the eyele e fair.

"Marty, let's go see the bearded lady."

"Alright Ben, I'll buy the tickets this time."

ight the tickets and we entered the small tent. There she sat, up on a plat-, with people gawking at her and I couldn't help but do the same.

"Come on Marty, Let's get closer, I want to see if it's for real."

"Na, that's okay you go ahead, I can see from here."

"You're not scared are you?"

"No."

"Well, let's go."

grabbed my jacket and pulled me up through the crowd.

"She looks pretty mean, doesn't she Marty? I wonder what she'd do if I asked her if it was real?"

"I wouldn't ask, let's get outta here."



I turned and walked out, a few minutes later Ben ran up from behind me.

"Well Marty, what will it be, the haunted house or the freak show?"

"Let's go to the haunted house first."

Once inside the house, I felt cold shivers and my pulse beating harder against my temples. I light flashed on in front of us revealing a torture chamber of racks and iron maidens with bloody bodies emitting painful moans. Everyone about me screamed and clamored through the black and narrow chambers only to emerge in the laboratory of a mad scientist. Before our eyes there unfolded a bizzare murder as a cruel doctor removed a living heart from a struggling patient. It all seemed real to me and I was quite frightened, but I remember now that Ben was laughing as he escorted me onward.

After escaping the horrors of the haunted house, I felt the tension ease from my body. The next thing I realized, I was following Ben towards the Freak show.

"Hey come on Ben, slow down a bit, I want to get a coke." Standing at the counter, I noticed Ben was restless, shifting his weight from one foot to the other with his eyes darting about. He had a funny looking smile on his face, I'd never seen Ben act this strange. I remember once before, in school, when everybody was out at Phys. Ed. but Ben, Miss Stockman sent me in after him. When I walked in, Ben had taken one of the mice for the class experiment out of the cage and was squeezing it in his hands. The look he had on his face then reminded me of how he looks now. It seemed as though there were some force at work within him, transforming him. I'd never known Ben to be this itchy, he had always been so calm and deliberate. He was the one who always seemed to have the situation under control. The person next to me now was different from the one I was familiar with. I sipped my coke very slowly, reluctant to go on, but Ben was eager.

"Marty, let's get in line for the freak show now while it's short."

Ben was leading me everywhere now. I had seen enough, but for some unexplainable reason, I continued on. I suppose it was curiosity.

Sighs of horror closed in around me as we wandered through the freak show.

"Marty, look at that cow with three heads." Ben moved closer and was pulling me with him.

"Ben, let go of me. I can see from here." I was irritated and shook loose from his grip. Ben went right up to the cow and stuck his face in it's face. My stomach was turning. Two of the cows heads were lifeless and just hung there, these were the heads that Ben was fascinated with.

"Ben!", he paid no attention, "Hey Ben!" he still didn't acknowledge me, "Damnit, BEN!!"

"yeah buddy"

"I'll be waiting for you outside."

"Sure, sure, ———— what? Why are you leaving? We just got here, Come on Marty, I haven't seen everything yet."

"That's alright, you go ahead and look, I'll be outside."

I turned quickly and walked out, not giving Ben the chance to insist because I always gave in to avoid an argument. I was glad to be out of there, I didn't want to look at such sad misfits. It seemed as if forever that I had stood waiting for Ben to tear himself away from the freak show. To tell you the truth, Ben was starting to act a little freaky himself.

"Oh Marty, you should have seen the wingless chicken. it was . . ."

"I believe you, you don't have to tell me about it."

"Ya ready to see the knife thrower?"

He was talking so fast that the next thing I saw was a lady standing against a wall with balloons outlining her body. The knife thrower was concentrating on his aim. My heart was in my throat as the knives sailed through the air. I happened to glance over at Ben, he seemed to me as if he were in a trance and he had that peculiar sly grin on his face. I couldn't figure it, I'd never seen anyone who had that look before. I thought I knew him pretty good, but I didn't understand this and I was beginning to feel uneasy with him.

He kept leading me deeper with him into the cycle of the fair, deeper than I really cared to go. We were now waiting to go see Lola, a quote "Beautiful woman" turn into a gorilla. Lola came out on stage.

"Wow, Marty, getta load of that! That's what I call a good looking woman."

All the older men in the tent were whistling when I noticed something odd about Lola's smile, it wasn't a real smile. Why, why it looked something like how Ben's been smiling. Then gradually, but suddenly Lola's attractive features transformed into those of a raging beast. It was one of the most terrifying moments of my life, to think that a human being could become a beast. I was to have many nightmares of this event.

While Ben and I were wandering about he kept rambling about how fantastic Lola had been, I wasn't really listening, I was still too horrified, I was in a daze. I had never seen things like this before. I never believed anything could be so wicked, I was scared.

"Marty, let's go in the house of mirrors!"

"I haven't got any money left." (Making excuses.)

"I'll pay."

"No Ben, you don't have to pay for me. Go ahead, I'll wait."

"I owe you one, remember you paid for me to see the bearded lady, come on."

There was much confusion inside the maze of mirrors, no one could find their way through with all the reflections. But it was here, amidst all the confusion that things became clear to me. Seeing Ben's reflection against mine, remembering the similarity in his smile and Lola's smile. The goose bumps raised on my skin and I started to feel as if I might get sick. I could see it now, Ben was transforming like Lola. Into what I don't know, and I didn't care to think around and find out. I slipped away from him and practically ran the whole way home.

Ben and I were never to be the same again.

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The trees stand silent,  
Do not ask them to bear fruit.  
Life's rush must crawl  
Among the dark hills where snow hides,  
And the land stripped by the harvest  
must stand fallow and fade  
beneath the dull morning frost,  
The color already dissolved in the  
freezing rains.

Winter has brought solitude to the earth  
so that with cold objectivity it might  
Contemplate its life,  
And learn to long again for the pain of  
Birth,  
Before creation runs toward the east  
Where the grey winter sky breaks  
And all is recreated in the coming of  
the Sun.

BJN.

---

## 6 O'CLOCK NEWS

shiny bloated bellies  
garnished with pretty  
tapeworm ribbons  
and we gorge  
radar cooked meats  
basted with melted margarine seasonings;  
we watch  
as Biafran babies  
bellies plump  
like vine ripened  
mellons ready to  
burst red juices  
drip bloody tears  
and sing rotting cries  
for our feast

Philip Nofal

## THE FIRST GAZING OF SNOW

From a city of sun parched skies  
more hot and green than golden  
came a non-shod me  
To this place of sleeping gardens  
where I know the window sill  
and a fogging pane best  
Here every lifting of a curtain  
and red pressed elbow at evening  
affords my gazing of white.

Tina L. Coleman

# THE EDGE

THE EDGE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT by PHILIP NOFAL

Time: Post World War One

Setting: Close vicinity of London, England; the parlour and dining room of a large estate.

Characters: Judge

Jean Paul Dubois

Dr. Pendelton

Col. Aldridge

Lord Victor Cheshire

JUDGE I  
Victor Cheshire  
spinner, and  
myself were  
perfect cri  
had asked  
together in  
man of stat  
With you  
became the  
Victor's si  
of Sir Ad  
macabre st  
night:

JUDGE I  
this is Nap  
JEAN PA  
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DR. PEND  
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## SCENE I

*At the rise of the curtain, the stage is in total darkness. THE JUDGE enters down right on the corner of the apron. A single blue spotlight fades up, and he begins his monologue in a quiet, humble, but troubled manner.*

JUDGE It all began late one October evening in the stately manor of Lord Victor Chesire, at Maidenhead on the River Thames. Lord Victor was a master spinner, and Jean Paul Dubois, Colonel Aldridge, Dr. Charles Pendelton and myself were unwaveringly intertwined in his invisible web which resulted in the perfect crime — a murder of high design. I had no knowledge of why Victor had asked the four of us together. I assumed for old times sake; we served together in the Royal Flying Corps early in the war of the trenches. He was a man of stately intrigue, forced by destiny to support the decay of a noble family. With your permission, I take you back to that Thursday evening where we—I, became the innocent conspirators of an unnatural rite. I take you to Lord Victor's sitting room. The other guests and I have just arrived from the debut of Sir Adrian Boult with the Birmingham Orchestra in London. As our macabre story begins, we are engaged in light conversation. Now to that fatal night:

*The spotlight fades to black, and the lights fade up on the set stage right. The set is that of a typically appointed sitting room of an English Country Manor of the period. The other players are frozen in their animation as if conversation had been going on. When the JUDGE finishes his narration he crosses to the brandy table, pours himself a drink and seats himself in the chair up right. As the JUDGE speaks, conversation and movement resume as if there had been no pause. Jean Paul is toying with a group of silver coins.*

JUDGE I must be sure to compliment our host on his selection of brandies; this is Napoleon '79, I believe.

JEAN PAUL Mais oui, Victor shares my finesse and appreciation for the finer liqueurs.

DR. PENDELTON Jean Paul, I am pleased to see that you could join us on this pleasant night. We didn't know whether your heart condition had yet bettered. We had all, of course, been keenly aware of the seriousness of your attacks.

JEAN PAUL Merci, Monsieur le Doctor, but you need not have been so concerned. This Tiger Moth is far from dead.

COL. ALDRIDGE You should have been dead long ago. You bloody well exhausted your luck over Dover. (He laughs).

JEAN PAUL Your flying was none too good either as I recall, it wasn't like the meandering of a zeppelin, many times you looked more like a blind moth than

a Tiger Moth. I need not point out that you still shuttled about in a Tiger Moth, long after the rest of us were given a Sopwith to fly.

COL. ALDRIDGE Even old Haig was astounded by the tales he heard of our "Outerbound" squadron.

DR. PENDELTON Tell me Judge, what do you make of Major Armstrong poisoning his wife? There's an article here on the front page of the TIMES

JUDGE A rather beastly affair. I rather expect he went a bit bonkers from the old girl's infernal nagging.

COL. ALDRIDGE A pity too, what? He was a fine soldier.

JEAN PAUL Yes, well . . . (they all fall into a short silence during which we see in their eyes their own wartime memories.) By the way Mesieurs, I chanced upon a case of Chateau Lateur for a paltry sum day before last. I discovered its availability be mere chance. It should give me the edge I need over Victor's cellar.

VICTOR (entering down right during this last line) What's that, Jean Paul! Still trying to better my cellar's excellence? (To all) Gentlemen, please pardon my neglect, but I fear there were things to oversee in the pantry. Today's hunt was grand — the hounds are still baying and the pheasant is in there, roasting admirable, I might add.

COL. ALDRIDGE Tell us, Victor, why the playful secrecy? Pray enlighten us. What is it that you have in store for us tonight?

JEAN PAUL Yes, do tell us your reasoning behind this pleasant occasion.

VICTOR Allow me time, for the night is still quite young. In due time you shall all know my purpose.

JUDGE Oh, come now, Victor, we are after all of the intelligent elite, and a bit above parlour games.

DR. PENDLETON Oh, allow him his games for the moment; he is, after all, the eldest among us. Judge, as you pour yourself another, would you poke the fire a bit? The chill of these October evenings penetrates to the bone.

VICTOR Allow me, Doctor, I fear I skimmed a bit on the coal. Ever since we went off the gold standard, it has been a near impossibility to get round these parts.

JUDGE (getting up to replenish his glass) My dear Doctor, we must not let Victor off so easily.

COL. ALDRIDGE I quite agree, you must tell us why you summoned us tonight.

VICTOR (as he finishes stoking the fire) Patience, my friends, patience.

DR. PENDLETON Have any of you perused the latest of Wodehouse's pSmith series? Damned good, I'd say. Just what the economy needs in this uncertain age. I feel the country is at an all time low with that bastard McDonald on Downing Street.

JEAN PAUL I agree that we are in trouble again, and I note that THE TATLER is filled with Teddy's exploits. His collarbone was broken when his

drinking unhorsed him on the point to point Friday last. Her majesty is a bit out of sorts with him over some wench named Roberta, I hear, and George is in a dither and planning to send him on an extended holiday to the far east.

VICTOR (rising) Gentlemen, while I hate to disturb your conversation, I'm afraid that if we do not soon adjourn to the dining room, our pheasant shall be unfit for consumption, and, I might add, that I have a miracle of sorts to share with you.

*The lights fade to black for a moment during which time the players move to the dining room set. All seat themselves save for the JUDGE who returns to the apron for another narration. Light then spots JUDGE.*

JUDGE At this time there was some meager suggestion of excitement in all of us for we knew not why Victor was being so elusive in his manner and speech. We all paraded in short procession behind our host to the banquet table. Tension ran rampant during the meal, and though there was a feast set before us, each of us held our own silent theories as to what was in store for us. But who could imagine the fiendish intent of our host? I must apologize for my ambriety, but it is not often that a man is intertwined in a plot so silent that not one of the participants was even aware of the rumbling storm brewing in that hush banquet hall. As the feast wound slowly to its completion like sailors on a windless sea — we all found ourselves looking — as if at a mirage — to Victor, only to see our answers melt into the mindless reality of the moment. Finally the last dish had been cleared from the table, and Victor's countenance shone with an inner pleasure of what was to come. Again, let us return to that night — the night which I have fought so long — without success — to sponge from my memory.

*The spotlight fades out on the JUDGE and he crosses to take his place at the table. When the lights fade up on SCENE II, the setting is stage left. There is a dining hall appointed with rich and heavy mahogany pieces, dazzling silverware, and centered by a rectangular dining table. All the guests are seated upstage with Victor center, Dr. Pendelton to his right, the JUDGE far right, JEAN PAUL to the left of VICTOR, and COL. ALDRIDGE on the far left. As the lights fade up we begin . . .*

## SCENE II

JEAN PAUL The cuisine was superb, Victor, the brandy delectable, the pheasant actually melted on my tongue. The hounds served you well this day my friend.

DR. PENDELTON Quite so. Truly the meal you have set has been an adventure in culinary excellence.

JUDGE Now Victor, perhaps you will end the suspense in which we have been



held through so scrumptuous a meal. You have perchance some announcement for us, possibly the appointment to some governmental post!

VICTOR Please my brothers, we are all fishermen of sorts. I humbly beg your patience. You must learn not to doubt me. I will soon show you the way.

COL. ALDRIDGE We have no wish to be impolite, but we have shared in your feast, please let us now share in your mystery.

JEAN PAUL If you please Monsieur, all this talk of secrecy starts my heart pounding. Perhaps an after dinner brandy, Victor? I am sure so delicious a meal deserves your finest . . . It is at times such as this that I long for the last case of Benedictine from the monastery at Monte Casino, before its destruction.

COL. ALDRIDGE The Germans had no mercy, it was completely leveled.

JEAN PAUL Oui, but there may have been a chance . . .

VICTOR Come now, Jean Paul, you don't really suspect any of that vintage is still in existence?

JEAN PAUL I fear, old friend that you are right, though if by the intervention of the Holy Spirit there were any left, I would sell my very soul for a bottle — or for even a sip.

*Dr. Pendelton picks up his pipe and lights it. The lights dim; we hear Handel's Messiah playing quietly in the background as Lord Victor produces an object to the table covered in a fine cloth. The eyes of the guests turn to the object, and to each other. Lord Victor, standing, is looking at his seated guests, first to his right where the Doctor and the Judge are seated, and then to his left, where Jean Paul and the Colonel are seated. He lingers on Jean Paul. Lord Victor slowly unveils what turns out to be the bottle of Benedictine from Monte Casino. Jean Paul's eyes become transfixed on the bottle as if he is possessed.*

JEAN PAUL Saere bleu! La Benedictine! But, but how can it be . . . it was all destroyed by the exploding fires!

VICTOR Look at it Jean Paul! Feast your eyes upon it. Is it not beautiful?

JEAN PAUL C'est Magnifique, Victor, c'est magnifique.

COL. ALDRIDGE Victor, your resources never cease to amaze me. Tell us if you please . . .

DR. PENDELTON (interrupting) Yes, how did you get it?

VICTOR Please gentlemen — so many questions!

JUDGE Tell me Victor . . . Is this the only bottle or is there more?

VICTOR No Judge, (looking at Jean Paul) this is the last bottle.

JUDGE This secures your cellar's collection over Jean Paul's does it not?

VICTOR Most assuredly, Judge, most assuredly.

JEAN PAUL How much Victor? I will pay you any amount! Tell me please, I will give you a note!

VICTOR  
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JEAN  
JUDGE  
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VICTOR  
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VICTOR  
is the  
drink.

COL.  
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JUDGE  
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No, Jean Paul. Nothing you could ever do or have, could pay for

*Lord Victor slowly grasps and raises the bottle above his head in both hands pivoting the view of the bottle to all seated. Jean Paul is lured but mesmerized by this vessel held before him. Victor opens the bottle and passes the cork first to Dr. Pend., the Judge, and then to Jean Paul...*

PAUL Excellent, the cork is perfect! The liqueur will be divine.

Why Victor, do you honour us with this liqueur when it is the one which would keep your rival, Monsieur Dubois, envious of you?

ALDRIDGE (taking the cork) Rest easy, old fellow, you might change d, and I would feel frightfully cheated not knowing the full body of that re are about to receive.

PAUL Mais oui, Your Honour, be quiet! The bottle has been opened not be resealed!

OR And as the host, my fellows, I will now taste the contents to see if it hy for you to receive. (pours, sips the liqueur, pauses, finishes his glass, en facing Jean Paul, he speaks...)

OR Gentlemen, your glasses please for I have this drink to offer you; it fruit of the vine, and the work of human hands. It will become for us our

*He then lowers the wine and taking Jean Paul's glass, ever so slowly, begins the careful, tedious exercise of pouring the brandy... Victor's eyes fixed on the reaction of Jean Paul (doesn't even blink) as he meticulously, deliberately pours the brandy onto the table! Jean Paul, on the edge of his chair, clutches his heart, falls forward, reaching for the brandy with his right hand dies, and the concealed silver coins roll from his hand into the pool of brandy. Silence... Victor sits reflectively staring first at Jean Paul, then at the dropped coins and finally at the other guests. The Judge in disbelief looks on...*

ALDRIDGE (Slowly looking Victor in the eye leans over the body, and tpping his finger in the brandy, tastes it finding it to be spoiled.) Bitter.

*Lights fade out on scene. Lights fade up on Judge, standing once again off stage in witness stand.*

JUDGE The peace of my soul rests solely in your hands... I ask you now to consider my plea and hand me down your verdict — guilty or not-guilty?

Curtain

PLAY ENDS

# DUTCH TREAT



CATHY (RED) O'NEILL

Once upon a time, there was a man who owned a diner on the side street of a very big city. This man's name was Karl De Jong, and he came from Holland. He was very meticulous and he kept his diner spotlessly clean. When the health inspectors came around to make sure he wasn't making roaches a part of his daily cuisine, he was always rewarded with a "Sanitation Grade-A". Mr. De Jong had a very pretty wife who was a modern southern belle from Alabama. She was twenty years his junior, and since he was forty-three, he didn't think have too many worries about being alone in his old age.

Unfortunately Karl De Jong never lived long enough to collect social. He died at forty-five, and no one in the entire city, with the possible exception of his well-tipped paper boy mourned. His death, and the stories of his leading up to it were on the front pages of every newspaper in town. Every person in the city who was old enough to read, and understand penance he'd been to society breathed a sigh of relief when there wasn't enough of him left to fill a coffeepot.

And the reason that there was so much apathy directed towards Karl during the last six weeks of his life was because a certain ambitious young policeman found out his lifelong secret. And the long-guarded secret that became known was that Karl De Jong was a cannibal! Yes, he was a regular old man-eater, lung, kidney, liver, tongue, and eyeball eater from way back. But of course he knew it would never do to put up a neon sign proclaiming his peculiarity for the whole city to see because what would the neighbors think?

At unbeknownst to Mr. De Jong's patrons he was very generous in sharing his food with them. Every other week, or as often as occasion provided, Karl would offer his customers an international dish as his one specialty. He found it very easy to obtain Spanish, Chinese, or Italian food, since the city in which he lived afforded a number of sources. But when he was able to provide German or French dishes, Karl was at his culinary best. He loved to cook, and he was very competent at his work.

The "Travelor's Delight" as Karl called his foreign dishes were most often considered among the best meals on his menu. Surrounding the main entree which was a large slab of choice tender meat was a steaming array of cooked vegetables particular to the country being featured. The meat was always freshly cut because it had been procured sometime during the day or previous night.

Karl's customers raved about his "Travelor's Delight" and his business thrived on "international night". The cash register was rung up constantly, the door opened every few minutes, and Karl's wife who's name by the way was Sandra, found it necessary to empty her pockets of tips revenue at least every hour on the hour. She was a good waitress who didn't seem to mind a pinch on the posterior every now and then. In fact, it was her nonchalant acceptance of the attention she received from one particular male customer, that cost her husband his life. Not to mention her own life.

This certain male customer happened to be a young rookie cop by the name of Tim Connelly who was anxious to make his first big arrest. He had been to Karl's to eat the famous foreign dishes, and had taken a great deal of notice of Sandra. She, on the other hand, had seemed to return the amorous glances he cast in her direction, and treated him with only half-hearted rebuffs. Sometimes when Tim would eat at the diner it seemed to him that she smelled like a sickly counter at Christmastime, and the aroma only served to increase his desire, and likewise his desire to get to know her better.

So, slowly but surely he did get to know her better. Their relationship started out slowly with Tim asking the usual hesitant questions asked of seemingly-faithful-but-prospective-looking married women.

"Any chance of sneaking away for a few hours tonight, good looking?"

And she would give the usual coy reply of the I'm-not-too-sure-I-should-get-myself-into-this-but-it-might-be-fun married woman,

"What would someone like you want with a settled housewife like me?"

And from those budding words a beautiful, but illicit love affair blossomed. Not that Karl was unaware of what was going on between his pretty, sexy wife and the handsome young policeman, mind you. And that was just the kind of thing that could send him into a flying Dutch rage. He asked the usual middle-aged-husband-being-cheated-on-by-young-good-looking-wife questions, and demanded an explanation of her behavior.

"Vat is dis, you hussy? Playink around behind my back and vit a customer yet?"

And Sandra would give the usual seemingly-faithful-wringly-accused-self righteous reply,

"Why whatever do you mean? How dare you accuse me of such a thing!"

And of course that was just the kind of answer which could put Karl into a murderous rage. It was the very thing that could cause him to take a cleaver and chop her up like so many pieces of chuck steak. Which of course he did. And all the while he was doing it, he was screaming,

"Filthy vench! Animal! You are nothink but a pig! Yah! Dat's it. A pig! A dirty, little, cheating pig! Pig! Pig! Pig!"

And that was the first time in all his cannibalistic life that Karl had ever been frightened by committing murder. He was worried this time. Worried that that snotty young Mie might come around looking for his wife. And yet the desire for revenge was so strong within him that it overpowered his anxiety. And in his mind he developed a plan. He'd give her to that young punk. In fact, he'd give her to all of the stinking, rotten men who had tried to take her away from him.

So Karl advertised a special platter to be called "Down South Night". He hired a young girl to work parttime as a waitress in place of Sandra, and he waited. And as he expected Tim Connelly came in with an empty stomach in anticipation of one of Karl's favored specialties. Before the girl took orders Karl announced to the crowd that his wife was away for a while, but that tonight's meal was on her behalf.

"Friends," he said, "My wife is visitink vit her parents. As many of you know, she is from down south. Vell tonight, on her behalf, ve are servink de kind of meal dat she herself is probably eatink right now at her parents home. I have fritters, corn bread, hash browns, and even grits as vegetables." The people in the diner laughed at the mention of grits since it was an uncommon side dish. Karl continued to speak.

"And for de main entree, I have ham. You know, from de pig, yah?! Vell down south, my wife told me, an excellent meal would be fresh ham. So dat is vat I have for you tonight."

The people in the diner applauded Karl who smiled benevolently at them. He got their orders and served up a dinner for them. He disguised the meat

from Sandra's viscera so well, and cooked it to such tender perfection that his customers never knew what was actually being slid down into their stomachs. That is, not until the next day. Even Tim Connelly complimented Karl on the meal.

"De Jong, that was one of your better efforts. I really enjoyed it."

And then Karl made his fateful mistake. Taken aback by the young policeman's comment he invited him down to the corner for a drink. Tim accepted, thinking that it might make it easier to continue his romance with Sandra by getting in good with the old man. Well, Karl was so ecstatically happy and pleased with himself over the dinner he'd served that he decided to really celebrate his 'victory'. He got extremely drunk and had to be escorted home by Tim. Unable to find his keys he proceeded to pass out on the pavement. Tim fished out the keys, opened the door to the diner and walked Karl towards the stairs. He accompanied him upstairs and put him to bed. Within minutes Karl was heavily snoring.

On the way down Tim decided to use the back exit which was through the kitchen. He was hungry, and he thought he just might grab himself a bite to eat. Opening the refrigerator he spied the rest of the ham that Karl had served at dinner that night. So, he decided to make himself a sandwich from the meat. While he was cutting a piece off he noticed much to his disgust a fingernail wedged into the ham.

"De Jong ought to get rid of that girl if she can't be more careful. The health department will nab him if he isn't careful," thought Tim to himself.

He then flicked it onto the floor and went on making his sandwich. But an instant later he bent down and picked up the fingernail. There was something very familiar about it. There was something about the color of the nail polish on it, and the tiny star decal which caught his attention. Then in a flash the sickening realization came to him. Sandra always wore those kind of decals on her fingernails, and it did seem very strange that she was not around these days. Tim looked at the fingernail with a feeling of nausea in his stomach, and then again at the meat. The meat was a little too pink for fresh ham wasn't it? As soon as he could Tim made his way into the bathroom to rid himself of the quickly enveloping sickness that he so suddenly felt.

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... Well, they cooked old Karl De Jong good. Under the broiling lights they evoked all kinds of confessions from his demented mind. The jury and judges didn't think that after all those murders he deserved even an insane asylum. That would have been too easy. So, they executed him. And they burnt him to a crisp. Strapped in the electric chair he received a burn he'd never forget if he could have lived to remember it. And of course they cremated old Karl's body. What better way to get rid of a person who liked to cook other persons than to cook him? Right? Of course right! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, an arm for an arm, a tongue for a tongue, a kidney for a kidney pie ...

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In the flow of courtships  
on lucid planes  
a hand-fed-pond-duck  
will sigh  
Now she wants a watermelon  
to peek at  
or tadpole with  
promise of transformation  
But I web-foot paddled  
across that spawning pool  
rippling my trail of down  
I've white feathers for you

Tina L. Coleman

#### NIGHT DREAMS

I'm making friends, but something's wrong,  
I miss you. I feel love wane.  
It moves off slowly into darkness.  
Your face becomes indistinct to my memory.  
Your touch less electric with passing absense.  
Our vibrant love fades into mediocrity.  
Time, a healer, slays all too.

William Tobin

your image embraced me in a dream  
subways whizzed by  
the clatter of hard souls  
against cement pavement  
mingled with the rustling of coats  
you stood amongst the hurried  
muttering how late you were  
upset  
about missing the only subway  
to oblivion

Debbie McComb



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A talented sophomore from Long Island, New York, whose artistic interests include music.

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An Indonesian student of Biology. Her artistic advice has been greatly appreciated by the Agora staff and our cover is proof of her artistic talent.

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