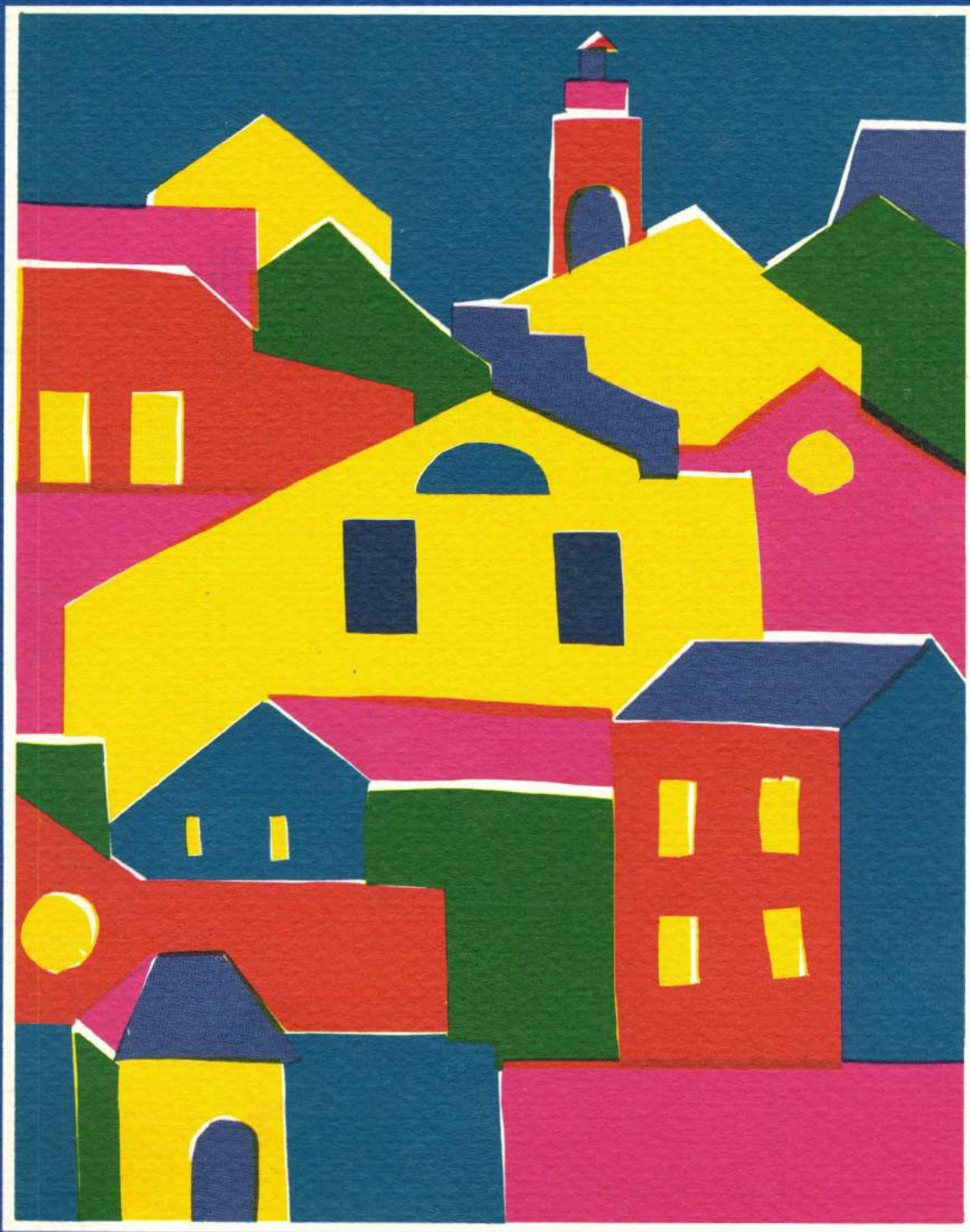


Point of View



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A Time and Place

Margery M. Munn

Over the years, no one could explain exactly why the old house frightened them, for it had stood empty nearly a century. Time, weather, and malicious children had been cruel to it, leaving ugly scars on its surface.

At one time, the house had been the most elegant residence for miles around. It was designed and built with great care for the beautiful young wife of a very rich man.

They had only been living in it a short time when, one terrible night, the young wife had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

After weeks of frenzied searching, the husband, in a fit of bitter rage at losing his beloved wife, boarded up the fine house, vowing never to set foot in it again until his wife returned and forbidding anyone else to enter.

Strange noises could be heard coming from the neglected house on certain nights, it was told, but as the years passed, and the weeds and trees grew to all but cover it, the house was eventually forgotten.

It was learned many, many years later that the husband had died an old and broken man, leaving no heirs, for he had never remarried.

Thereafter, there was an eerie, sinister silence about the house as though with his passing, a spirit life entered — one of expectancy and waiting.

Indeed, it was waiting and due to one of those unexplainable coincidences that sometimes occur in the great universe of time, and with the arrival of the battered, blue station wagon out in front its patience was about to be rewarded.

The young woman climbed out of the battered car and, even though it was raining very hard, stood looking at one part of the house visible from the road. Strange feelings and instincts that she couldn't explain compelled her to search out this particular house, and to come to it as quickly as possible.

It had not been an easy search, but she had kept at it. How many old houses had she looked at with real estate people? She'd finally lost count. The search had become an obsession, and now that it was finished and the object of it before her, she could only stand in the pouring rain and let the relief of finding it flood her being.

"It's the right one at last!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Then she began to climb through the underbrush, over fallen trees, and between thorny bushes. The only sound she could hear other than the rain smacking against the leaves was that of her own heart beating. The closer she got to the house, the more urgent seemed her quest. Her fingers were bleeding from fighting the bushes, her short-cropped hair was stringy from the rain, and her clothes were soaked, but she kept going.



At last, she stood on what was left of the front porch.

"I made it!" she whispered softly. "I really made it!"

This quest had cost her far more than money, although it had cost plenty of that too. Her friends had become tired of her talk of finding the old house. She had described it in detail from her dreams. They had finally refused to loan her any more money, and had in fact, started calling her a witch, for at times she would stop in the middle of a conversation to "listen" to something.

"It doesn't matter now," she said. "None of that matters now."

Carefully, so as not to cut her fingers any worse than they already were, she wrestled the boards off the huge front door. The nails were rusty and gave way easily. She didn't just throw the boards, but stacked them neatly on the porch.

The huge door moaned on its hinges, complaining loudly at being awakened after such a long sleep, but yielded its interior to the long-awaited visitor.

Once inside, the young woman stood on the threshold allowing her eyes to get used to the semi-darkness of the house. The light from the partly-opened door illuminated what she beheld.

"My god!" she cried. "Oh my god!"

Time had vanquished the exterior of the house, but the interior seemed stopped in mid-sentence. The mode was of at least a hundred years ago. There were long pink velvet drapes hanging over the floor-to-ceiling windows.

The furniture was upholstered in soft shades of pink and lavender silk. The rugs were white fur, and there were flowers, fresh flowers, in the vases set on the numerous tables around the room. The whole effect was total elegance. It felt as though the occupants merely had stepped out of the room for a moment.

The young woman felt she had fallen back into time. Different levels of consciousness crashed together within her head. She turned, but could only see rain and overgrowth. The atmosphere of the room held a scent of past happiness and dreams, but now there was an aura of waiting. Everything in the room seemed to be holding its breath.

She walked slowly over to one of the windows from which the boards had been ripped away and parted the drapes. The rain beating against the windows caused small rivers on the unbroken panes of glass. These small rivers broke off to form even smaller tributaries that from a distance gave the window a spiderweb appearance.

She didn't know how long she'd been standing there when suddenly . . .

"You've decided to come home, Amanda."

She whirled around, her heart caught in her throat, and found herself face-to-face with a man of medium height, dressed in the fashion of a day that fit the decor of the room.

"I repeat, Amanda," he said, his eyes penetrating her own, "I see you've finally decided to come home."

She swallowed several times before answering.

"I — Who are you?" she stammered.

"Come now, Amanda," he said softly, his eyes narrowing. "Is that any way to greet your husband? I've been looking everywhere for you."

"For me!" she exclaimed. "I've never even seen you before!"

He stared at her for what seemed like hours. "Amanda, I know you are just tired. I have waited patiently for your return. Nothing has been disturbed since your departure. Your clothes and perfumes are exactly as you left them. Please go to your room, and change for dinner."

"I don't know what's going on here, or why I was brought here," replied the young woman, "but my name is not Amanda, and I'm certainly not staying for dinner!"

She started towards the still open front door.

"No!" he bellowed. "No, you shall not leave me again, Amanda!" With that, he stepped in front of her, blocking her escape.

"You're crazy! Get out of my way," she warned, "or I'll scream!"

"Scream all you wish, my dear," he answered with a mocking sneer, "I promise no one will hear you."

A chill of terror swept over her body, but she replied with more determination and bravery than she actually felt, "I'm leaving." she stepped around him and headed for the door.

"No, Amanda," he said quietly, "not again." Slowly from his vest pocket, he drew a small pistol. Aiming it directly at the base of her skull, he fired.

She had time to only half turn around before she hit the floor. Her eyes held a look of disbelief and pain, just before they clouded over and could see no more. "Now, Amanda," the man said in a child-like whine, "please get changed for dinner as I requested." With that he slowly faded into the wall.

"Cut!" shouted the director. "That was superb! I watched the whole thing on the monitor, and the special effects of the husband fading into the wall were perfect! Okay, darling," he said to the young woman lying on the floor, and offering his hand to help her up, "you were very convincing. The fear in your eyes showed up well."

"Boss!" cried a gray-haired man running in from outside, "They just found the guy who is supposed to play the husband in a bar across town. He's dead drunk, but they'll sober him up, and bring him over as soon as possible."

"What do you mean? We just played the whole scene," the director responded. "Oh my god!" he moaned looking down at the scarlet pool forming around the head of the young woman.



Anna Maturo



Grown Up Blues

Carolyn Vasquez

*Mommy used to come when I was sick,
Give me a thermometer to check my fever,
Make me swallow two orange aspirin
(the ones for kids),
And tuck me in bed with my head propped up.*

*Daddy used to come when I was sick,
Feel my forehead,
Ask if my chest hurt,
And tell me to lie down when I already was.*

*Nobody comes now when I'm sick,
I have to feel my own forehead,
Take my own temperature,
and swallow two white aspirin
(the ones for adults).*

The Circus

Marianne Wielgos

*Standing in the dark of the three-ring circus
Waiting for his turn to go on
The clown of the circus sees many faces
But no one ever sees his
Standing in the circle of the spotlight beam
Performing his job as he should
The clown of the circus sees happy faces
But no one really sees his*

*Under the grease paint the clown's face
Is not what it's expected to be
The face of the clown is sad and tired
But he knows that the show must go on
And under the wig the clown's mind is troubled
Wondering should this life go on
The clown of the circus pleases most people
But no one ever pleases him*

*Standing in the dark of the three-ring circus
Thousands of clowns await their turn
The clowns of the circus see many faces
But they don't know whose face is whose
Standing in the circle of the spotlight beam
Performing their acts as they should
The clowns of the circus make happy faces
But they don't know whose face is whose*



Are You?

Margery M. Munn

The slenderly built, slightly tanned young girl, with her two smaller companions, sat very still on the edge of the old wooden dock over-looking the calm, aqua-green water. They had been sitting that way for better than an hour, not talking, not moving. She had great, wide, blue eyes, and a face free of all expression at the moment. Her long, blond hair shone like a ray of sunlight as it fell loosely about her thin shoulders.

Anyone seeing the girl would have guessed her to be about ten years of age, and perhaps a model of children's fashions. In actuality, however, she was closer to twenty years of age; nineteen years, seven months to be exact. But due to one of those tragic mistakes Nature sometimes makes, she would never look more than ten, nor live to be older than twenty-four, at the most. For her, it was understood, the world would always be seen from a six year old's point of view.

How fortunate they said, not knowing she could hear them from the other room, she'll never realize she's different from the others. She'll always be young, carefree, and happy. No worries, no cares, a continuous childhood. Really, how lucky she is.

Turning to her companion on her right hand, she suddenly broke the silence and said, "I'm lonely today, Patty. Are you?"

Her little companion just nodded her head slowly, sadly.

Turning to her companion on her left, she asked wistfully, "Are you lonely today, Ted Edward?"

Her other little companion also nodded his head in agreement. So the three moved closer together out of mutual need and sat quietly awhile longer.

Breaking the silence once again, she said, "Patty, how deep is the water, do you think? Does the rain taste salty before it falls into the ocean? Mother says I sometimes ask very foolish questions, and I shouldn't worry about things like that because it's not important. She answers Mike's questions, though,

and he writes them down on a paper. Daddy tells Peter and Margaret things when they ask, and they write in books, but no one writes things down for me. But, I'll fix them!" she said firmly, "I just won't ask them anymore! Are you lonely today, Patty?"

Before her friend could answer, she said, "I am."

Continuing in a new vein, she said, "I wonder if a tree does hurt when it gets chopped down. Can a tree cry? If I pull a leaf off it, is it like pulling off a finger? I wouldn't want my finger pulled off. Are you lonely today, Ted Edward?"

He just stared blankly out at the water.

"Ted Edward!" she said sharply, "I'm talking to you! You must listen to me, or you won't learn anything. You'll be different! You won't grow big if you don't learn things. Look how big I am! Don't you want to be big, like me? Don't you want to be happy, like me? My mother says I will always be happy. Are you lonely today, Ted Edward?" she asked softly. "Me, too."

Ted Edward looked at her solemnly. His expression did not change at all, but he nodded his head once again in agreement.

"It's hard to be happy all the time, Patty," she continued sadly. "Sometimes, I just want to cry. I don't know why exactly, but then Daddy says I have no reason to cry because I have nothing to worry about except having a good time, and being a good girl. He says I should play with other children, not just you two, but you are my bestest friends. I like playing with you more than anything." With that, she planted a big kiss on the top of Patty's head, and one on Ted Edward's cheek.

"Hey, look at that pretty bird! Hi, pretty bird!" she called gayly. "OH," she wailed, "he flew away. I don't think he likes me. I wonder if he's lonely."

She stretched her legs out, and wiggled her toes in the clear water, causing little ripples that disturbed the tranquillity of its surface. A small fish jumped out of the water, and swam quickly away.

"Oh, Ted Edward, did you see that?" she exclaimed excitedly. "A fish! Oh, I scared it away. Maybe it was trying to be my friend. Oh, I scared it away, too."

Great tears welled up in her eyes, and ran down her cheeks. She lifted her feet out of the water, and tucked them under her Indian style. In a few minutes, the surface was once again calm, and so was she.

After awhile, she leaned over and gazed attentively into the cool, clear darkness of the aqua-green water. Perhaps the fish had come back, and she could see him.

"Ted Edward! Patty!" she whispered breathlessly, her eyes growing very wide. "There's someone down there looking up at us." She held Ted Edward and Patty at the edge so they wouldn't fall in, but could still see. "Did you see her?"

Patty and Ted Edward both nodded their heads, and in a high squeaky voice Patty replied, "It looks like a little girl, but she's sort of green looking. Did you see her, Ted Edward?"

"Yep," answered Ted Edward, "but green is a funny color for a girl."

"I wonder who she is. Why is she in the water? Is she really a fish? Is she lonely too?" said the young girl aloud to her two small friends.

She leaned over again very slowly. She was still there. Pulling back quickly, so as not to frighten her away as she had the bird and the fish, she said quietly to Patty, "What should I do, Patty?"

"See if she wants to play with us," answered Patty excitedly, her voice squeaking more than usual.

Once again, the young girl leaned forward, but instead of calling to the green, watery figure, she waved to her. The figure waved to her.

"She waved to me! I think she wants me to come and play with her. She must be lonely, too," said the girl happily. "Patty and Ted Edward, I want you two to stay right here until I get back. Don't you move, or you might get lost. If Mother calls me, just tell her I'll be back in a while. If Daddy comes, tell him I'm playing with someone new. Promise me you won't move now?"

Ted Edward and Patty shook their heads, and said they promised. With that, she gave each of them a kiss, and sat them close together.

"Remember," she said as she lowered herself into the calm, aqua-green water, "don't you move!"

Several days after the funeral, her brother, Mike, found the two little puppets, Patty Paws Cat and Ted Edward Bear, sitting, just where they'd promised to stay, side-by-side, waiting for their little mistress to return.

Tangles

Mary Harris

*Your voice weaves with the westering sun
A cradling warmth and companionable fabric.
Symphonies of white butterflies stir and
Toss about our ambling strides, disturbing thoughts,
While leafy bows the green dappled collonade.
Our fingers entwined hold a check on the day
To a background of insects and a distance of birds
Hurrying intent on their private pursuits.
Rudely sparks a three-strand fence tightly strapped
Between aging posts, guiding the path for a bit
Among skeins of webs glinting in lazy splendor, and
As quickly lost as migrating thistledown
Carefully bearing its own fragile promise
Our laughter tumbles to the breezing sky.*

A Martyr No More

Jane Schultz

*Mother you taught me well.
"Live for others, give to others,
Live through others, child!"
With no identity of my own
Through him I seemed to have one.
Somewhere in myself a bargain was reached:
Love, obedience and devotion
In return for life-long security.
What this girl-child didn't know
Was happiness comes back
Only when it is given willingly
And silent resentment does not
Make for merriment.
What will happen to this
Aging child struggling to grow up,
This martyr no more, who found out
Freedom was too much for anyone to pay?
I don't know, but the more I learn
The less afraid I am to find out.*

The Hippie

Muriel Frank

*Whimsical
Dirty feet,
Shifting,
Slothful nails,
Scratching
The smugness of my
Sage and splendid shield.*



The Maiming of Herbert Fischer

Steven R. Howard

Most mornings were bad lately, but this one had been exceptional. Dennie had been even colder than was usual the evening before and had laid it all out to him in the morning.

"If it weren't for the kids, I'd be rid of you tomorrow," she had informed him across the table.

He sat holding the coffee cup in both hands, blinking as he gazed at the middle of the table. He knew it was probably true; she would leave him now if it wasn't for the kids. It wasn't waiting for him to make bigger money so that she could collect higher alimony. She was convinced his salary was as high as it was going. He was also. While he was certain of these things, he was confused as to the causes. He really loved her, and it ate him up all day knowing how she felt.

He had always been faithful to her and tried to give her all she wanted and needed. He had worked hard at his job and risen through the ranks at the prescribed speed until he became ill. It was the "old bones" that had finally done him in, and she said it fit him — an old man's illness for an old man. Herb had been forty-five and active when it hit, but it had limited his activities and he had grown fat. He still put in long hours at the desk in the office and at home, but Dennie claimed the fat came with laziness. At the office people were looking at him like he was through. He would eventually be incapacitated with his bad joints, and to rise any higher would make demands of him which he could no longer meet.

Dennie drove him to the station that morning in silence and pulled away almost before the door closed. The morning was already hot, promising the type of day which had become more and more unbearable with his increasing weight. Heat waves shook the air in front of him as he heaved himself up towards the tracks, and the creosote smell of the ties rose on the shimmering air to his nose. He realized that for quite some time the smell of creosote had depressed him. The summer before Dennie had talked him into having the yard landscaped. After it was finished he found himself avoiding the raised

area with its landscape logs because of the smell. He thought he might be able to enjoy it more this year as the smell was finally passing with time. He smiled to himself to think that logs were one of the few things he could enjoy because of the effects of time.

The automatic doors slid shut behind him, and he thought it was too bad it wasn't like the movies with the conductor leaning out calling "board." It was too bad a lot of things weren't like the movies. He moved slowly down the aisle, slightly staggering from the motion of the train. Dropping into the first available seat, he unfolded his paper and pretended to read. He seldom read the paper for real, but it cut down on conversation. Most conversations on the train tended to depress him; no one seemed to be happy and even their complaints seemed to lack any real conviction.

As the train gathered speed two young men, almost boys in Herb's eyes, sat down in the seats behind him. Herb had glanced up as they passed, briefly noting that one sported a hairstyle Herb had been forced to wear as a child and had abandoned at the age of fifteen. He was amused to see so many of the old Alfa styles roaming the streets downtown. All the "dynamic young men" with the hayseed haircuts.

One of them let out a groan as he settled into the seat. "Another day with Delenti," he sing-songed like an announcer.

"Delenti giving you trouble?" his friend asked.

"Not any real trouble, he's just getting to be a number one bore lately. He's shown me all he's got and he's got nothing left now but tired old cliches about teamwork and loyalty to the company. He's been with this same rat cage firm for twenty-three years! Where does that kind of thinking get you? I give myself another year with these jokers and then I grab the first good deal that comes my way. Jeez, if I'd wanted to be a shopkeeper I would've opened a music store. Sit in the same place your entire life? Sell it somewhere else."

"I thought Delenti knew what he was doing," the other threw in. "What made you change your mind?"

"I haven't changed my mind," the first one said. "He knew what he was doing, but that was a long time ago. The man hasn't kept up with anything. If he had, he'd be farther ahead than he is. If I stay with these boys a couple of more years, I'll be Delenti's boss and hand him his twenty-five year pin right along with his pension — early!"

Both found some great degree of humor in this, and after getting their laughs out of the way went on to discuss baseball standings. Herb began to read a little of the paper then but found he was reading lines twice without any meaning coming to him. Outside, back porches began to fly past the windows, and he closed his eyes in an attempt to shut out the sounds and sights.

People were already in the aisles as the train slowed to a stop in the station. Herb waited until the line had passed his seat, then pulled himself into the aisle. As he stepped off the train, the heat and noise of the station lashed at him. By the time he got to the office, he felt like he'd been caught in a downpour.

As he stepped from the elevator, the receptionist waved him over to her desk. She glanced around quickly, then said, "I thought you should know, Mr. Fischer, the word's out Jim Guss is getting the district job. I think it's rotten. I'm really sorry." She sat looking up at Herb who stood blinking and smoothing his rumpled jacket. He glanced down the hall towards his office, mumbled "Thank you" without looking back, then walked off down the hall.

He removed his jacket and hung it on the tree by the door, stood for a moment feeling cold and clammy in the air conditioning, then put the jacket back on. From his window he could see people in the building across the way filing to their own desks, drinking coffee and talking in groups. He looked at his own desk, neat and orderly as it always was. He like it that way, a spot where things went as he wanted them.

Lowering himself into his chair, he gazed around his office and its three walls of beige painted cinder block. Should've had it paneled, he thought. A poster on one wall pictured a raccoon hanging by its front paws above a lake. The caption read, "Hang in there, Baby!" It seemed like that was about all you could do. His daughter had given him the poster the last time she had been home from school.

Was it almost a year ago? She didn't come home very often since she had found an apartment off campus. He forced himself not to think about why. Herb, Jr. was already talking about going away next year, not that he was around all that much now. Maybe it would be best if he did. They seemed to be getting on each other's nerves a lot recently.

The desk phone rang just then, pulling his mind back to the office. He watched it for a moment, not picking it up until just before the third ring. Before he said hello the caller was talking.

"Herb? Jim Guss. I want to get together with you sometime today to go over the district's quarterly reports." Herb sat quietly, slightly confused. Jim Guss was in the office next door. He had never talked to Herb on the phone before, for that matter he had never called him anything other than Mr. Fischer.

"Herb, you there?" The voice had an edge to it now, something else Herb had never heard before.

"Yeah, Jim, I'm here, just kind of knocked around by the heat." He was thinking of the two young men on the train. "When do you want to get together?" Something hung on a string in the back of Herb's mind.

"I'm not sure right now, Herb. I just thought I'd let you know so you could get some things together. I'll be back to you on it."

"Fine, fine any time," Herb was saying as he heard the connection break. Herb was always getting things together for Jim, explaining things to him, helping him along, giving suggestions. Something was different now though, or at least it seemed to be.

For half an hour he tried to work on the reports that Jim Guss had turned in to him the week before, but the more he tried to concentrate on the papers in front of him, the more the walls seemed to close in. He looked at his watch. It was half an hour still till the office coffee break. He always looked forward to them; they seemed to be the one bright spot in his day lately. The main reason for this was Judy Henning, a young typist whose naive sincerity had created in him strong feelings of fatherly affection, something his own children had stopped accepting long ago.

He went back to the report again. Guss's conclusions didn't seem to be backed up by the figures on the pages. Herb reached for the phone again, then decided he would just drop in Jim's office.

Herb was always bewildered by Jim's office, and as usual he just stood looking around after entering. One wall was totally dominated by a painting of three flowers, composed of small dots in pastel shades. The painting was as large as a home movie screen, and Herb felt it was just as blank. Another wall had

posters and plaques, mostly containing soaring seagulls with inscriptions relating to freedom and perseverance. Herb felt the thoughts were a little too noble to assign to gulls, which in his experience had most often been seen fighting over scraps of garbage.

In one corner stood a lamp on a long chrome pole curving out over Jim's desk. The desk was always neat and always filled with an odd assortment of paraphernalia whose purpose eluded Herb. One was sort of a gallows arrangement with five steel balls hanging from it. Jim would sometimes sit and watch the balls swing and bang against each other in a manner Herb found nerve-wracking and time wasting. Now, as Herb stood watching, Jim sat back in his reclining desk chair, rocking a plastic oval filled with blue and white sand. As he rocked it, the sand swirled and convulsed like ocean waves.

Jim looked up at Herb standing mutely in the middle of the office and smiled dreamily. "It's a great way to relax, Herb. Speaking of which, sit down."



Lori Peddicord

Herb looked towards the spot usually occupied by the extra lounge-type chair Jim kept in his office. It was gone. He settled for the straight-backed chair sitting a few feet in front of Jim's desk. "Jim, I was just looking at last week's reports, and there are a couple of points I don't think you picked up on." Herb shuffled the papers in his hands nervously. Jim swung the chair around slowly, the smile gone from his face.

"Herb, they've given me the district," Jim said quietly.

"I know. The receptionist told me on my way in. Congratulations."

Jim sat silently watching Herb. He closed his eyes for a moment, then reopened them staring directly into Herb's. "That kind of means I'll be handling my own reports from now on, Herb." There was nothing in the voice, nothing in the face.

"I realize that, Jim, but the fact remains that —"

"The fact is established rather," Jim cut him off sharply, snapping forward in his chair, "that I handle my own reports, and what some clerk in the bottom rungs of the division concludes doesn't matter anymore. I figured we'd have to get this out in the open pretty quick. The district's mine. All I want from you now is the rest of the data you've been sitting on in your monk's hole next door and your continued non-interference in district matters. After that you can sit and fill out the forms you're so good with, rubber stamp and shuffle your way through them to your not too distant retirement."

Herb was astonished. He sat numbly, not believing what he heard was coming from the normally polite young trainee in front of him — or rather ex-trainee.

"Jim, I didn't mean anything. I just thought you should know." Herb couldn't understand what had offended the younger man so.

"Herb, I didn't go through six years of school just so old Herb Fischer could do the thinking. And I wasn't hired to follow the same old beaten path that you've

always followed. I was hired to replace the tired old way of thinking, to bring some fresh thought, something a little more dynamic. I hate to put it to you bluntly, Herb, but the new wave covers the old."

The two men sat without speaking, the old looking older and the young looking smug. After a few moments Herb rose and mumbled, "I'll get the rest of your information after coffee break." With that he shuffled out into the hall.

Talk to Judy, he thought, that always perks you up. Why was Jim so full of contempt? People shouldn't talk to other people that way. He drifted into the company cafeteria and made his way to the corner table where he always sat. People began to file in for their morning dose of coffee, and a young woman detached herself from the mass. She headed straight across the room to Herb's table, a small package under her arm.

"Hi, Mr. Fischer, this is for you." She held the package out in both hands, a slightly embarrassed look on her face. Herb looked at the package, then back into the girl's face.

"What for, Judy?" She was still standing, arms outstretched, blinking quickly.

"Well, every morning practically since I started here you've had coffee-break with me, and you never sit with anybody else. And whenever I had any problems, you listened and tried to help me out." Herb smiled looking at the package, noticing people were watching them.

"Judy, I like your company and being able to help when I can. You don't have to give me a present for it." He smiled at her now, not the package. Slowly her smile began to fade.

"It's not just a thank you; it's an apology gift, too. Every morning we've had coffee break together, but I can't this morning because I was invited to go with some people to an early lunch. It's a celebration thing

for Jim Guss, and some of the V.P.'s are going and they said I could. We probably won't be back this afternoon."

Herb's knees were throbbing, and he could feel his knuckles beginning to ache. There was a slight buzzing sound in his ears, and the room seemed very hot and unsteady.

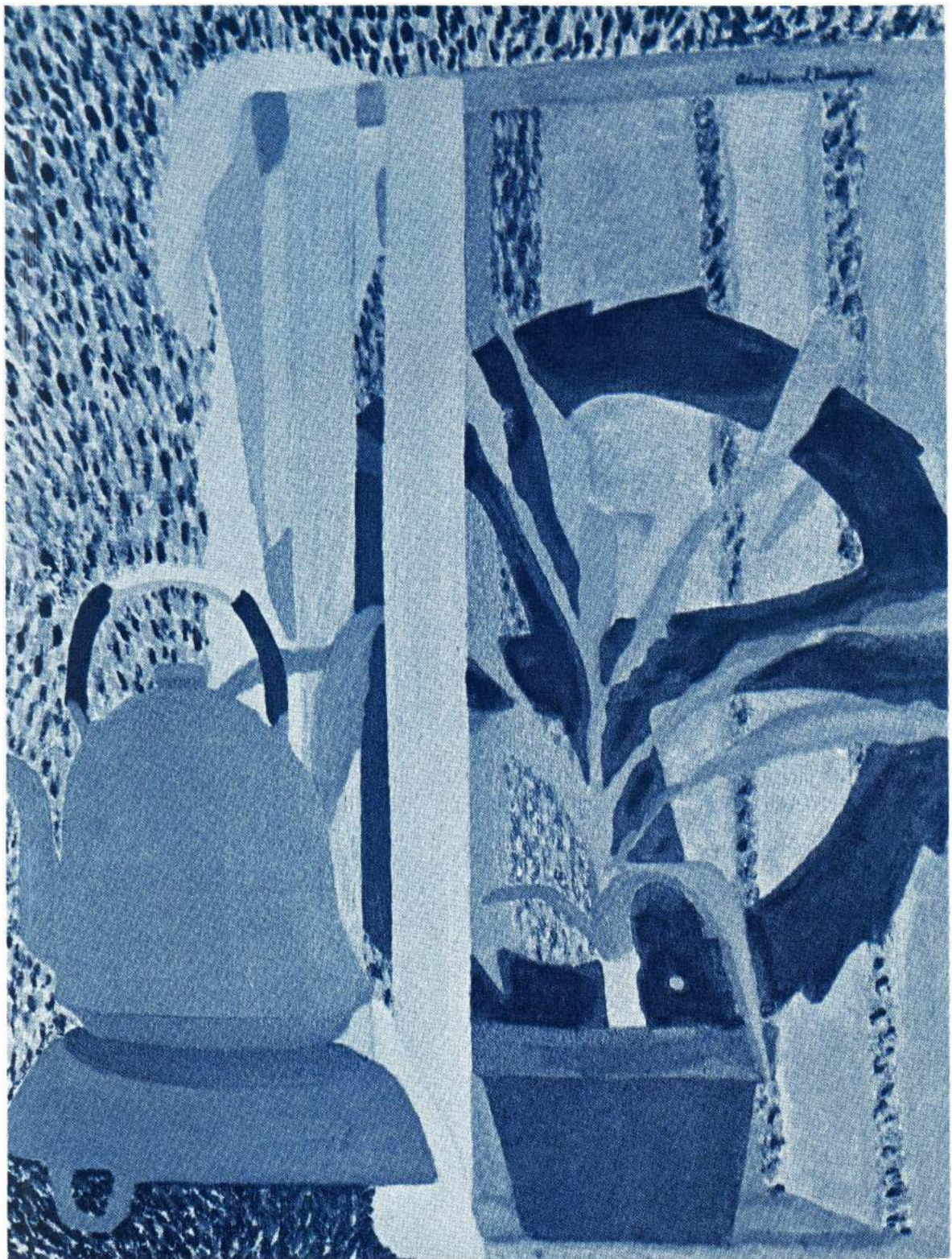
"Mr. Fischer, are you okay?" Judy looked frightened.

"Huh? Yes, yes, of course. The heat today, you know. Well, go on, I know how these celebrations are." He tried to sound cheerful. Judy placed the package on the table.

"I knew you'd understand, Mr. Fischer. I have to go; have a nice day and I'll see you tomorrow." She was gone then, and Herb stood up self-consciously holding the package. He made his way sheepishly through the tables and into the hall.

In his office he sat looking at the poster his daughter gave him. Just before she went to school, he thought. The package sat like a rock on his desk. He carefully peeled the paper off and opened the box within.

A long time later he was still sitting motionless, staring at Judy's gift. He reached out cautiously and tapped the end. As the balls clicked together, Herb wondered if he only imagined the mocking sound that they seemed to create. As they slowed to a halt, tears began to roll slowly down his face.



A Garage Sale

Moisette Sintov

*Beneath the baby shoes and underwear and the clothing to fit
Children from ages 3 to 12
And one or two out-of-style dresses, men's trousers and spike heeled women's shoes
And big vinyl purses and L'il Dot comic books with crumpled covers
And old novelty ashtrays with machine-inscribed cute sayings
As gifts from far away places
Lie traces of a family
Sprawled across a country
In cities
Colleges, wars, families, love and even cemeteries
Rising and falling
Blooming and blossoming
Hibernating for the winter – or for life.*

*What once was a shiny new tricycle is now squeaking and rusted at \$1.50 as is
Only to be replaced by a more modern model for that child's child
The dolls and stuffed animals with their missing eyes and limbs –
Will they once again talk and raise families and drive sports cars
and change clothes,
Or will they be junked next Tuesday morning if they don't sell?
The honor pins and old work uniforms that were worn with distinction or disdain –
Surely someone will find a use for them.
And that set of china still intact save for a cup here or a salad
plate there,
Wasn't it just yesterday that it served the first home-cooked meal
so proudly
To a group of guests.
This garage which once held a large lumbering station wagon, bicycles,
tricycles,
Garden tools, lawn mowers and the like
Still has oil stains on the floor
But the echoes of Kool Aid stands and children's chatter are forever
gone
Do it over again? – too tired, too old, too fat, too rich.
A condominium overlooking a golf course or maybe just a place to sit
down
And look ahead to another 20 years or rebirth,
What the hell –
Here, try and sell this bird cage
Maybe it'll go for \$2.50.*

May Everybody Win

Steven R. Howard

The feminist movement in the United States is controlled by lesbians, Communist agitators and women who just plain hate men because they are afraid of sex. If this movement ever achieves its goals, the result would be the destruction of the nuclear family and the ruin of our social stability. The one thing that most of these women need is a night in bed with a strong man who knows what he's doing.

These are some of the arguments used against the feminist movement. This type of reasoning was also used against the advance of the civil rights movement in the 1960's. Claims were made that Martin Luther King, Jr., was being backed by Communists. Attempts were made to show that various black leaders were either morally corrupt or homosexual. White racists believed that the success of the civil rights movement would result in a breakdown in the moral fiber of the nation, set education for whites back years, and weaken the race through generations of mixed offspring.

In the same way as the civil rights movement, the feminist movement must deal with legal issues as well as with subtle, ingrained biases. As with the civil rights movement it is not just a matter of better jobs and better pay, but a desire to be recognized as human beings rather than as a class alone.

As the feminist movement makes gains, women will not be the only ones to benefit. Both women and men become locked into roles which do not allow them to interact with each other as anything other than man and woman. Part of this is due to male ego, or as Alan Alda phrased it, "testosterone poisoning." Many men still feel the need to preserve the traditional roles of the sexes, as do many women. It will very likely take the passing of a few generations before there is full acceptance of sexual equality.

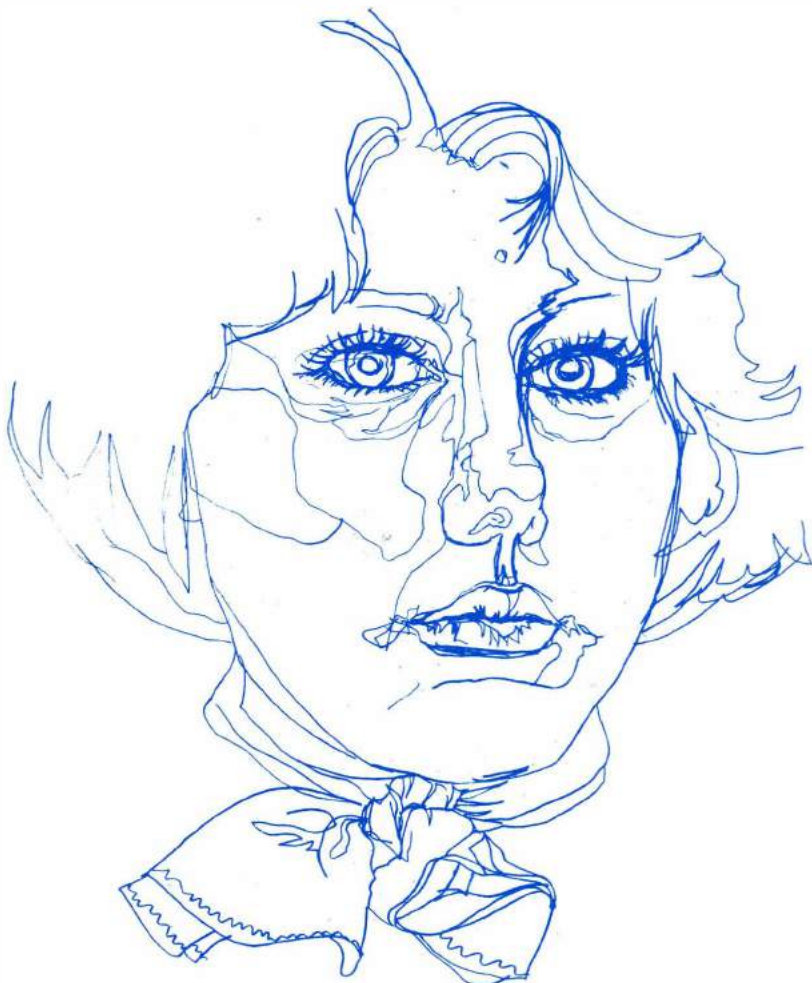
The problem in many cases is not a matter of opposition to the movement but a matter of years of conditioning to the old roles. While many people outwardly support women's rights, they have not come to a full inward acceptance of their equality. As an example, when Leni and I meet people for the first time, they usually ask what I do for a living. The

question is innocent enough but carries the underlying assumption that Leni, as my wife, is nothing more than my wife. Leni graduated as the valedictorian of her college class, but her alma mater has blotted out her identity as it mails alumni material addressed to Mrs. Steven Howard, evidently granting me full rights of ownership. This in itself is not a major issue; but when many small items such as this are combined, the total is a statement by society that claims a woman's role is subordinate to a man's — especially to her particular man.

By the old standards a man is supposed to be better educated, hold a better job, and be the main support of the woman. When Leni and I announced our engagement, some people asked us if our marrying was a good idea. Leni had her master's degree; I had only a high school diploma. About the same time we became engaged, another two couples we knew also announced their engagements. Both men had their college degrees, neither woman did, and no questions were asked. Some people wondered whether I was bothered that Leni's job was more prestigious than mine, but the question was never reversed in relation to the other couples. When I quit my job to return to school, my employer believed Leni was pressuring me to get a better education. Some people felt that being supported by my wife would deprive me of my masculinity and that I would then "lose control of her."

It is sad that this line of reasoning exists at all and that people feel as threatened as they do by ideas that are basically beneficial to both sexes, or in effect supportive to human race. Why people would be outraged at the idea of being forced to support one segment of the population through welfare, while men demand they be allowed to support another segment is really bewildering.

The idea of denying a large segment of society the right to equal participation is foolish and destructive. Whatever gains are made by the feminist movement will result in new freedoms for both sexes. If a woman decides to be a homemaker and a man decides to follow a career, it should be their own choice. If a woman decides to follow a career and a man decides to become a homemaker, it should be by their own choice. The choice should be uninfluenced by social bias or unequal protection of rights. That's what it really amounts to: acceptance of each other as equals and freedom of choice.



Tapestry of Morning

Marty Levin

*The forest is alive
with
beautiful
sparkling
innocent
simplicity*

The songbird sings

*The wild
living creatures
of the forest
celebrate
the fresh
new day
that the sun brings
on golden wings*

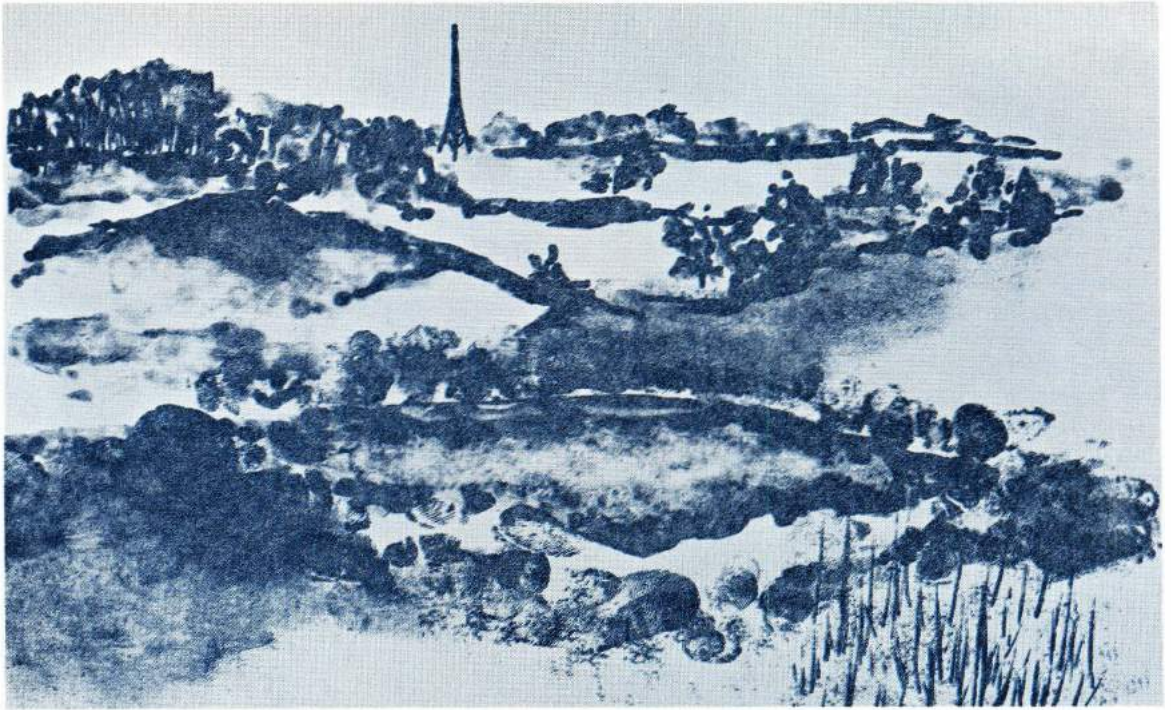
*A fawn is born
upon a small patch
of dew-touched grass
just 'neath
the fragrant
towering evergreen
where the songbird resides
singing
a flowing
lyrical melody
that announces the
latest arrival*

*Its voice
carries far
in the
clear
crisp
morning stillness*

*The neighboring
forest dwellers
enjoy this
simple
familiar tune
in an off-handed
light-hearted
sort of fashion*

*Tapestry of morning
tapestry of light
tapestry of glory
is what I'm doing right*





Carolyn Dodson

Bubble

Carolyn Vasquez

*A
tiny
bubble
in a carbonated
soda
slips
up a
crystal
glass
colliding
and
clinging
to the side
like a snail to a
leaf
as it glides to
the surface
and explodes
with
one inaudible
pop.*



Mary Pat Schmidt

The Final Word on Parenting

Barbara Bastian

Parents are as individual as snowflakes; no two are alike. However, speaking in broad generalities, they can be sorted into three categories. The first group can be labeled “too strict”, the second group “too lenient”, and the third group, to quote Goldilocks, “just right.” The problem in parent-slotting arises from the lack of objectivity on the part of the classifier. The “too stricts” are so placed by the “too lenients” — and vice versa — while they are simultaneously categorizing themselves as “just right.”

The “too strict” parents are real tyrants, imposing stringent rules such as clothes must *always* be hung up, beds must *always* be made, plates must *always* be emptied, and the parents must *never* be the recipient of “back talk.” They also are noted for inflicting cruel and unusual punishment — for instance, standing in the corner — for not returning home at the appointed time, drawing unauthorized murals on household walls, or taking a bath — with the dog.

Furthermore, the “too strict” expect unreasonable heights of achievement in the form of excellent behavior reports from teachers and at least better-than-average grades. They believe children, when given an inch, will take at least a mile — thus they feel there is no room for deviation from rules. The premise for their method of child-rearing is that a child is merely an underdeveloped grown-up; hence, they set forth to produce the socially acceptable adult. (This *modus operandi* probably doesn’t have nearly as many ill effects on the children as it does on the spouse if the said spouse happens to fall in the second category.)

The “too lenient” parents are basically day-at-a-time problem attackers. Because these parents feel a child is simply that — a child — there is no correlation, expressed or implied, between the child of today and the adult of tomorrow. After all, they rationalize, there are plenty of years ahead for the grown child to conform. So for now the child shall enjoy — not have the mind cluttered with rules, responsibilities and restrictions.)

This is not to say the “too lenients” condone *all* childish ways. They tend to get upset at things such as self-styled haircuts, dropping the cat off the garage roof to see if he really does land on his feet, and watering the lawn — in the middle of winter. But they rarely inflict corporal punishment; rather they tend to wring their hands and twist their faces into an “I really wish you hadn’t done that” look. (As might be expected, the “too lenient” spouse is capable of driving the “too strict” spouse right up the proverbial wall.)

And then there’s that third group of “just right” parents. This is a difficult group to define, as stated earlier, because of the lack of objectivity. If parents were polled for the definition of a “just right” parent, the definition would strangely enough be twofold, with one description closely matching that of a “too strict”, and the other sounding amazingly similar to a “too lenient” parent. Of course, non-parents could be polled possibly resulting in a different definition. But then what do they know about raising children anyway? (As one man said, “Once I had six theories on raising children. Now I have six children and no theories.”)

There are times when any tyrannical parent becomes “just right” — as when they realize a messy room is not sufficient reason to keep the child from accepting an unexpected invitation to visit the zoo with a friend. (This also provides temporary relief for the “too lenient” spouse who has been quietly banging his/her head against the wall.) And even the softest of parents knows there are times when a child must accept responsibility; yes, the child may have a pet dog, but the child and not the parent must also do the feeding, walking, and bathing of such pet. (At this point, the “too strict” spouse begins to smile and feel there is hope after all.)

The conclusion appears to be that, while parents may be snowflakes, they are also Mama Bear’s porridge, chair and bed. How strict is “too strict” and how lenient is “too lenient” when the parents believe they are doing what is best and the nurturing stems

from a genuine love for the child? And who can sit in judgment on the job parents do of raising their children — except perhaps the children themselves when they attain adulthood? And their judgment will probably be most accurate if they have become parents and recall their own parents' admonishment of many years before: "Wait till you have children of your own!"



Sandra G. Sitzes

A Past Reality

Barbara Bastian

*In the morning my shower rains
Tears of remembering on my brain, then falls
Gently, wet time machine walls caressing,
Carrying me back
To you.*

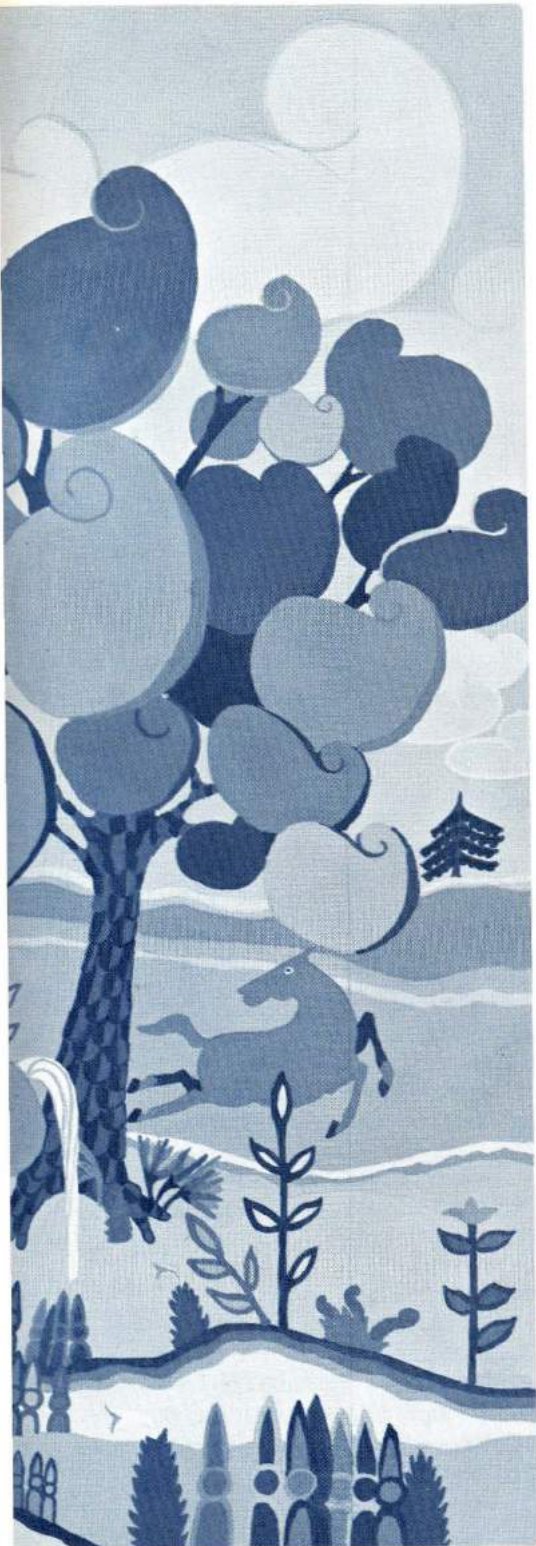
*Joyful echoes of our laughter,
At the first sight of us after the water
Has slicked, flattened our hair, cauterizing me
From pain, for now I'm
With you.*

*The lather's scented message holds
The moment fast, and as steam enfolds us now
I taste the heat of knowing how it feels
To hold and be held
By you.*

*But somewhere within me beckons
The present with which I must reckon; I turn
Off the past, and the cold truth burns through me,
Pulling me away
From you.*



Cindy Markow



Limbo

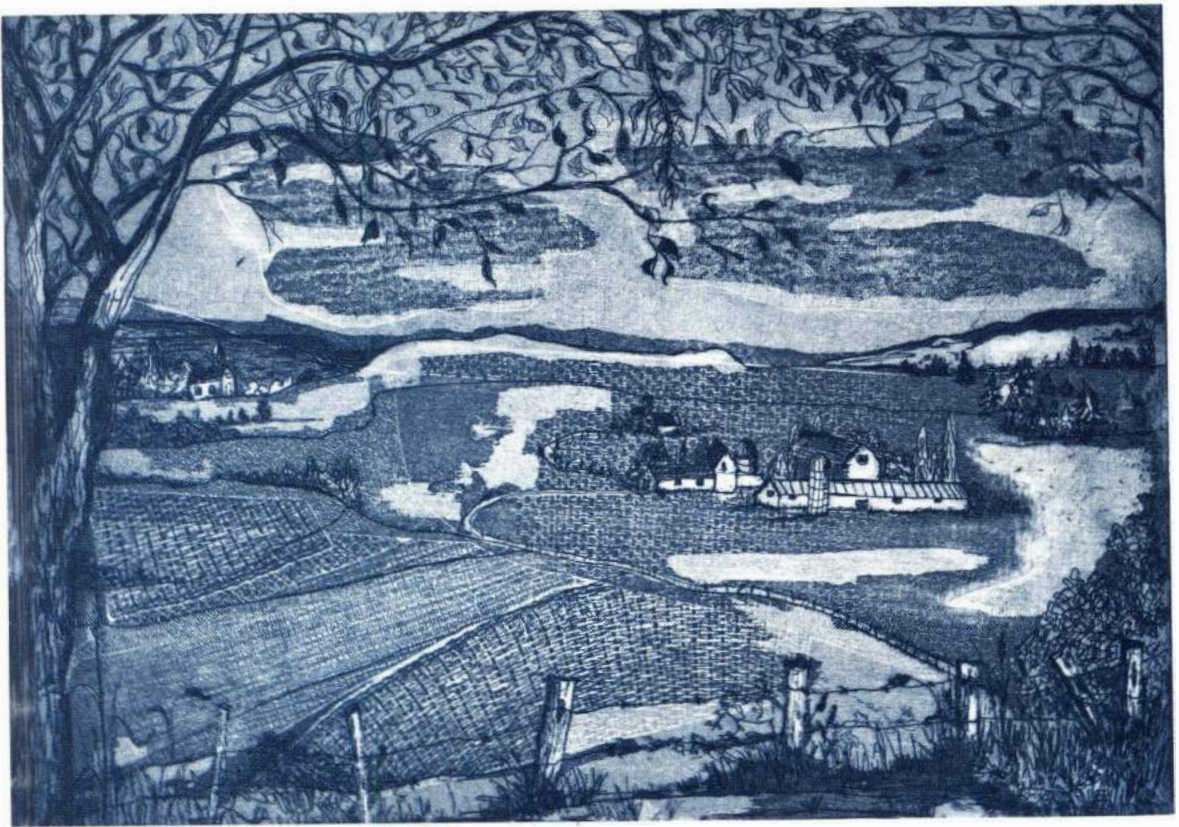
Barbara Bastian

*This path between the end
And the beginning is a vacuum.
The vast emptiness is void of feelings –
Yet the pain of numbness sears through me
For I must feel something to survive.*

*Is it now as summer
When I have worshipped the sun too long?
The once soothing warmth overpowers me –
I must escape the torturing heat.
I leap – sink into oblivion.*

*My soul cries with relief.
As I become submerged in the pool
My parched body sizzles pleurably
And I welcome the deep, cool silence.
Just for now I need to be alone.*

*As solitude wears thin,
Lungs scream for air against pressure.
I fight the depths. Though I feel no motion
I know soon I will burst through – again
To enjoy the warmth and sounds of life.*



Mary Ellen Klotz

Smiling Highway

David J. Kallhoff

Sleeping flowers, dozing restlessly would not have dreamed, to break the library-silent dawn, an event would unfold.

Green grass spectators lining both of its sides. The highway smiles.

On the horizon, cool window breeze creeping lightly across the road.

A ripple of sound reaching only the ears of the median strip, grows before the quickening speck is seen, closer to destiny, disaster waiting in the wings to seal its fate.

Warm seats, a comfortable heater, radio on, the lull of the engine completes the song.

Sleep nestles in and what could go wrong? It's sliding; hit the brakes! The event begins.

Inside, a scream, six long flips and six long seconds occur.

One roll, two, three, four, five, six and it comes to rest in center stage, upside down in flames.

Horrified flowers sway in dismay, the cornstalks lose faith and hang their heads to gently weep, for all looks lost.

Yet rescue is forthcoming.

Youth is saved once more to face another day. Across the road to safety now.

Center stage, the spotlight sun begins to dim. The act winds down and the crowds to thin. Exquisite play applaud the clouds above, and the highway just smiles.

Night Life

Laurie Jackson

*Empty faces, unknowing stares,
Unfeeling eyes: the usual responses.
Laughing, talking, clapping, smoking,
They come to watch me work, watch me sweat.
After all these years, this paid routine is
The only way I know to feed my family.*

*I perform for them;
Free their minds from daily life;
Take them into my world of blues and song.
For me, it's real.*

*As my fingers move
Over the strings of my guitar,
I sing the song I know so well
Til I'm weak and spent with joy
And fulfillment. I've lived again and
Been enriched by my own effort.*

*The faceless men and women
File out of the cafe,
Alive with drink, smiling and saying
"I'll bet he was good in his day."*



Mike Wendes

Fruh Stray Shun

Barbara Kuehn

*Keepin' cool is easy until
"Mom! She took my nickel!"
"It's mine! I had it first!"
Oh, it's not hard to keep cool,
Just bend and listen, pool your reserves,
Relax. Mother. Nurture.*

*Keepin' cool was easy until
"She's a thief! I'll get her!"
"Ouch! Go away! That hurt!"
My cool warms up, threatening
We sit down, we discuss, we solve.
Peaceful. Happy. Balance.*

*Keepin' cool is easy until
Spilled this, broken that, No!
First time, tenth time, no more!
Again! It's hard to keep cool . . .
They're adorable? I'm the fool?
Crashes. Smashups. Collapse.*



Someone Like Me

Judy Genualdi

In the darkness that surrounded him snow fell. With the wind whipping at his back, the child continued his play. Many times before he had done just this, but someone was missing. He could not satisfy himself with a sufficient reason for his playmate's absence, but he accepted it without question.

Instinct told him his mother would call him in the house soon. Patiently waiting her voice, he bent down and shaped a hunk of snow in the palm of his wet mitten. Staring at the odd form in his hand he wondered. Making his decision he raised the piece of snow to his mouth and took a bite.

Simultaneously from the house came a voice yelling, "David, spit that out of your mouth, you'll get sick! How many times do I have to tell you?!" Pausing a moment, she followed up with, "It's late. Come in the house and change from those wet clothes."

Trudging through the snow drifts, he headed toward the house. At the sliding glass door his mother stood patiently. He stepped onto the old towels she had laid on the floor.

Brushing the loose snow from his shoulders and the top of his hood, she began to remove his wet clothing. When they were all in a pile next to him, she tenderly gave him a kiss on the forehead, a pat on the bottom, and sent him upstairs to dress for bed.

Eager to please his mother, the youngster scampered off to the bedroom. Flipping on the light switch, he took a pair of pajamas from the drawer and began dressing himself. He stopped suddenly, thinking he might hear the sounds of his playmate coming from somewhere in the house.

He heard the TV in the other room, but that couldn't be Richard; he wouldn't watch the news. Only papa enjoyed it. The footsteps coming toward his room could only belong to mother. There were no other sounds.

At that moment mother entered the room. Startled, he resumed buttoning his top. Neither said a word and the silence grew uncomfortable.

Sensing it was not the right time, but too curious to hold back any longer, David spoke, "Where is Richard? Why can't I find him? Did he go to Grandma's?"

Calmly she replied, "Don't think about Richard. Now hop into bed and have sweet dreams. Mama loves you. Good night."

With this she turned off the light and left the room. The retarded child was all alone.

Thinking of Richard, he imagined his presence and began a conversation as if he were there.

"Did you see the snow, Richard? Tomorrow we can play in it, O.K.? I like playing in the snow with you. We can make a snowman and maybe mother will let us have a carrot for the nose."

"Are you real sleepy yet?"

Pretending he received an answer, he continued.

"So am I. If you go to sleep I'll go to sleep too, Richard."

Again there was a pause for a response and then a final, "O.K. Good night."

In the silence that followed, he tried in vain to picture Richard in his mind. Frustrating himself because of his lack of memory, he jumped from his bed and turned on the light. Hurrying to the desk he grabbed his chair and dragged it to the mirror high on the wall. Climbing on it, he smiled as he saw his reflection.

Yes, that's what Richard looks like. He had the same soft, golden hair and blue eyes as David. They were identical twins.

He stood looking at his reflection a minute. Knowing he had satisfied himself, he returned the chair, turned off the light and again got into bed. Left with no more thoughts or questions he fell fast asleep.

His first concern the next morning was to make sure the snow did not melt.

He hopped out of bed and made a quick dash downstairs toward the den window. To his delight the snow was glistening in the sun's rays. Slowly lowering himself to the floor, he sat where a moment ago he stood. Hypnotized by the whiteness he sat motionless. His mind wandered over thoughts of snow. . . . Playing in the snow . . . making a snowman . . . eating snow . . . making an angel . . . eating snow . . . laughing with Richard . . . Mother yelling . . . laughing with Richard . . . making snowmen . . . laughing with Richard . . . Richard . . . Where is Richard?

By now his mother was already in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Not knowing David was awake she was unaware of his quiet entrance to the kitchen. He climbed into a chair and sat there a moment.

As she turned her head David spoke. "Good morning, mother."

"Good morning, David."

Silence followed. He phrased his next sentence with great care.

"I cannot find Richard. Will you please tell me where he went, mama? I miss him."

"David." She paused to think. "After you finish breakfast we will talk about it."

Putting a plate of food in front of him she encouraged him to eat, then went about her business.

His father walked in. They all exchanged greetings as he poured his coffee. Like every other morning he hurriedly drank it, kissed his wife, and left for work.

David and his mother were again alone.

Getting up to put his half empty plate in the sink he loudly exclaimed, "I'm finished!"

Removing a pan from the stove she submerged it in the sink, took David's hand, and led him to the couch in the den. Seating him on her lap, she gathered her thoughts.

"Sweetheart, don't you remember what mother explained the other day after Richard got hurt?"

He shook his head no.

"O.K. Well, you do remember Richard got hurt — hurt very badly."

His quiet yes assured her he did.

"God didn't want Richard to hurt anymore so he brought him to heaven and now he'll never hurt again. But since he's with God he can't live with us. Do you understand that, David?"

Bewilderment overcame him.

With uncertainty he questioned, "But can I ever visit him?"

"Someday, dear. See, everyone will live with God someday and when you do you can see Richard."

In a burst of excitement he cut off his mother, "Can I go visit Richard today?"

"No, not today. God will let you know special when you can see Richard.

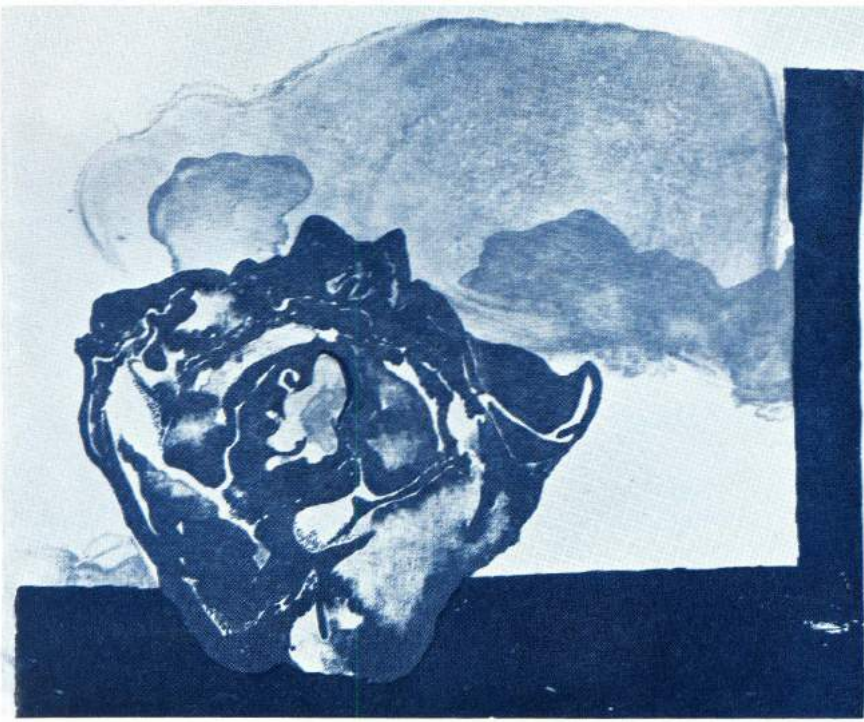
"I know you miss him and I'm sure he misses you." She paused, again gathering her thoughts. "He is happy, David. Do you think about him a lot?"

Slowly he nodded, "Yes."

"Richard thinks about you. When you think of him make them only happy thoughts."

Without saying a word he got off his mother's lap. As he climbed the stairs many thoughts cluttered his mind. Hurrying to the desk in his room, he grabbed his chair and dragged it to the mirror high on the wall. Climbing on it he smiled as he saw his reflection.





Carolyn Dodson

Grandfather's Funeral

Jane Schultz

The Anderson house was full of activity. It was early on a Saturday night. Trudy's mom was hurriedly ironing a dress to wear to the country club that night and her dad was upstairs taking a shower. Trudy was making some popcorn in the kitchen and preparing herself for another thrilling evening of watching television with her younger brother, Eric, who was already engrossed in *The Jackie Gleason Show*.

The sudden shrill ringing of the phone was abrasive to her and seemed like an intrusion. Trudy peeked around the corner of the kitchen to see who her mother was talking to. Immediately she knew something was terribly wrong. Her mother was crying! In all her twenty years Trudy could never remember ever seeing her mother cry before. Edith Murray Anderson just wasn't the crying type. Trudy was now listening intently and from her mother's end of the conversation learned that her grandfather Murray had died that afternoon. He had not been ill, but he did have a heart condition and he was seventy-seven years old. It was a shock. They all

agreed that he died as he would have liked. He was simply sitting in a chair when his head dropped on his chest. That was it. There was no fuss, no muss. He hadn't ever been a burden and died as he lived, full of self-respect and dignity. How nice.

The family quickly packed and left on the four-hour car ride to the small town where Trudy's grandmother, Faith Murray, lived and where her grandfather, the late O. W. Murray, now waited to be buried. Mrs. Anderson continued to weep on and off the entire trip. It was done, of course, in a quiet, controlled way and so was not too uncomfortable for anyone. Mrs. Anderson had always been extremely fond of her father.

Trudy put her head back on the seat. Her father was an excellent driver and she always felt relaxed when he was driving. She knew, even without words, that somehow the four of them shared something in that enclosed car that they hadn't shared in a long time, if ever. That something was *almost* a feeling of togetherness and closeness. Trudy felt that by just

being there she was somehow comforting her mother. They had never been particularly close, and especially of late there had been a lot of tension between them.

In the quiet of the dark car Trudy let her mind go over the past year. She had left for her second year of college a year ago. She'd had high hopes then. She'd been in love, had had lots of friends, and was enjoying her studies. Then somehow everything seemed to go wrong. Her studies started going badly and she couldn't seem to concentrate on her work. She was tired all the time and developed all kinds of mysterious physical ailments, which prevented her from going to her math class. With all that on her mind she hadn't been much fun and her true-blue boyfriend decided to take a walk. Her confidence in herself had been completely shattered when she flunked out of school that spring and was brought home in disgrace by her disappointed parents. She still hadn't figured out exactly what had gone wrong and in fact tried not to think about the whole experience very much. Her existence had changed so much. Just a year ago she had been part of college life, part of a couple, part of a sorority. Now she was back at home and part of nothing but her family. Had she herself changed that much? How could anyone be so worthy of everything one moment and so unworthy the next? She seemed to be in an emotional abyss. She had no idea where her future was headed, but at this point it didn't seem very promising. Now her grandfather's death could be added to the events of this miserable year.

They reached Carneyville late that night and were met by hushed voices. Trudy's grandmother, they said, was asleep and was taking it pretty well. The next morning, after the initial weeping and declaration of what a good man he'd been and statements like "how will I get along without him?" Trudy's grandmother seemed to focus on getting her hair done for the funeral and deciding what to wear to the wake that night. Relatives gathered from all over and again Trudy was comforted by being part of this grieving family. It was a tie to something.

She remembered how she had always loved to come to Carneyville to stay with her grandparents and play with her cousins. Her grandfather had been very influential in the town, and she had felt proud knowing that people knew she was his grand daughter and was there visiting him. He'd always been very neat and an immaculate dresser. Trudy could remember the fresh, brisk smell of his Old Spice after-shave. However she tried not to think about things like that. It was too painful. Her philosophy had become "just pretend it doesn't hurt and pretty soon it won't." It had worked pretty well for her so far.

Trudy got so caught up in seeing favorite cousins and having a good time that she almost forgot the reason for their being there at all until it was time for them to go to the funeral home for the visitation. She dreaded having to see her grandfather dead. Strange, but she had never seen a dead person. It was evidently one of the things her parents had been shielding her from, but she thought she would have felt better if she could have seen another dead person before. Someone who hadn't meant so much to her. Her fear mingled with a curiosity about what a dead person looked like. She was about to find out. She walked up to where her mother, Aunt Lenore, and her grandmother were sitting right in front of the open casket. She tried to speak to them and opened her mouth to do so, but no words came out, just an awkward croak. Her face reddened. She had never been very good at expressing herself. No one seemed to notice though. They all just ignored her and concentrated on greeting those strangers coming to pay their last respects.

Finally, seeing there was nothing else to do, Trudy looked into the open casket. She felt an almost immediate relief. That wasn't her grandfather in there. It was someone, something, that looked vaguely like him, but this man didn't have his lively blue eyes, his wonderful smile, his quick step, his marvelous spirit, his essence. From that moment her spirits picked up enormously. She smiled, took a seat and looked around the room. She saw her grandmother smiling, nodding and talking to people. It was as if she had been preparing for this day, just

as she must have prepared for her wedding day, and everything had to be done properly. Trudy knew that her grandmother had loved her grandfather. They had been married over fifty years and she would be terribly lonely without him, but for now her mind didn't seem to be on her loss. Her main focus seemed to be on keeping in control and doing the right thing. Trudy's mother would go through this too someday no doubt and her Aunt Lenore. Would she too? Probably, although at the moment her prospects for marriage didn't seem all that great. Trudy got up and joined her mother, who was talking to another lady. "Hello, yes, I'm Edith's daughter. Thank you so much for coming."

The next day, just as they were all almost ready to leave for the church and the funeral service, Trudy's mother noticed that Trudy wasn't wearing a hat. Trudy didn't even own a hat and never wore them. She considered them old-fashioned. Her mother, however, was insistent that Trudy wear a hat of some kind to the service. She thought Trudy looked so nice in hats. The reason, she explained, was that people wouldn't understand if she didn't and would think she was being disrespectful to her grandfather. This logic made no sense at all to Trudy, but in order not to further upset her mother or anyone else she agreed to wear a plain, black beret that her Aunt Lenore had brought along. She felt dumb in the hat but she guessed it wasn't important right now how she felt.

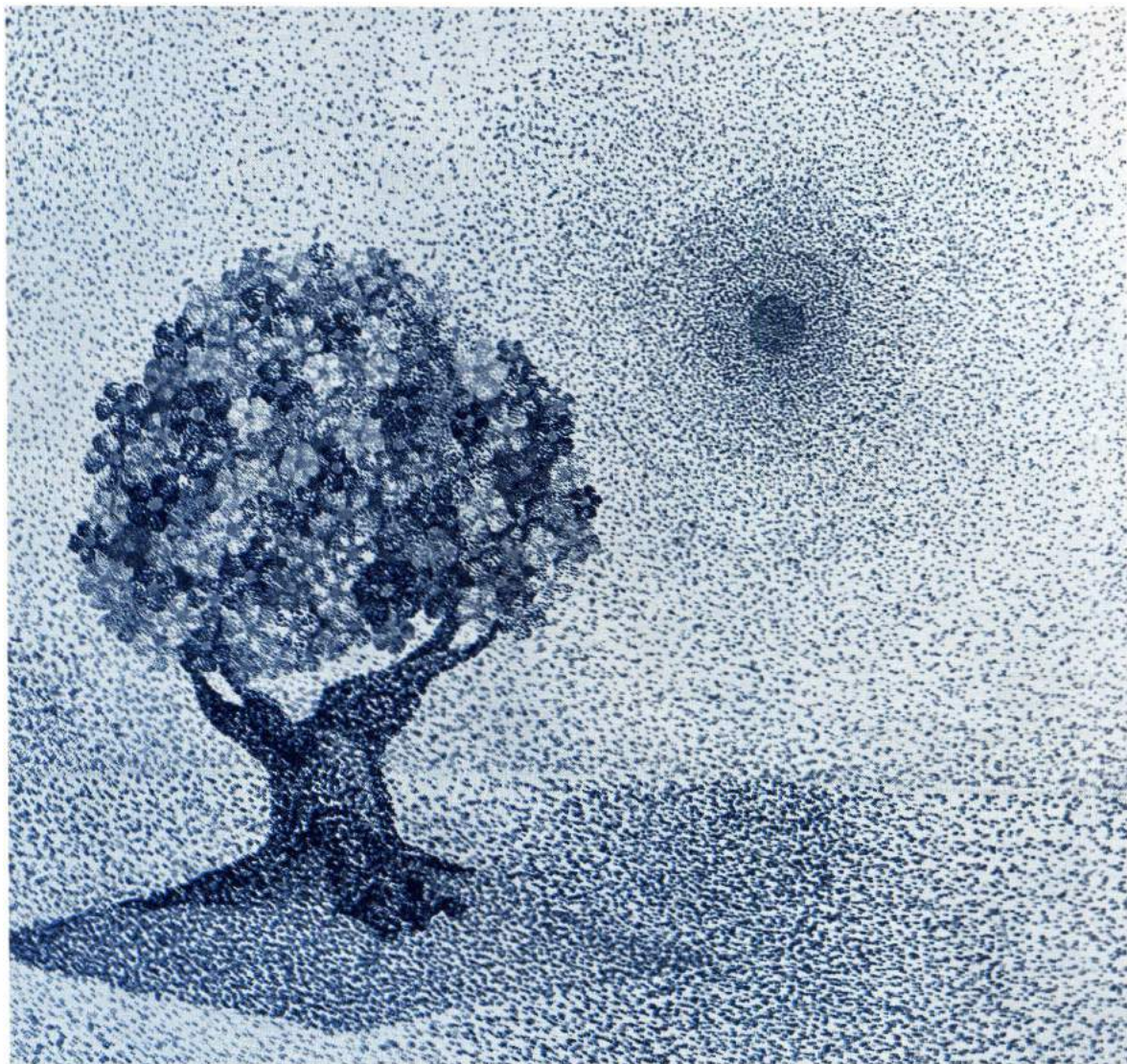
The big, old church was packed to the seams with mourners for her grandfather. Trudy felt proud that so many people had thought so much of him. She was part of his family. There were sobs heard throughout the church, but from where Trudy sat with her parents at the front of the church she knew it would not do for her to carry on, to cry, to create a scene of any kind. To do so would be in bad taste. So she sat stonily like the rest. Maybe if she ignored the empty feeling she felt inside her it would go away in time. She stared straight ahead and tried to think of anything but her dead grandfather. Her only connection now was to her family and she couldn't afford to lose that too.

After the service at the cemetery, it was officially over, but Trudy, her father, and brother would be staying on for a few days and Trudy's mother would stay over for a few weeks after that. Life went on. They had meals, did the dishes, talked and then started the whole process all over again. During the days right after the funeral Trudy picked up bits of conversation between her mother, her Aunt Lenore, and her grandmother. Piecing them together Trudy learned that her grandfather had had a long-term affair with another woman once. It surprised her that they didn't try to conceal this fact from her now when obviously they all had until her grandfather's death. Maybe this was her initiation into adulthood. Funny, she had always thought of her grandfather as an old man. It seemed ludicrous to think of him having an affair, but obviously he hadn't always been old and from old photographs she'd seen Trudy knew he'd been a very handsome man. Looking at her grandmother Trudy saw a very insecure woman; cold, critical and afraid. Her grandfather had been just the opposite; outgoing, confident, warm, and open. What had gotten them together and kept them together for over fifty years? It must have been hypocrisy and the idea of keeping up the pretense of a happy home. Grandmother had apparently threatened to kill them both when she found out about it. Trudy really couldn't feature that. She couldn't visualize her grandmother as ever having that much passion in her.

Trudy thought she would probably feel differently toward her grandfather now, or toward his memory at any rate, but she didn't. She almost loved him more knowing that he wasn't perfect after all. Like her.

As Trudy got ready to leave for home with her father and brother she said goodbye to her grandmother, kissed her lightly on the cheek, and did the same to her mother and Aunt Lenore. They all smiled and appeared cheerful, as if they'd been gathered for a picnic instead of a funeral. More lies, thought Trudy, but she just didn't have the strength to break the mold. She wasn't sure how to anyway.

They got into the car and drove away. Trudy didn't look back at the house, but as they passed the cemetery she glanced at her grandfather's gravesite and the wilted, brown flowers heaped on it. The tears came then in big, uncomfortable, deep-sobs. She saw her father look at her in the rear-view mirror. "Oh come on," he said disgustedly. The bittersweet smell of the Old Spice her father was wearing filled the car and she cried all the way home.



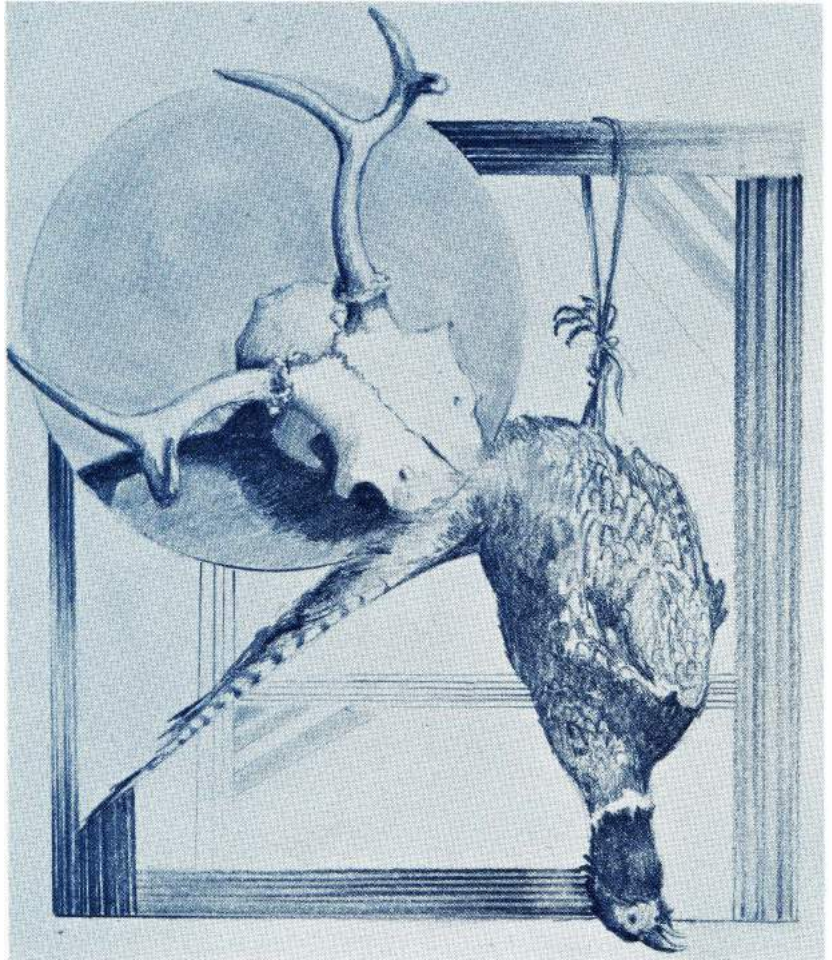
First To Arrive

Carolyn Vasquez

*Coming home I ring the doorbell
But no one answers my summons
So I have to dig in my purse
And get out my key.*

*Opening the closet I see six wire hangers
Empty of their winter coats
Staring at me forlornly
And waiting for the weight of the season's attire.*

*Sitting on the old couch
I hear its protesting squeak
And I bury myself in a book
To stop from feeling
Alone.*





Michelle Montjoy

The Affair

Mary Harris

*You reach out in loneliness
I understand but cannot help, for married I am.
So we speak of other things,
God and the movies.
And I wonder what another man's lips taste like.
You wonder about me.
We circle one another
Around and around
Sometimes almost touching upon our thoughts
But never quite daring to.
In bed that night
Next to my own man
I think on our next meeting, how we will be.
If the shadowy imaginings we shared
Will linger
Or be gone.
Or if I, embarrassed, will pretend they never were.
And you, confused,
Will leave me to my marriage.*

Peace Corps Poem

L. J. Hoke

*World gets smaller, so they say.
Makes me wonder if it's true.
I haven't been to Paraguay.
It's winter here and summer there.
There's bathrooms and McDonald's, too.
Don't have those things? Can that be true?*

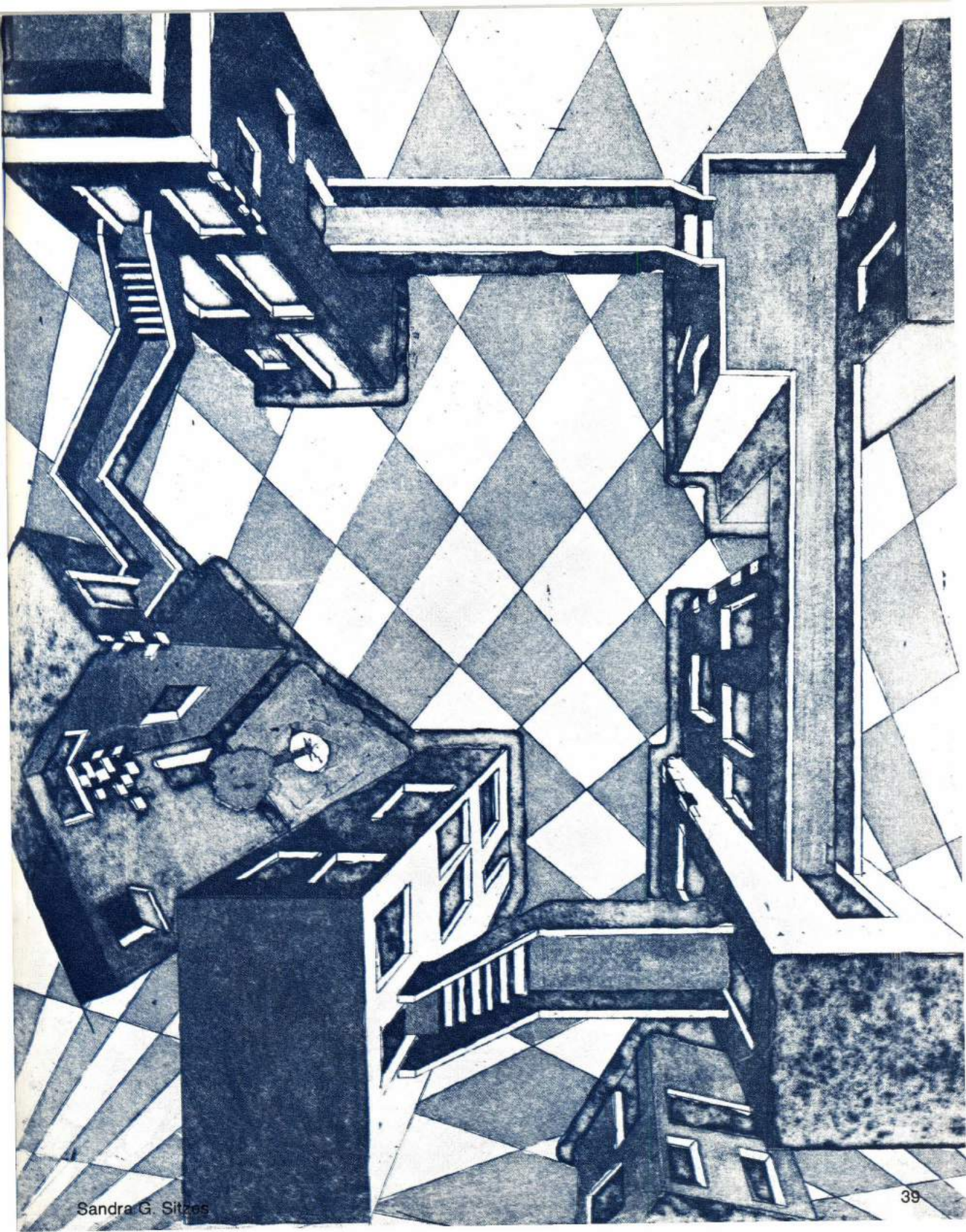
*Do you miss the twelve-ounce Pepsi?
Or the Muzak, or the Nestea?
Do you know who won the Super Bowl?
Well I wonder what you're thinking,
What's the drug, and are you drinking?
When you come back will you be more whole?*

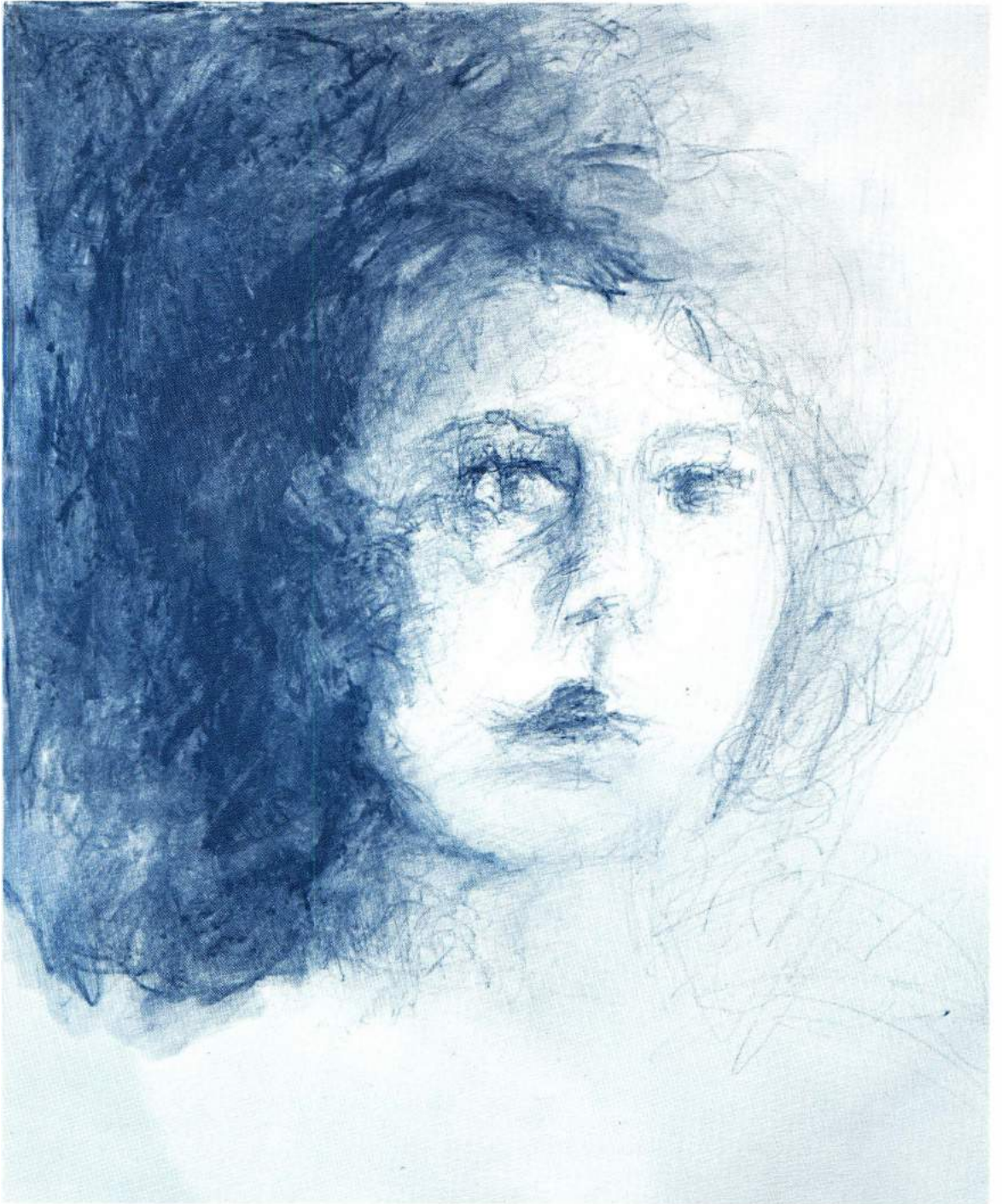
*I've been wonderin' 'bout these things for many days,
For I wonder if you're in the clear,
And I am in the haze.
It's winter here and summer there.
The grass is greener, you know where.
I want to go far, far from impending snow.
Where are you at? I want to know.*

The Alien

Mary Harris

*My moving stirs the dust best left alone,
For the community of monstrous growths
Holds spears against my passing.
Desert dwellers; hairy multilegs under rocks,
Bright beaded halloween lizards, and
Snakes singing of their fangs will
Fight vicious for their homes.
A different sort of sun, hungrier,
Steals away life moisture, and
It makes no difference that I walk upright
When traces of my being can be
Scoured away in a shifting of wind.*





A Letter to my Mother

Margery M. Munn

I thought of you this morning, Mom. You were very much in my mind for I was engaging in a small rite of passage. In fact, a certain *deja vu* atmosphere seemed to prevail. Yes, this same scene had occurred long ago, only now it was I in your place and my child trailing slowly behind in mine.

It was the same kind of gentle, spring morning that you've always relished. "A fine day for planting," you'd declare thus stating aloud your intentions for the next several hours. On would go your gardening shoes, stiff and almost impossible to walk in comfortably. Mud interwoven with grass clippings caked in numerous layers attesting their presence to previous years' toils. Nonetheless, they served the purpose.

You'd already have on your housedress, worn and somewhat frayed from wearing each time you undertook this venture, but slacks were not your forte. I remember thinking how glad I was that I could wear shorts for the sun would be beating down unmercifully trying to warm the earth after its long winter sleep.

You'd be bent over, the light breeze billowing your skirt around your legs. After awhile, little rivers of perspiration would cover your flushed face. Periodically you'd stand up and rub your aching back — but not for long. The lure of the rich dark soil was far stronger than the uncomfortableness of a stiff back.

I often wondered why, when you usually took such care with your hands and nails, why you didn't wear gloves to dig in the dirt. For days, your nails would have stubborn traces of deep, dark earth beneath them. No matter how many dishes you washed, or baths you took, they remained stained. But, it didn't seem to bother you. "This is a different kind of dirt!" you'd say.

How exciting it was to come home from the nursery with numerous flats of brilliant blooms. Pansies, marigolds, petunias, begonias, geraniums, and snapdragons. Dad would complain halfheartedly of the cost, but you'd turn a deaf ear. The yearning for a garden bursting with glorious color was a driving passion.

How wonderful it was that you realized I should be a part of its creation. You would show me where to dig the holes, how to separate the plants from each other without damaging the roots, and just how to pat the dirt around the new little plantings.

And the worms! Oh, the worms we dug up. Why does it seem there were more worms in those days? I didn't know you disliked worms, for your enthusiasm almost matched my own when I found a big one. You taught me to hold them gently so that when I was finished admiring and playing with them, they could be put back into the earth to continue their very necessary tasks. Where did I lose my delight? When did I first decide that worms were dirty and didn't want them anywhere near me? Will I regain the innocent delight through my own child's joy of discovery?

You turned the dirt almost reverently and broke up the lumps with your hands. Sometimes I'd see you lift a handful to your nose drinking in its earthy aroma as a connoisseur might savor a fine wine. I tried it several times, but was never sure what I was supposed to discover.

When everything had been planted, you would have me fill the sprinkling can using the hose that was never quite long enough to reach anywhere. What a temptation that hose was! Anyone walking by was subject to a spray. Never you, though. We had an unspoken agreement on that. I can't remember you ever doing it to me either. I think it would have crushed me, for this way, we shared a realm where there was mutual trust. Then you would help me carry the full can, water sloshing over our legs and feet, to soak down the fruits of our labor.

Every year it was your unspoken hope that your garden would be as beautiful as your friend's, Mrs. Sherman. But you always felt it never quite measured up. True, hers was gorgeous — no weeds, uniform colors, and rare blooms, but there was something so special, so elegant in lovely blending, the wild array and splashes of color that was prevalent in your garden that in my mind made yours far and away more beautiful than hers. Perhaps it was the fact that you let me pick bouquets for my teachers, for the kitchen table, and for my room. You let the flowers become a part of our everyday living.

I marvel at your patience. Over and over you told me the names of the different flowers until I could identify each one and where it would most suitably be situated for planting. Why don't I seem to have that same patience with my own when they ask to help me? Is it because you had two spaced far apart, and I have four close together?

But, there was a moment this morning with my youngest. I had gone out early, before the heat of the day, to water what I had planted the day before. Soon, I was aware of being followed by a small, pajama-clad figure with a questioning, hopeful look in his eyes.

The birds were singing and the soft breeze felt cool on my face. It promised to be very hot in just a little while, but now, right now, it was lovely.

Suddenly, you were with me, Mom. I turned half expecting to see you standing there. Had I heard you say something? Something like, "Let him help you, honey."

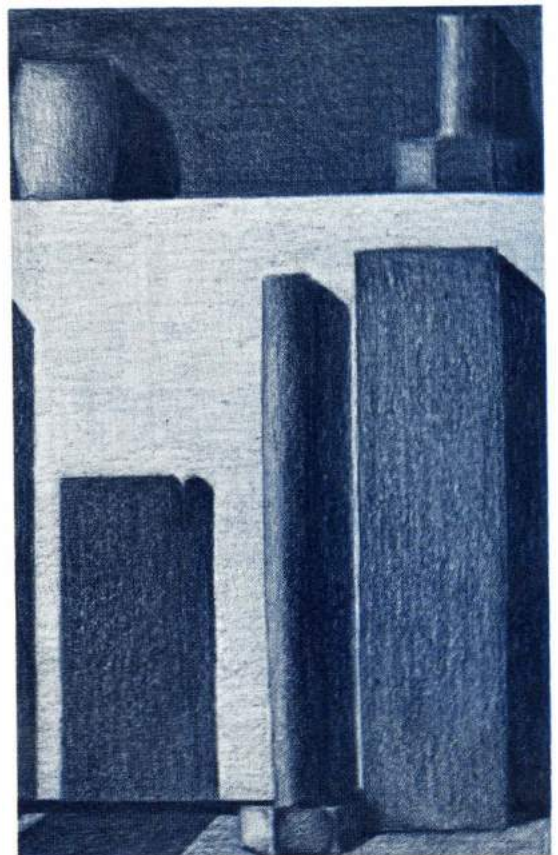
I asked him if he'd like to help me give the flowers a drink. What a look of surprise and joy came over his face. He ran for the sprinkling can, and filled it from the hose. Then together, with the water sloshing over our feet and legs, we carried it to each small plant.

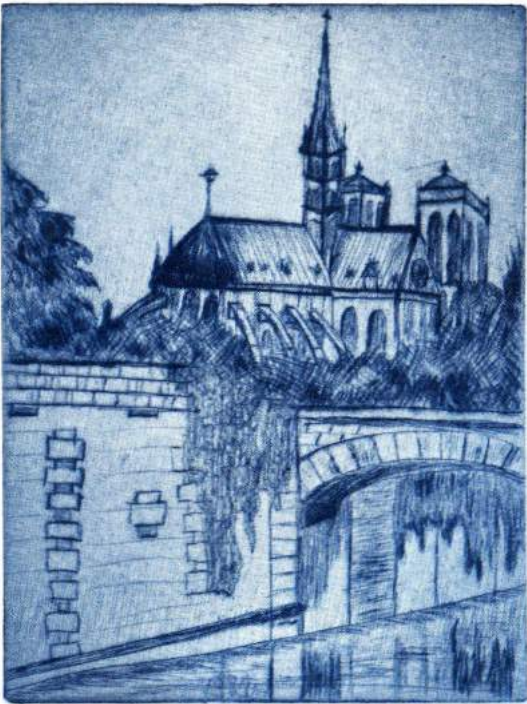
A look of wonder passed over his face as his nostrils caught the fragrance of wet earth. He leaned over to smell the freshly watered plants.

"They smell yummy!" he exclaimed softly.

I looked at him, so small, so eager to learn and to share. Kneeling down, I dug around for a few moments, then found what I was looking for.

"Hey, honey," I cried excitedly, "look at this neat worm!"





Mary Ellen Klotz

Voyage

Mary Harris

*A silent dip of the paddle into
Glacier cold turquoise, cupped
By kneeling giants.
I pull against the water's weight,
My arm strong to the honey wood.
Clouds hang closely about my
Trackless passing.
The ramrod firs salute and
A jay mutters once, then is still.*

*The easy balanced skimming
Provokes a flurry of swans and
They keep pace for a heartbeat
Great wings spread, dark eyes bright,
Matching speed for speed, then
Lifting, blending to the cloud.
Leaving me to coast in a*

*Muddled wake,
Rocking halt,
And hunch awkward arms and legs,
Yearning after to regions I cannot know.*

Faith

Laurie Jackson

Father Rosario waited in silence. A shadow appeared and began to grow to life size, moving slowly, intently toward him. The shadow eased downward into a kneeling position, hovering in silence for a long second or two.

"Father, forgive me, for I have sinned . . ." the voice droned on wearily.

Father Rosario listened earnestly trying to sense some repentance in the man's voice. He could find none. I shall not judge, he told himself, I am but an instrument of the Lord. After an interval of several minutes, the man paused, and Father Rosario heard his cue: ". . . for the sins of my past life, I ask penance and absolution." Penance and absolution, he thought, how lightly he uses the words.

Having dismissed the man, Father Rosario checked his watch: five-twenty-five. Thursday confessions ended at five-thirty officially, or whenever the parishioners stopped coming. He waited, finally checking his watch again: five-twenty-nine. He left the confessional to check the church. It was empty. Father Marino would be in the sacristy, preparing to leave. Father Rosario turned to the crucifix, reflecting for a moment on the stability of the symbol. He was surrounded by concrete symbols of the Almighty and His host of saints. Faithful saints, many of whom had died centuries earlier in defense of this man who hung sorrowfully on the cross, the Son of God. Yes, he believed they had died rather than renounce their Saviour. The symbols had endured, but the faith? He shook his head. He was judging again. He genuflected, asking God, as he did a hundred times a day, to make him stronger, and left the sanctuary.

In the sacristy Father Rosario removed his stole, kissed it, and put it in its proper place.

"You look tired, Father Rosario," said Father Marino, studying him. "It must be the basketball team, eh?"

"They gave me quite a workout today at that," replied Father Rosario, "but I enjoy those boys."

"Yes, you've quite a crew this year. They're lucky to have a fine athlete like yourself coaching them," said Father Marino, smiling.

"They're the athletes, Father. I'm only there for spiritual guidance and a tip now and then on their game," he added.

"You're too humble," said Father Marino, putting on his coat, "Ready to go?"

"I'm going to stay on just a few minutes," Father Rosario told him, "I'll see to the lights and the doors."

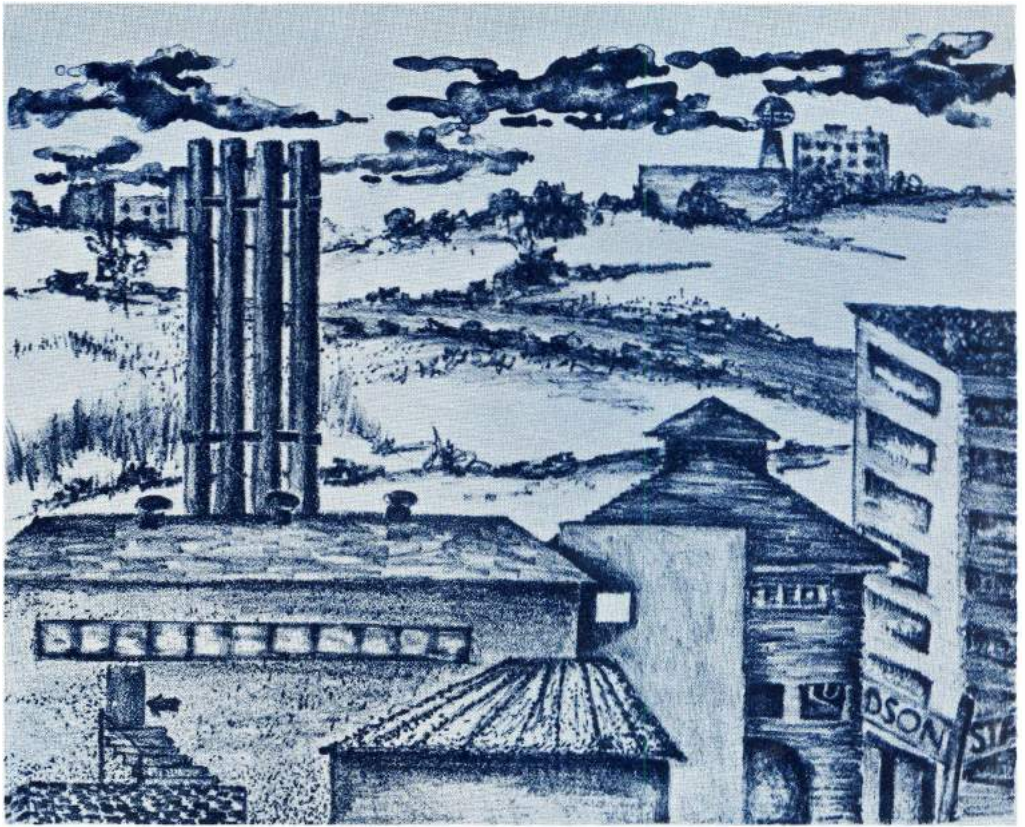
"See you at dinner then," said Father Marino as he turned to leave.

Alone, Father Rosario recalled the basketball practice. The youngsters were eager, as he had been at their age. They were good, too, and devoted to their playing. He looked forward to the basketball season each year, and the chance to involve himself so closely with the generation he found so puzzling. Once on the basketball court, they were just boys, himself included, running, shooting, passing, dribbling, laughing, and playing their hearts out. He sighed. With the playoffs next week, the season was all but over. Back to the world of the uncertain priest, ministering to lost souls, he said to himself. He'd have to hurry now or be late for dinner. Hannah would scold him, as she loved to do, and give him an extra helping of mashed potatoes.

Father Rosario put on his coat. He entered the sanctuary once more, on his way to the back doors, which remained unlocked. In his hurry, he nearly overlooked the children who knelt facing the altar at the entrance to the sanctuary. He stopped astonished at what he saw.

"Please, dear Lord," said the little girl, "Let my brother Angelo see," she bowed her head.

The child who knelt at her left, his hands clasped in prayer, stared blankly ahead.



Carolyn Dodson

Father Rosario stood transfixed. The boy was blind, he realized. That blank stare was the stare of the sightless.

"Now, Angelo," said the girl, "it's time to pray. Let us say the Our Father out loud."

The children prayed in unison for several minutes. The boy Angelo voiced his prayers loudly, enunciating each well known word with a joyful note of hope. His sister prayed intensely, keeping her head bowed, but speaking clearly and purposefully. After the various prayers, a random assortment the length of which surprised Father Rosario, the girl looked up and noticed him watching them. She crossed herself and rose.

"Good evening, Father. My brother and I are just leaving." She was quite young, he noticed for the first time, probably not more than ten or eleven. Her long black hair fell softly in curls, and her wide, dark eyes shone. The child smiled, "Come, Angelo," she said.

"Wait, child," said Father Rosario.

"Yes, Father?" she asked. She stood, holding the boy's hand, waiting obediently.

Father Rosario groped for the words he must find to detain her. His heart was pumping rapidly, as if he'd just run the length of the basketball court three or four times. He must talk with this girl, this child who sought a miracle at the very altar where he said Mass. A miracle to heal the blind boy, he thought, like the miracles Jesus had performed and His apostles after him.

"Do you live in this parish?" he asked, finally, finding nothing else to say.

"Oh, yes, Father, we live right near here. Our brother, Anthony Capelli, is an altar boy. Do you know him?" she asked, somewhat confused.

"Yes, I know your brother. I've not had the pleasure of meeting you two, have I?" he asked.

"No, I suppose not. Angelo, as you can see is blind, so he goes to the special school. I go to public school because Papa says he cannot afford to send us all to St. Bernadette's. Anthony wants to be a priest, you see, so it is very important that he goes to your school," she said.

"I see. Anthony is a good boy, and he will make a fine priest," said Father Rosario, admiring the girl's obvious perception. Again he was at a loss for words.

The children stood still, calmly waiting the priest's next words. The girl broke the silence. "I'm sorry, Father, if we are keeping you here too late. It is time for us to go. Mother will have supper ready and she will wonder where we are. She doesn't know we come here each day," she said.

"You come every day then?" he asked.

"Yes, Father, I wait for Angelo at the special school, then we come here on our way home," she replied.

"And you pray for a miracle?" he asked.

"We pray that God will give Angelo his sight. Some people say there are no miracles, but we believe there are, so we pray for one. Someday my brother will see," she said confidently.

"God bless you both!" said Father Rosario, touching the boy's head, then the girl's.

"Thank you, Father," they said in chorus and turned to leave the church.

Father Rosario watched them walk down the worn center aisle. The boy held tightly to the girl as she opened the door and guided him out into the night.

When they had gone, he crossed to the right aisle and closed the one window which remained open. Then he walked back to the center aisle, genuflected, crossed himself and rose. Then he stopped, studying the crucifix once more. He knelt.

"Please, God, if there be a way that You, in Your devine mercy and kindness, would grant the child his sight, let it be done. I pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Father Rosario turned out the lights, locked the door of the sacristy, and began the short walk to the rectory. He whistled softly, thinking of Hannah and how she would feign anger at him for being late.



Sunset

Laurie Jackson

*It is the time of day when
The sun, having spent itself,
Lies placidly down on the horizon
And slips out of sight.*

*My eyes burn from overuse.
They're not much good anymore.
But they've seen a lot of years, these eyes,
They have served me well.*

*I'm thinking of my grandchildren
As they smile at me from their gilded frames.
They're so busy with their young lives,
I hardly see them.*

*They'd have loved the old house
Where my children played and grew.
That huge, happy house, indeed, it holds
Lots of memories.*

*Time surrounds me now
It lies in vast piles of waste,
So unlike the rich and active life I shared with
My beloved mate.*

*Now for wealth I have government checks.
My palace is a nursing home;
But I, unlike some, have much love to recall, as I sit
Slipping with the sun.*

Tennis Anyone?

Rita DiVerde

When my son confronted me with his plans to try out for the football team, I was outraged.

“Better that you play ball and jacks with the garbage disposal. Better that you snack on a bowl of nails. Better that you play tag on the Kennedy Expressway. All that would be better than being mangled on the football field by a bunch of sadistic hulks.”

“Does that mean no, Ma?” Nick queried.

My husband sided with Nick. “After all, the kids wear safety helmets and lots of padding.”

But I wouldn't budge. Instead I politely suggested an alternative. Basketball seemed like a tranquil, sensible game, nice little boys in cute little shorts padding around the gym floor and swishing a ball through a hoop. Sane. Practical. In other words, basketball was just the sport for my little darling.

After weeks of practicing with his team at the gym, and stretching and jumping at home, Nick was ready for the big day of the first game. On the way to the gym, he was flanked by his cheering squad — my husband, daughter, sister, parents and me — most of whom knew nothing about the rules of basketball.

During the first quarter, I failed to keep track of the number of times Nick was splattered across the floor. A boy from the opposing team was so tall for the age of eight that I was tempted to protest the game on the grounds that his mother tampered with his birth certificate. As Nick brought the ball down court, the tall boy placed a long, lean leg into Nick's path, and he tripped, sliding on his hands and knees across the length of the gym floor. When he picked himself up, I noticed two skinned knees and a pair of broken eyeglasses.

My father rushed onto the floor, quickly repaired the bent frames, and motioned for the game to resume.

During the second quarter, Nick caught a long pass and dribbled in closer to the basket. While jumping to make the shot, he was floored by an opposing boy's arm bopping his head. On Nick's way down, a stray foot found his mouth and knocked out a tooth.

"So, this is basketball?" I whispered to my husband.

"Yep."

"No use getting upset; it was only a baby tooth."

During the third quarter, the president of the league — who happened to be my best friend's husband — halted the game to inform the referees of our team's subtle cheating which the officials had overlooked. My friend was seated in front of me, and I tapped her shoulder.

"What does Denny mean stopping the game to put his two cents in? If he does it to our team, he had better butt in on all the other teams' games, too."

Thus ended one friendship.

As I drew my attention back to the game, my mother leaned toward me and said, "Nick is tired. Look at him; he's pale. Why doesn't the coach let him take a rest?"

"He will, Ma, don't worry."

"What kind of a man is he to work a mere child to a frazzle? Don't child labor laws apply to basketball?"

Three minutes later, the coach summoned my son to the bench and sent in his replacement. This time, my mother remarked, "Who does that coach think he is? The nerve of him, benching the best player on the team! Is he intentionally trying to lose the game?"

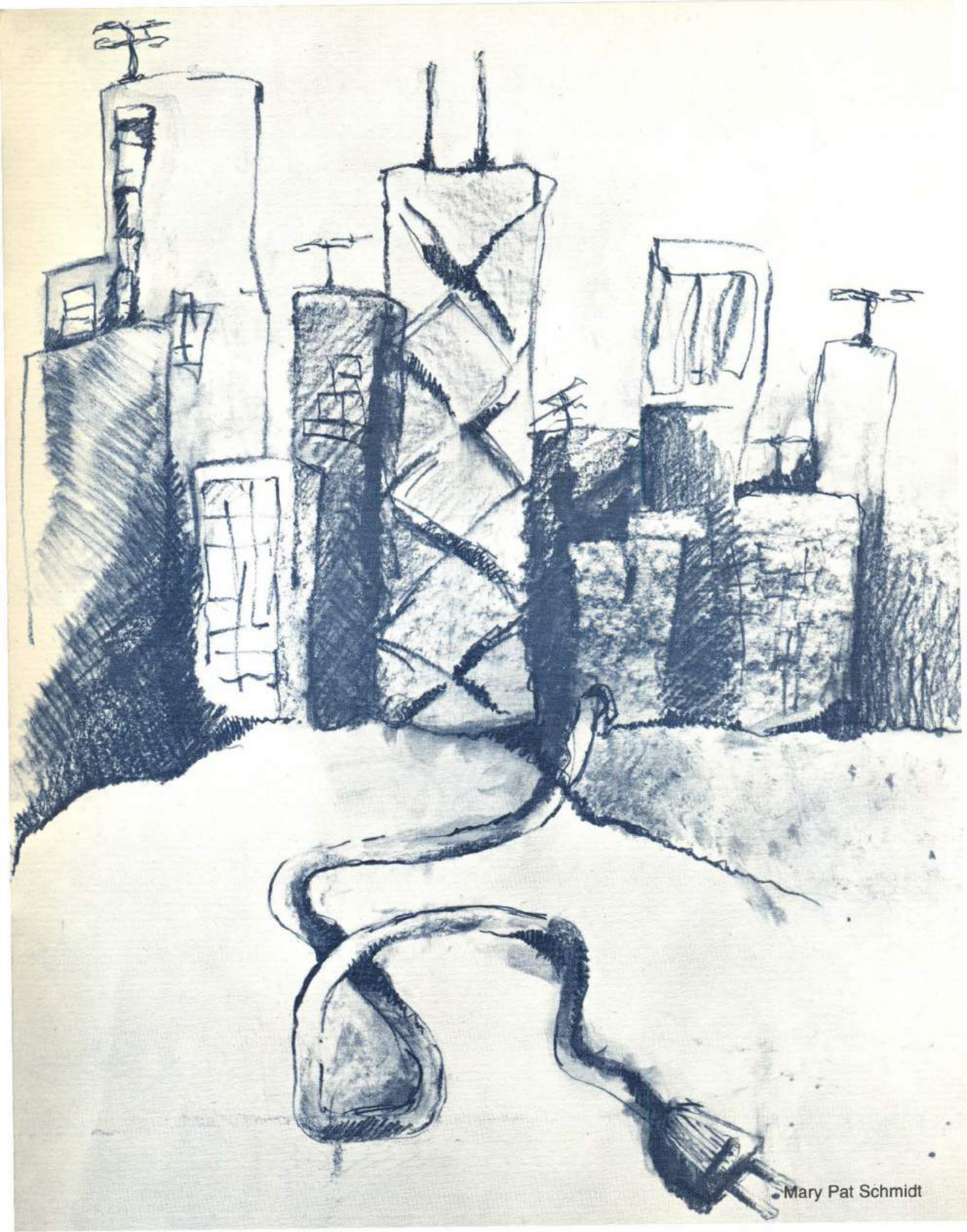
"Ma, please, you're supposed to be enjoying the game."

"How can I enjoy the game? I came to see my grandson play basketball not sit on the bench."

During the fourth quarter, a gentle shove sent Nick flying into the wall while his glasses flew into the opposite direction.

Since the referee had failed to call a foul on the shove, a restless grumble emanated from my family's side of the gym, and it was all my husband could do to hold back the prospective Lynch mob.

The total count was in — one missing tooth, a pair of eyeglasses beyond repair, a couple of bruised knees and elbows. The game was over. We lost. As I offered Nick a Lifesaver in his favorite flavor, I sheepishly muttered, "How about switching to football?"





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