Big dogs are big in Bridgeport. Where rows of vinyl-skinned bungalows glow at each other in the sun, where middle-aged children of immigrants are led from post to shrub by purposeful pets.

I'm tired. We've returned to our childhood city, to my parents' home, for a visit of three days. At the parlor window, I watch as a Doberman drags a man in a crumpled raincoat down the gentle incline. A girl with orange hair approaches from the opposite direction, skirt skirt grazing purple thighs. The man blinks. He jerks his gaze to the vertical run of a retaining wall across the street, and rubs his neck. The Doberman is riveted. As she passes he strains to sniff, trembling, at her hem. Then folds neatly in half against the tug of leash to watch her slow retreat.

Below this window between the rosebush and the yew, I'd settle
with a book after school. From there I could look boldly into the kitchen of the house next door where a German couple lived. The son, a tall blonde god, who hung in my girlish imagination like the air of a lowering storm. There, on a dull summer breeze, the garlicky prelude to our evening meal would meet and be overlapped by the stronger, mustier scents of their cooking.

The noise in the room grows louder. I turn to watch my daughter skid past in her stocking feet. My country kid, wired on sugar, MTV, and the prospect of sidewalks. Across the room my father grins at me. As I walk by he croons, "How ya gonna keep 'em... down on the farm...?"

My mother, golden in the rich light of afternoon, fits a glass into the dishwasher rack. We discuss recent family history—The new signs of her physical decline are unexpected. A body shrinking in time and gravity. Soft features sharpened into caricature. She hangs back, managing a shy, stripped smile, as if her aging were something she had neglected, had gotten way out of hand. I go to her, and we embrace. The same dreamy eyes fill with light. When I speak, she points to an ear, shakes her head. I stroke away the ivory foss cupping her ear and press the lobe.

"Where's your hearing aid?"

She frowns, impatient with the question. "It whistles, wheeeeee."

It makes me crazy. "Candy?"

She pulls me into her room, shutting the door behind us.

I am always struck by the contrast between the studied decoration of my parents' rooms and her crowded, comfortable mix. The colonial couch, The blonde, fifties bureau. The tall metal cabinets overlaid in plastic. Scattered across the surfaces sit dozens of family photographs, many sharing a single frame. Free-floating heads cropped from snapshots grin lopsided at me. I turn to meet the familiar faces of her saints strung across a wall in giant, framed collage. The same sensitive faces still look imploringly at heaven, or knowingly at me. Delicate hands still frozen in graceful gesture. Old friends, St. Francis. The chaste St. Bernard. Their stories of their suffering and transcendence were my bedtime tales. On a h bureau, selected icons are illuminated by short candles stuck into garnet cups. A gifted Madonna is smirking with pearly teeth and tiny silk roses.

I am seven years old. I am with my grandmother in the downstairs chapel of our church. Evening mass is in progress. Kerchiefed old adults in my life against miracles, from where I stand, trying hard to contain its slippery fragments. And there, amid bits of cold egg and half-eaten toast, she would ceremoniously rely its cryptic message, its implications for my life.

Out of the lower bureau drawer, she removes a small bundle. There is a fuzzy orange blanket, a man's cast-off sweater, a green cap knit with sequins; protection against the unspeakable cold she imagines in Maine. From another drawer she pulls a framed print of a Raphael Madonna, and lays it in the bag with the rest.

"Hang this in your house. Your mother says you don't have one holy picture in your house. And you in the woods. "Her voice turns sharply strident. "You used to be so elegant, and now you live in the woods like a peasant!" She raises her arm in a gesture of puzzled resignation.

The focus of her eyes on mine is relentless. Always searching. For what? Shred only got lost in the blind alleys of my own holy pro- gression. I want to reassure her, to thank her for the gifts of the seamless faith that was her life — not choice — not something to choose. But the dreams of history are on her side. She fears for my soul.

Her hand grips mine as I turn to leave. On my forehead, she hur- ri-cally traces a cross with the edge of her thumb, then steps back, smiling beneficently.

"It's a lousy world to bring you kids." She winks conspiratorially.

Better to let them stay where they are."

I light the hollow of a candle before the Madonna of our Sorrows, and we leave the darkening room.

"Pavarotti?" She squints at the jacket. "He shouts." She hands it back. She is being loyal to Caruso, another Neapolitan.
Serial: episode #3

This is the third episode in an ongoing series over the last few years.

Summary: Ted Wharton, a 43-year-old high school English teacher, drifted into a wild affair with one of his senior students, Joy Dollinger. After a couple of months the relationship took a back seat, but a week before Christmas, Ted recognized it as an English quiz from last year, with a comment of his scrawled across it in red: "It isn't proof." He handed it back to LeMaster, who returned it to Joy.

A clear cool stream of relief rushed into Ted's chest. Round one to Mr. Wharton. He shook his head with a brown as he glanced at Grimsley. LeMaster's hair, Shuck, Poor child, she's lost her mind. Grimsley ignored him and said, "I think we'd better see the other evidence you spoke about." He clasped his hands and touched his knuckles to his nose.

The motel receipts! Jesus Christ, she'd kept the motel slips of a hotel for the trip to the office! Ted thought: The motel receipts! Ted frowned. "Grimsley knows too much."

Ted frowned. "Grimsley wants me? What for?"
"You'll have to ask him that."
"Where is he?"
"The Principal's office."

Ted informed his kids of the change (scattered chuckles and groans) and started down the hall. It's about the Media Review Committee, he told himself. But what about it? Maybe LeMaster had quit as chairman and Grimsley was tapping him. He felt a slight twinge of that chest pain again. He hadn't felt any of that in weeks. And facing Mrs. Crux in the outer office his heart flipped upside down.

Mrs. Crux stopped her typing; gazed over her glasses. She went to the door behind her, opened it slightly, received a message and forced a smile and said, "They're ready for you now."

Ted's mind said, "They? Who? With a horrible sinking feeling he walked to LeMaster's door. The knob was cold in his hand. He pulled it open.

As soon as he entered the room it was instantly clear that life as he'd always known it had come to an end.

LeMaster was behind his desk, tilted back in his swivel chair, his fat legs crossed, his expression more hangdog than ever. On his right sat Grimsley, face grave. Vice-Principal Phil Shuck, looking fretful and scratching his fringe of red hair, was sitting on LeMaster's left, and next to him sat Joy—wiping tears from her eyes with a pale blue handkerchief.

Grimsley nodded to the one remaining seat— the seat in the middle, the chair that faced the other chairs—and said, "Mr. Wharton, please sit down."

Ted did. Knees rubbery, weak. He clasped the arms of the chair with ice-cold hands. Cloudy with fear and rage he shouted at himself: Stay calm! Play dumb, it's your only chance!

Grimsley placidly listed the accusations: Mr. Wharton had forcibly seduced Joy Dollinger in the audio-visual room. Too frightened to resist his advances, she had let him engage her in numerous acts of sexual perversion both in and out of school, even making her pay for motel slips. As Grimsley spoke, a deadpan executioner's expression masking his delight, Joy sat demurely, straight-backed, weeping quietly and dabbing at her face.

When Grimsley finished, swollen screaming silence filled the room. Heart blasting, Ted put on a baffled smile. "Joy, why are you saying these things? Did I treat you unfairly in class, or what?" He looked at her with puzzlement and hurt, trying his best to convey to the others the message that she was insane.

She didn't meet his eyes, didn't answer. Instead she reached into her purse and came out with some flimsy papers. "These are the motel receipts," she said, and gave them to the nearest inquisitor, Phil Shuck.

Ted thought: The motel receipts! Jesus Christ, she'd kept the motel receipts— from the very beginning, like a secret agent! Bald rumpless Shuck looked through the tissues, eyebrows raised, and passed them to LeMaster. LeMaster examined them closely, holding them up to the light as if they were counterfeit bills. "Mmm," he intoned. "Well, Mr. Wharton..."

"What about this one?" Grimsley said, and passed another photo. "Where is he?"
"You'll have to ask him that."
"May I have them back now, please?" As Ted complied, his arm weighed tons.

"You have two choices," Grimsley said. "You can either resign, take your pay, and leave here. Or you can remain here, and we'll begin proceedings."

Ted frowned. "Grimsley knows too much."

"Grimsley ignored him and said, "I think we'd better see the other evidence you spoke about." He clasped his hands and touched his knuckles to his nose.

LeMaster stared at the paper on top of the pile, his cheeks and shiny pate suffused with a rich vermilion. He looked as if he had seen the Gorgon's head and had turned to stone.

"Ted's mind was so full it was blank. The Polaroids! He flushed with slick cold sweat.

Grimsley examined the photographs, taking his time. His blush had faded now. The squeak of LeMaster's swivel chair and the delicate prance of one photo against another as Shuck moved on. The sweat on Ted's forehead collected above his brow. To take out his handkerchief and mop himself would make him look bad, extremely bad, so he sat like a statue, soaking, and tried to seem calm.

"Where is he?"
"You'll have to ask him that."

"What about this one?" Grimsley said, and passed another photo. "Where is he?"
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"Ted's eyes were swimming. Every one of his organs was poisoned and maimed, his skin was a horrible slime. He felt something break in his throat when he tried to speak.

Grimsley said, "May I have them back now, please?" As Ted complied, his arm weighed tons.

"You have two choices," Grimsley said. "You can either resign, take your pay, and leave here. Or you can remain here, and we'll begin proceedings."

The first thing Ted did when he left the office was go to the mensroom and vomit.

Christopheratty
Thomaston
works with the blind and embraces a Keypoint green screen

High Noon

from Growing Pains, a novel
The Drowning

We never knew whether he drowned slowly or quickly. Like most fishermen he never bothered learning to swim. Somehow, each of them found a way to spend every day working at sea. They knew the water beneath them was cold enough to damn any man lost overboard.

I was told later that the day was a fair one, cool, sharp with the coming of autumn. A thin film of high clouds streaked the sky. An onshore breeze was building as the afternoon wore on. The water always looks clearer in the fall, clearer yet darker too. I imagine that it must have been beautiful that afternoon as it cradled our boat's hull between its swells like a face between a woman's breasts.

The knock came. My mother was in the kitchen at the rear of the house. She was working on the last of the season's canning, delicately arranging the jars in the battered old kettle. Banks of steam boiled up toward the ceiling. The knock was crisp, formal, foreign — few neighbors ever walked through that door. Or even through their own front doors. She must have knitted her brows helped her to think. As a child I copied her; I was trying to work something out. I still am, after all these years.

She hung the towel on the rack next to the stove, and walked down the long front hall past the landscape paintings she had done while in school. And whispered a handful of words as a prayer.

The Coastal Warden who stood there was not the one we feared. From where they grew up. He may not have been from our area. He may have been separated from us by his position. But we all shared the same common link to fishing and boats and storms and death. He was on his routine patrol earlier in the day when he came across our boat as it rocked sideways in the swells. Its engine was idling, and no one was on board.

We drove all the way up to Jonesport to pick up our new boat from its original owner. My mother drove our car back home and my father and I took the boat south. We followed the coastline to our harbor. It had the high bow and the broad beam and the long sweeping lines that mark the boats from Washington County. I remember tingling as I felt the power from its engine vibrate up through the floorboards. My father felt that power too. He held the wheel with one strong, hard hand, his eyes sweeping over the water. His other hand clutched a chart. Together we owned the waves with that boat. Thirty-two feet of oak and cedar and knowledge and skill. Once, during the long trip home, our hull slipped down hard into the water sending a wall of spray up over the top of the cabin. My father turned and looked at me and gave me a wink. I shut my eyes. I prayed that one day I would grow to be a man like him. Perched in the sternman's seat I watched him out of the corner of my eye to see if he would turn and wink again. His powerful, broad body dwarfed mine, his silent, brooding way was nothing like the way I behaved. But how I longed to be like him. How I ached to share his strength and his hardiness and his unyielding control over what was in his heart.

When the Warden pulled alongside our boat he found it empty. He knew what had happened and what he would find. He began checking my father's traps, and slowly circled the buoy that marked each location on the bottom. Within a quarter of an hour he found my father. His legs were tangled in the line that led to his last trap. Whether he had gotten wrapped up in the line as he lowered the trap over the side or whether he had fallen overboard and then got caught in the line as he beat his arms against the water, the Warden couldn't say. It really didn't matter. He pulled my father's body on board. Then he took our boat to tow back to the town wharf. After he
got both boats tied to the dock he left my father covered with a blanket out of view in the cuddly cabin of the patrol boat. He walked straight to our house. He told my mother. Before the word got out among the neighbors. I knew the Warden; he was a decent, fair, honest man. I imagine his awkwardness, how he fought to appear unemotional and professional as he stood in our front hall. He told my mother that her husband was dead. And then, knowing he should leave, that there was nothing he could do to change what had happened, to help my mother, he turned and walked slowly down our road. Back to our village. His head hung down. Tears formed in his eyes. He was young.

He regained his control before he reached the undertaker. The undertaker's son got the hearse out of the garage and drove him back to the wharf. To pick up my father's body. It wasn't very far to go.

I would have given anything — everything. I would have given my life to have been there, to hold my mother as she stood alone in the hallway after the Warden was gone. A lifetime's worth of training to hold in her feelings was rocked and then shattered by that moment when she opened the front door and saw the Warden with his cap in his hand. She must have been bent over double by the pain of that last hollipng up from her middle. He was the only man she had ever loved. Or would ever love. And to lose him on a clear, sweet fall afternoon, with the smell of apples, rotting on the ground, and woodsmoke and leaves decaying, and the vegetables bubbling in their jars on the stove. It was something she couldn't bear. Standing there all by herself, her arms clinched tightly together over her stomach, her body shook. Some part of her broke.

She blamed me. She never spoke another word after the Warden left. Not a single word for as long as she lived. Not to me, not to anybody. But I know that she blamed me. She blamed me for my father's death. My uncle blamed me; every man and woman in our village blamed me. They all did. Like animals in the wild turning on an alhino and killing it because it's different, they all turned on me because it was different.

My uncle called me in Orono and told me about the drowning. I hitch-hiked home from school and tried to help with the arrangements. No one wanted to bear anything I had to say. My mother wouldn't talk with me because she couldn't. Our neighbors, the other fishermen, the people I had grown up with wouldn't. Because of what I had done. I was the one who was different. I was the one who had gone to college in Orono when I should have stayed at home, working as my father's sternman. How could I tell them that I had to — the thought of spending the rest of my life in that village? Doing nothing more than a dumbly paddling through year after year, like an ox dragging a plow through a field? No. What I wanted was two and a half hours away in Orono. And beyond.

It was my mother's fault. She was the one who had taught me all my life about the importance of books. She had read to me during quiet winter afternoons after school; she had defended me when I announced that I planned to go on to college. It was her fault. She had no right to blame me.

After the funeral, someone had to provide for my mother. So I collected my things in Orono and moved back home. Along with the boat and the traps. I inherited my father's territory. Just as he had from his father before him. It was too bad that I didn't inherit some of his skill and his strength as well — I wasn't very good at lobstering. I managed to scrape by all right, but I just didn't have the feel for where the lobsters would be. I didn't have his touch for it. I kept at it though; I didn't have any choice.

It was strange being back home again after nearly four years away. Nothing in the village had changed except for me, and I'd changed too. For six months I lived at home with my mother, six months of silence in that quiet house. I walked down to the town wharf every morning. Except when it stormed. I took our boat out and worked all day until my hands were numb from cold and I was half-dead from listening to the sound of the engine's exhaust. The waves lapped against the hull. Every day I bore them not speaking to me. No one ever said a single word more to me than they needed to. Blame dies hard there. Sometimes it doesn't die at all.

 Barely half a year after the drowning, my mother swallowed an entire bottle of sleeping pills the doctor gave her. She went to bed and never woke up. I stood by her grave during the service with a kind of grief in me that felt like I'd swallowed fire. The way only I could breathe was to take little shallow gulps of air. All around me, on every side people stared at me with their eyes hard and narrowed. I knew that her death was my fault as well. I knew that there was no way out. I was twenty-two years old, and for another fifty or sixty years my mother's death, and my father's, would bear down on me as an anvil strapped to my back.

After the funeral I thanked the minister. He nodded back. I drove home alone. I stopped by the liquor store and bought a pint of scotch and some beer. The rest of the afternoon I walked from room to room, slowly draining five cans of beer. I had fought to appear unmoved and professional. An hour or so after dinner I started in on the scotch. By the time it was dark it was all I could manage to set the alarm clock.

It was still dark the next morning when I climbed out of bed. The house was quiet. That I might have been buried in a grave myself. I got dressed, washed down a cup of coffee and a doughnut. Then I took my suitcase in one hand and my dinner in the other and walked out the front door. I locked it behind me.

At the wharf it was just beginning to get light. That glow that comes over the ocean before dawn. I walked quickly across the creosoted dock and lowered my suitcase down into our skiff. It felt good to row through the gentle chop. The spring breeze ruffled my hair and my shirt. The sea smells helped to clear my head.

With the skiff tethered behind I took our boat out of the harbor and set a course toward my nearest trap. I was fishing almost two hundred and fifty traps that year. All of them were out. I followed a rhythm set by habit from busy to busy, just as I had hundreds of times before. As I reached each marker I fished it out of the water with my gaff, listened to the engine idling and the gulls calling as they circled around the stern. With my rigging knife I cut through the line to the trap. The lines slithered down into the dark water as each left my hand. The buoyu threw back into the sea to bob around in the waves until they washed up on shore somewhere far away.

By midday I had sliced through the last of the lines. I listened to the hollow popping of the exhaust, feeling the vibration of the motor as it picked up speed. I headed for a small cove. Few people laid traps there and solitude lived on shore.

I cut the engine and threw the ignition key into the water. Our boat glided over the calm surface with no more noise than the beating gulls wings through the air. We kept a metal can of kerosene in the cabin for the one-burner stove. I unscrewed its cap and splashed kerosene over the wooden floor of the aft-deck, up toward the cabin, and then all over the boards that covered the engine compartment. Bending over the gunwale I dropped my suitcase back into the skiff and climbed in after it. I struck a kitchen match on the side of the skiff and threw it up into our boat. Then more. Finally the kerosene caught. I watched for a moment as the flames traced the path I had made with the fuel.

I dragged the skiff up on shore. Then the flames reached the gas tank. The explosion heaved the boat up in the water and splintered it and shattered it. Burning scraps of wood flew into the air for fifty feet, then fell back down into the sea, leaving thin trails of smoke hanging in the sky. I watched until there was nothing left but smoke and bits of wood floating in a huge circle on the water where our boat had been a minute before. I picked up my suitcase and walked into the woods. I didn't look back even once.

Leslie Gould
Brewsterwood, N.H.

is a free-lance writer
who recently moved from Maine

Ethiopia

I am dying rib by rib.
I am dying of pneumonia.
I am dying of tuberculosis.
I am dying of food shortage.
I am dying of disease.
I am dying of starvation.
I am dying of poverty.

The bowl of my belly is empty.
The bowl in my hand is cracked.
The bowl of my penis rattleth with too many young teeth.

I am dying rib by rib
by bone
by knuckle.
The rag of my body disintegrates.
The dust bears no seeds.
The dust bears no fruit.
I am dust.
I am dying by meatless rib.

Andrea Hamlin Knowles
Vander in

teaches creative writing at
Dexter Regional Vocational School

Hampden
Bunny Peasley and the death of the Reverend Andrews is part of why I gave up driving the mail. I would just as soon not answer a whole lot of questions about that business. My mail route was full of those questions, where I didn't really want to know about what was going on with the people waiting beside their mailboxes, and yet I did know. They don't tell you about that when you take the oath to uphold the U.S. Government and deliver the mail come hell or high water. Snow, hail, no problem. It's the everlasting gossip, backbiting, and slander I couldn't stand.

It was quite some feat for me to get that job, considering I'm not from Meddy-bumps. People down east do tend to be suspicious of outsiders, which I am, being from three counties to the south. Also they don't favor people getting on air, loosely translated as reading or writing when it's not strictly called for. But my husband Cy is from here, and not considered pretentious. He pays no mind to gossip, just tends his own business, and always advised me to do the same. He's never said anything to me about this "accidental homicide" or whatever they're calling it. I'm not involved and I don't plan to be.

Now that I'm through with the mail, though, I guess I can talk about it a little bit. I never carried tales from one mailbox to another. They all say I opened mail or else I never could have known about some of these things, when in fact I saw them going on in front of me. People don't hide themselves as well as they think they do. Really it's the postmaster, Hobb Hallowell, who reads the mail. He gets paid by the hour, not the mile, and he ain't too awful fussy in the afternoon. Never mind. I don't want to think about those backbiters out there in the plantations and the unincorporated townships, waiting by their boxes for the only car they sometimes will see in a day.

God knows there were times when it's densely populated here in the village, but you do see some architectural style, at least until you cross the railroad tracks and pass the dump. Then you're in the trees alright. Still I don't know what keeps people out there, on those little patches of cleared land. When you're in a good mood, or it's spring, it's exhilarating to get out on the rough roads and know you never will meet another car unless it's a pulp truck hauling out. Or hunting season — I have never seen so much game as when I drove out there then. Bears in the dump, bobcat tracks in the snow, deer and rabbit everywhere, and eagles overhead when the fish are coming up the river. Partridge flew into my radiator grille one morning last fall, and I had the breast meat frying in butter right after I finished my route.

I used to get to Unincorporated Township 114 in midmorning, and I know that either Bunny or her mother-in-law Margaret Andrews would be waiting at the mailbox for me. They were at the end of the Ridge Road, nothing else out there except the wooden frame of the Word of God Baptist Calvary Temple that the Rev. Andrews was building, and the road that used to go through to the Peejepcoot Paper lands, back fifty years ago, when logging was still good, and the Ranger and Aroostook went by three times a day. Woods road still did go through, I suppose, but everything else was over with. So why were those few families still out there? You had to wonder.

When I got down to the end of the road one of those two women would be waiting. I preferred Mrs. Andrews. She'd meet me, dressed in her print house dress and probably apron, with knit slacks under so as not to arouse casual thoughts about legs or something. Or it could have been on account of blackflies, which were fierce out there in early summer. Anyway, I could ask how the Temple was coming, how Rev. Andrews' homemade saw rig was working. She would always answer in tones filled with the zeal of the Lord's work. It's all coming along splendidly. We're so happy.

But Bunny was something else. I could tell it was her waiting way down that straight empty road. I'd see that saggy swagger figure, with the shapeless clothes, and those three dirtball kids hanging off her and whining. She'd stand there all day, and I'd picture myself new golden days. By the time I got there my teeth would be gritted. I'd manage something, maybe:

"Here's a good pile of letters for you, Mrs. Matthews." She'd married the Rev. Andrews' adopted son Bill Matthews, that was always on the pulpצעt crew.

"They aren't for me. They're for him." The Rev. Andrews, she meant. He was definitely head hog in that pen.

Well, here's something for you, from way up the coast, might be Knox or Waldron County. I'm guessing. I know where she was. Same town I was. "I don't belong there anymore. Here is all there is." Voice so flat, so dead to hope. Her eyes would suck on to me, gray-brown, the color of a horse's back. I couldn't get that car in gear fast enough — almost went over a kink in the road. Didn't hit the sight of her, dully mining, hanging, arms dead slack. I know who she was, Mrs. Matthews. At first I blocked it out. But last May I was talking to my sister Barb on the phone. She was hollering away about her tenth high school reunion coming up in June and who was going to appear, and it was Cy.

"Barb, was Bunny Peasley. Bob's older girl, in your class?"

"Bunny? Yes, Miss Measly Peasley. She won't show. I don't know what she did with herself."

"Well, I think she might be down here. Converted to Christianity or something. Barb is something of a born-again Bible hituneser. I try not to get her going when I'm paying the phone bill."

"Oh yes, now that you mention it, I had heard something. I don't think she really found the Lord, though. I heard she was awfully poor. Her father won't have anything to do with her." According to Barb's Christians you can tell when Jesus loves you. He makes sure you have a nice home with carpeting and a good car. Barb and I have been over that ground before, so I changed the subject. Besides which, I found I didn't really want to hear about Measly Peasley even though it was me that asked.

Bunny Peasley, that's who Mrs. Bill Matthews was. Once I had said it, even itself, I was wrong. I started to see Bunny other places, like she was lying in wait for me, when in fact she never left the house before. Something about her was trying to get hold of me. I decided to kick it off. I began stealing myself, over the next few days, to say something to let on I knew who she was.

Bringing her a letter with the name "Bunny" in the address. I asked, not looking at her, "Did you get the name Bunny because you got so many kids?" That wasn't real polite, but she didn't seem to notice:

"My father called me that. Because I looked like a scared little rabbit. Before the dogs got it."

I sat there in the car, the motor running, frozen with my hand stuck in the mail case where I'd been rummaging for the next day's delivery. I guess Bunny thought I was waiting for stamps or money, because she leaned down to the window like she was going to say some more, but I dropped the car glasses, thought and drove off in a fog of spring mud heat. I never looked back. All I thought was of Bob Peasley, and his reaching and grabbing, like a dog, onto a cornered rabbit. Only it wasn't Bunny he was after, it was me, fifteen years old, standing at the file cabinet in my dad's car sales office. Bob would wait till they were doing body work, sanding, something real nasty in the shop, and he'd come waltzing in, chuckling, the gladhandling car salesman. Mr. Shot who could move the old boys off the lot. And he'd sittle up behind me, checking that nobody was coming and breathing in my ear, whispering dirty sick words, and kick his hand down the front of my skirt. And I'd freeze, just like that rabbit.

I gag when I think about it. It felt like someone was constricting down my neck, I couldn't scream. Dad would have bluffed it all on me, didn't want to lose biz but salesman. Everything was always my fault anyway, my principle.

Once those scores had broken through the walls in my mind, I couldn't stop the gut-tearing. I was a mess inside. I had married and come down east to get away from the faces, the garage, the noises, everything that reminded me of it, and now it was waiting for me at the mailbox every morning. I knew Bunny would be there when I drove out the next day, and she was.

I looked right at her. "Bunny, you ever get back to Stickney Corners?" That's all I said. I felt like I was heaving a brick through a big plate-glass window.

She flinched, then looked away past me, and started in talking low, hard, fast. "No, I never think about it. I have a life here now. I can fix things. You didn't know that, did you. I'm the one had that small engine repair course by mail, not Bill. He don't have time, I can fix anything. Have it done by sundown."

I caught my breath, then jumped right in. "Can you now? I've got some stuff that wants tinkering, wants it in the way. My lawn mower. Don't I hate frigging with a lawnmower? Any my boy's Schwinn, he can't get any use out of it, chain keeps slipping off. Could you fix that? My husband isn't inclined that way at all."

I was talking so fast because she was, because I just wanted to race away from Stickney Corners and Sanfilibach Bill Peasley. And I do hate frigging with greasy bits of metal.

"I can do all that. I have a gift. You bring it out. I'll get it done for you." She stood up straighter, and she was looking at me now, not seeing through me, but like she really wanted to know what I was made of. For a moment, I almost liked her; and I smiled at her, said I'd bring the mower out. The here and now, I can deal with. That's how she was too, maybe. I believed she could fix things.

When I got home, still chewing over notions about Bunny and the Ridge Road, I told Cy I was going out to the Andrews place to call. He raised up.

"I could have fixed that lawnmower before now, if I'd known you were going to go messing around out there."

"Well, I go out there every day. I know you can fix the mower, and Paul's bike, only you never actually get to it. I am some tired of the hand mower, I want to tell you. Like moving hay with a hutter churn, it is. Bush say'd he'd be easier. Anyway, I'm not messing around with Andrews, the old blowhard, if that's what you're worrying over."

"Go out there if you're set on it, but don't ask any fool questions. That's hell, fire Baptist territory. Those hardhats get more enjoyment out of damping the rest of us for all eternity than most folks would out of a college." He wouldn't say how he knew anything about those people, but he'd talked with Bill Matthews on the skiddish, though, as I think it.

Anyway, I was back there later on in the week with the lawnmower. I dropped
walking eight. I could tell they were watching her evening.

And I could smell the kerosene, with a rain smell, for it was

I tried my hand at making the lawn-mower, and it did seem to catch. I could see where she’d taken it all apart, cleaned the air filter and what-not.

“This must take you all day. How much do you figure on a job like this?” I had once asked her how she charged.

“I guess five dollars. I’d do it all before noon if it wasn’t for them kids.” She shot a mean arrow look in the direction of the kitchen porch. The kids were being held at bay by Mrs. Andrews, that firm figure in an apron, just visible through the screening. Definitely not a spice-the-root type. She was holding a switch in one hand, I could see.

Bunny was trundling the mower over the mole-hill lawn to my car when I heard a tractor put-putting its way up the old woods road. I peered into the dust, and Bunny said, bowing the mower into the trunk, “That’s him, coming in with more happy green spaces.”

“Your husband,” you may have thought he was on St. Regis, driving a skidder.”

“He is. Comes home weekends. That’s Rev. Andrews. He wants more boards for the Temple. You seen his saw rig? He’s some proud of that. Old Model A engine, with a rain barrel for a radiator. Sure ain’t light with it.” I noticed her voice lacked absolute reverence, I handed her a five dollar bill, and she smoothed it and put a crease in it longways. I watched her thinking, “Who the hell is that does that?” I’d seen it before, someone who loved the feel of a bill, loved money and its power, liked to deal it out of a wallet like a winning ace out of a hand of cards. Bunny’s father did that.

Anyway, I was about to get in the car, was just telling Bunny about Paul’s blue sprocket that won’t hold onto the chain, when my words turned into shouting over a fierce racket building up behind me. I turned and watched as Rev. Andrews had turned to, obvious what he looked to be a 1950’s vintage Farmall cub tractor, or maybe one of those Nuff cars with the wide front end, but with no muffler on it at all. He arrived eastward of me and switched it off, thank God. The silence dropped over us like a green wool blanket. It was suddenly a very quiet evening.

“How do, ladies. Fine night for a visit.” He looked like the cock of the walk, peering up there, affably inclining his head. He smiled in my direction, and he reminded me of pictures of Harry S. Truman, so pink and healthy, like a blue ribbon prize. He was a compact, energetic man, with bright blue eyes that looked right through you without seeing a thing. I could see him building his temple in the wilderness. He wouldn’t mind if none of us sinners went in. He wouldn’t even notice.

He didn’t seem to notice Bunny much, either, he mostly made talk with me. I told him I’d heard about his saw rig, and he got wound right up on that. How hard salvaged the engine out of the first car he ever owned, and set it up on blocks in the shed, having no particular plans for it, and then the vision of the Temple had come to him. I was a carpenter before I ever had a call to the ministry, just as our Lord was, and of course I was proud of my skill, I could build a whole house if I had the time, enough to do it. When I came out here it was on the bidding of the elders of a church that had gone by the boards, so to speak, in 1953 when there was no more lumber being sawed or shipped. They could need me this property but they couldn’t give me a stipend. So I turned and made this place yield a living. And it was six years ago I had a vision of the Temple and how I would raise it up out here where all else has failed and the flock is scattered.”

I could see the frame for the Temple pretty well from where we were standing, it occurred to me all of a sudden that when the old folks did this thing they generally had a hark raising type of affair, where everybody pitched in and helped. From what I could tell, Rev. Andrews was doing the whole job himself, from scratch. I was getting curious in spite of my good sense.

“Bill and Bunny here help you out some?” I said this in a fairly tentative tone, not to imply I thought anything one way or the other.

He raised right up. “No, this is the Lord’s work I’ve been called to. It’s own vision, granted to me, a mission I have been given. How long it takes me doesn’t matter at all. Scripture tells us how long the people of Israel were in building the Great Temple in Jerusalem. No, this is a holy work sanctified to me.”

Bunny didn’t look like she wanted to be on this earth at the moment. I could see how the world would get a little small with the Rev. Andrews smack dab in the middle of it all the time. He bobbed and nodded politely at him, reminded that I was going to bring Paul’s bike out at the end of the week, and hopped into the car pretty briskly. As I drove out the road, I could see in my mirror the Rev. Andrews on his tractor heading up the drive way to the house. He passed in front of Bunny like a general reviewing the troops. She was standing there, that dead still way she had, like she was hung from a tree.

Next day I was out there with the mail I found Mrs. Andrews waiting for me. “Tell Bunny the lawn-mower works good, more like crazy, would you, Mrs. Andrews?”

“Oh, yes, she’ll be grateful to hear that.” But I wasn’t exactly in a tearing hurry to get involved with those people. I had been hearing things, you know how you do, like if you’re reshingling your house you suddenly take notice of all the poor shingling jobs on the houses around you. Wolf, don’t believe I asked anybody what they knew about the Andrews out on the Ridge Road. But people would volunteer things, standing at the mailbox.
she's crippled with arthritis. Or you might say I'm a busybody. I don't care. I never made any bones about visiting, not like some. You know those people out there on what we used to call the Stacks place, he's supposed to be a preacher but he never talks to anybody isn't that particular breed of a Baptist or whatever they are out there. That man is hard. Won't allow anyone much on the place, nor it off, from what I see.

Archie McKinnon, at his box on the Baileyville road. "For a while I made hay on the place with Andrews, but I got myself in a pretty quick. He had to be the boss of every ying. You know, it's like anything else — there's what you know for a fact about making hay, and there's what the other fellow knows for a fact about making hay, and halfway in the middle there's enough hay for both of you, not with him. There's the gospel truth about hay, and all the rest is just chaff. I guess. I wouldn't deal with him, nor after he fretted me down in front of my whole family. Ran me up one side and down the other. He ought to get an iron cross up on top of that church he's building. Lightning just might strike him out of there tomorrow."

Quite a few people had old bones to pick with Rev. Andrews. No one really seemed to know much about him, though, as to where he'd come from, or why Bill and Bunny were there. That really did begin to get to me. Much as I wanted to leave sleeping dogs lie, I found myself harping on Bunny and Bill and the Andrews, wearing on my husband Cy's ears. This aggravated him no end.

"Bill Matthews is a good worker, that's all. He just wants to be left alone to do his job. You tell him what to do, he does it. I don't see what you want to be poking around other people's lives for. You never used to.

"I'm not. I just wondered if you knew anything about him, where he came from or anything."

"He isn't a talker. I don't think anyone knows who he is. He just minds his own business. Like I wish you would."

"How come you don't ever have him to work with you?"

"He ain't a talker. I don't think anyone knows who he is. He just minds his own business. Like I wish you would."

"He seems out of the picture most of the time. I never saw him. Doug said."

"He ain't a talker. I don't think anyone knows who he is. He just minds his own business. Like I wish you would."

"So far I hadn't been run into though I'd shovelled ice and ice out of my mouth for the mail case I was working from, and I had a thing with magnets and a lot of boxes. I had a lot in that car, I had worked a long time getting it, for the mail case I was working from, and I had a thing with magnets. I got from a catalogue to hold my coffee on cold mornings. I kept my U.S. mail sign inside except when I had mail in the car. And I had California mirrors on both sides so I could pull out while I was still headed way over to the passenger's window. So far I hadn't been run into though I'd shovelled myself out of a number of snow ditches. I didn't like having to get out of the car to deliver to people's boxes, You aren't supposed to have to, but you do in the winter. This wasn't winter, and I wasn't stuck, but I sure as hell didn't want to get out of that car."

I wondered if there was anything that seemed to be doing anything to everything or that Bunny was catching. I got out here, and all my normal ideas of who I am and what I do deserted me. I felt like some buggied-eyed rabbit staring up at the house, staring at nothing. I had come out there with a bicycle. I wanted to leave it and be gone. But I didn't do anything.

After a bit, Bunny moved, and then I moved. She started down and I started out of the car. I felt like a shadow, quite light and pretty agile, which isn't usual. I slipped right out of the car, came across the lawn to meet her. It was so nearly out there, no traffic, no voices. Just intermittent, the sound of that saw ruffling back. Scree on a board, run still, scree on a board.

"You want to look at this bike, Bunny? That was someone else talking inside my head. There was quite a lot of air in there somewhere."

I didn't hear her say anything, but her mouth was moving. The saw screeching cut out her words. I thought, I'd go crazy, hearing that all day, quiet minutes then screech, then quiet for some while longer; you can't guess how long, then a creak, then a short one, then a long baying screech. Then he saw a lot I had to ask. She nodded, dumb as a beast, then started down to get the bike. I stood still, listening to the saw, sweeping my eyes over the yard and building trying to think what all this reminded me of, couldn't get it. But I knew the place. Something was there, hanging in the air. That I know. Wasn't sawdust, wasn't kerosene. The saw ruffled down with a backfire and a couple of pops, and Rev. Andrews appeared. He had a bouncing, confident way of moving, even though he had to be getting on in his years. When you were in his presence, he had you, he com- manded your attention. He addressed me across Bunny, who was crouched over, like someone that had just climbed over the top of a series of a crescent wrench. It was like she wasn't there with him, but I never lost sight of her hands, moving quick and definite.

"How do, ma'am. I see you've favored us with another call. He hubbed in a loud, clear, crisp voice.

"I'm out here every day, Rev. Andrews."

"Are you now? Observing the progress of the Temple, I expect. Well, with a bit less rain we'll have a deal more kiosks in place for the clothing.

"Actually, I deliver the mail. It's my job. I was bringing a bike out for Bunny here to fix, like she did my lawnmower. She's an awful able worker, I expect you know that."

"No. I take care of all that here. Woman is a helpmeet to man, but she was never intended to govern. A rib doesn't direct a head. It's part of the structure of the body, like these boards are to the frame of the Temple."

He gestured widely, encompassing Bunny, the house, the woodpile. I snorted. Bunny's hands moved faster; more emphatically, she whipped the chain off the spoke. Andrew's nostrils flared. He detected some challenge in the air, and I could see him lower his horns to charge. "You might not be as familiar as I am with the word of the Lord on the subject of the proper relationship of man and woman, and the chains of the head, which is the husband, to the body, which is the wife and family. Woman is a vessel, needing to be filled, and man has been appointed to govern and control her. Within herself she is empty and prone to error. Man has the authority and responsibility to..."

He was going on, getting good and worked up, but I stopped laughing. Wasn't that just what I'd heard it all before from my sister's husband Francis, braying about women subjecting themselves. I can shut that out, and I do, and I guess I thought every woman did. Except that Bunny wasn't. She was muttering, speaking words at the ground through the bike spokes. I stared at her. Her hands were moving just as quick: tap, wrestle, Humanities, B.A.

I felt myself losing my balance, and pulled back. I looked straight at Rev. Andrews, who was waxing pink, even red. I thought, "These people are crazy. I'm right in the middle of it." Fare possessed me. I didn't want to be here, wanted to be in my car, safe sliding away. And my feet were plummed to the ground. You'd have thought there was a trough of sucking mud there, I was that stuck.

Bunny paused for breath. On the inhale, I could see him getting ready to toss another trumpet blast, but there was a scream from the house cut through it. He lost his train of thought, and said, "Just the children. In need of discipline."

"That was plenty enough for me. I gathered my jacket about me — everything seemed to be hanging off me, slack — and said in the direction of Bunny on the ground."

"I'll be on my way now, I see you got business. I'll call back for the bike by-and-by, and prepared to flee, across Bunny's muttering form. But Andrews blocked my path. He spoke straight in my face, angry, "She's got no business. She has no right to take on work, to make promises. I am the steward here, I supervise, and I decide. She obeys me."

This last was barked at me, past me, he was looking right through me to some judge on the other side, I froze.

Bunny's voice was hushed and low now, and I heard the words. She was raving, screaming at the ground, but every word felt like it was running down my neck, across my breast, soaking me. Every word was out of Bob Peinley's hissing mouth, into my ear. I was freezing, shivering, sickening, but, I heard a doubt."

I took a look, and then I went. I jumped up, and I ran, a shallow racing across the lawn. I never touched the ground.

I'm no fairy runner. I got to the car so burning out of breath I thought my throat would swel. I found myself in there, clutching the driver's wheel like a wolf, not breathing, tears streaming down, kicked off. I had that car going. I had it in gear, and it stalled dead. I had raced it through the gears and popped the clutch and there it sat. I looked up at the house, my breath still. I swear I thought they were coming after me. No such thing. I saw, like it was a silhouetted figure in the tree, Rev. Andrews pushing Bunny, stumbling and sick-looking, toward the saw mill shed. I screamed at her back, from way down the hill. I don't know if she could have heard me. They're going to burn in hell, you know that, Bunny!

She gave no sign, didn't look back. It all got so deadly still again. They were gone, as I reached for the key. I held my breath. The second I touched that key, turned it over, I heard the saw start up. I drove off without another look, that saw back there, screaming like a stuck pig.

When I heard next morning the Rev. Andrews had fallen into his saw rig and been fitted up in dimension pieces. I just looked sightedly aghast. I was there at the post office, casing the mail, and Bill the postmaster hustled in to tell me all about it. I didn't let on I'd been out there. I took my time getting to Town- ship 114, and I had plenty of opportunity to hear the story retold. We were all out by their mailboxes, waiting to tell me what really happened. Everybody knew someone who had it in for Andrews. No one seemed to think he fell. Nobody
mentioned Bunny. I listened, I looked horrified but I’m from away. No one thinks I know anything.

When I got out there, I had a deal of a time finding a place to park. That farm was a crawling zoo. The tank truck from the fire department was out there to hose down the mill. Must have been a mess in there. Mrs. Andrews was walking about, arms stiff, gibbering to anyone she had to go, the place was only hers for a lifetime, she had no right, she was alone, but. People were helping her park, or maybe just peeking for her. The kids were lurking there, but I saw no sign of Bunny. I waited.

Sure enough, after I’d stood and kept quiet a bit, someone volunteered that she’d “gone back to her people in Kentucky or Tennessee or somewhere like that.” I knew the Pearsleys didn’t have any people, they were all right there in Stickney Corners, but I said nothing. I saw her toolbox was gone out of the shed.

I picked up Paul’s bike, which was all together again, and wheeled it along by the side of the house on my way to the car. My head happened to be about level with the open kitchen window as I looked in. It was full of houseboy neighbors stripping everything down and talking.

“The state’s going to take these children, don’t you imagine? Look at these towels, Charlie.”

“I’d warrant they would. Harold says that boy that was supposed to be his son never was adopted, and they think he did it. There was bad blood there. You could tell it.”

“I always knew. Old man was evil. Seemed like a wolf. This case is Bunny Lewis’s.”

“He had to own everybody. I never let him near me nor any of mine.” I just kept cruising wheeling that bike.

I gave up the mail route a while after that. I left Cy. I was just tired of the routine, and the gossip, and if this was the best job I could get maybe we ought to move farther west, up the coast, where something was going on. He said he’d think about it, and he is, and probably something will come of it. I’ve lived in one small town or another all my life, and you do get where you’d just as soon not see the same faces every day.

Joe Banana

I’ve seen skin bulge on both arms and cheeks grind:
he could mow down a truck just by looking, Joe Banana,
they call him, but he looks like a grenade. He cups boots
stiffly in one hand, holding them on his hip: Tasha,
the exchange from England, stands at his elbow nodding,
hair ruffled in his breathing. No teacher asks Banana to move on.
They skirt him in the hallway and bow: they don’t even whistle
when Banana glares at them. He has no time for their nosiness.
Tasha stands at Banana’s face held tight. He draws in her eyes
and lights them. Passing on the left, I dip my head, too:
I can’t let Joe see me and remember on some Saturday night
when he’s drunk and cruising with his friends. I can hear him
stop me on a sidewalk, grab my jacket, and squeeze the neck:
the sharp wind of his voice asks a name. Words jam in my throat
and I squeak. My feet wouldn’t touch him; he’d lift and hold me
to the clouds:
shaking. Slamming me to the pavement, he’d pretend to stomp my head,
one foot raised like a stomp press. The cement air chills my cheeks:
as I wait at the door, I look back and study Banana’s body,
wrapped in a red windbreaker, pulsing like blood.
It’s his soul that freezes me, the glassy blue pupils that pierce
in the nerves:
I could stand here an hour and shudder. I could never look in his face
shimmering like a church wind. I push the exit open and think
of Banana’s fists that lift a hundred pounds each.
Banana is a god the students know and walk around after class.
I never leave school without whispering his name.

Catherine S. Baker
Spruce Head
is a freelance writer

Nick Thorndike
Cambridge, MA
in a Bouvain graduate
studying Theology

photo: Bruce Armstrong
thought of it. The cement air chills my cheeks: the sharp wind of his voice asks a name. Words jam in my throat and I squeak. We won't touch him: he'd lift and hold me to the cloud.

Shaking, slamming me to the pavement, he'd pretend to stomp my head, one foot raised like a stamp press. The cement air chills my cheeks: as I wait at the door, I look back and study Banana's body, wrapped in a red windbreaker, pulsing like blood.

It's his soul that freezes me, the glassy blue pupils that pierce the nerves: I could stand here an hour and shudder. I could never look in his face because I'd call him, but he looks like a grenade. He cups books tightly in one hand, holding them on his hip: Tasha, the exchange from England, stands at his elbow nodding, hair ruffled in his breathing. No teacher asks Banana to move on. They skirt him in the hallway and bow: they don't even whistle when Banana glares at them. He has no time for their nosepicking. Tasha stands at Banana's face held tight. He draws in her eyes and lights them. Passing on the left, I dip my head, too. I can't let Joe see me and remember on some Saturday night when he's drunk and cruising with his friends. I can hear him stop me on a sidewalk, grab my jacket, and squeeze the neck: the sharp wind of my voice asks a name. Words jam in my throat and I squeak. My feet wouldn't touch him: he'd lift and hold me to the cloud.
The Curious Observer

The rain would begin at any moment, of course. Avery penciled a notation into his pocket spiral that the apple-bob for God should have been held after the Citizens for Morality picnic, not before. The children probably wouldn't have minded if they got wet, he thought, and anyway the children be damned.

He looked up at the rough-stitched black and yellow banners, here late, there high, that circled the garden, and he was thinking, and then he wondered whether this idea made him a feminist of sorts.

To be sure, the ladies of the church had outdone themselves:

WELCOME TO SINLESS CITY, U.S.A.
(AND WE'RE PROUD OF IT, BY GOLLY!)
A DECENT COMMUNITY IS AN ALIENABLE RIGHT!
DO YOU QUESTION THE ORDINANCE?
ARE YOU A WH * * ? A PI * * ? A OU * * ?
BEHOLD! THE CITIZENS FOR MORALITY ARE ACTUALLY THE S * * IEST PEOPLE ON EARTH!
WAKE UP TO CHRIST OR LEAVE!
WAKE UP TO CHRIST OR DIE!

And so on. The words were his, and lumped together they were to him like some found poem, for he had intimations of being a poet, but the stitching, the publication, was through the graces of the ladies.

He approached the makeshift wooden podium: well over a hundred good people packed down suddenly, for no particular reason, besides the beauty of ord- inance, because next they were asked to rise as one for the opening prayer.

"Heavenly Father, we ask Thee to widen our hearts and minds to truth. You are the Author of life, giving Man with intelligence and Woman with purity. Allow us to use that intelligence to protect that purity. Guide us with Thy Grace we beseech Thee through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Thy Son amen."

Rushing things a bit, because of the threatening weather, he then launched into yet one more reading of the obscenity ordinance while the members of his congregation were still trying to regain the texture and balance of their folding chairs.

"Section one. Material. 'Material' means anything tangible that is capable of being used to arouse interest, whether through the medium of sight, sound, reading, the senses as a whole or in any other manner:

"Section two. Sexually Explicit Material. For the purposes of this ordinance, 'sexually explicit material' means any picture, photograph, combination of words, publication, drawing, sculpture, film, or other visual presentation used to excite lust or arouse interest, other kind of fish had you?" she asked, "something perhaps in the back?"

His heart beat hard so that he was afraid it would burst out of his chest. He looked at her.

She raised her eyebrows.

"But now, what was he doing? He was growing old in Little Canada. There had been many winters and still he was a fish monger every day from morning to night. From morning to night, tired, exhausted, the children in the room next to theirs. The baby with them, Aurelie, tired all taken up by the children, tired all taken up by work."

She could see the outlines of his chest.

When the lights went out. Avery was watching "The Tonight Show." He was watching from the outside; his date, once removed, by a pane of glass, was the divorced Mrs. Milner. She's a bad woman, thought Avery, but she's not being bad tonight. At least three times within the past month she'd had a male visitor when the lights went out. Avery was checking on her, and he was tired. Excuses to wife Martha peeked at his brain precisely as wife Martha peeked at his brain when he had no excuses.

He always felt like some smalltown chief, slipping through the woods in his sneakers and bowling jacket. He wished he didn't have to be so covert, but there was no way around it, people wouldn't understand. He was chairman of the Citizens for Morality, not its director of community standards. The latter wasn't doing his homework, and Avery could hardly spell it out for him. He thought this: It's

In The Back

The woman laughed and he looked up. She had big breasts that hung airily in her cotton dress. Her hair was curly and it ringed a bright kerchief tied to the side behind the right ear.

"Oh? Steadying his voice, he had spoken to her from a place in him which he had not spoken from in a long time. He noticed his arm, tawny, the veins in the forearms bulging, pulsating near the surface. He felt the blood thrum, was sure that, beneath the bronze, a telling red had appeared. He felt like a boy.

"De la mère?"

"Yes we have rod. Good cod. The best. For you. I have the best."

Her eyes jumped from the rack of rod to the man sorting halfnut in seaweed at her feet. He got up. His sleeveless undershirt was light. She could see the outlines of his chest.

"Combien?"

"Oh, a couple of pounds."

Where had such a woman come from? He was used to the Canadian wives, running in, harried, all distracted from the lateness of the hour, desperately wanting to get supper underway.

But she was calm and deliberate. Her face was a farm face, a strong face, not a weak city face.

"In the fish market."

When he walked by, his bare arm touched against her breast, rubbed against the nipple and he felt a shot go through him, the energy of the young man he had been. What was he doing in this fish market, that place that reeked of fish?

"Is it working in a fish market that gets you dark?" she asked.

"Your êtes noir? And her finger gently, briefly, fondled his upper arm, grown full from pulling nets.

He looked at his arm. It was dark and round. It was a strong arm. He would have grabbed her and carried her away...

They were speaking now, tremolo in voices, as he had not spoken in a long time, in voices he and Aurelie had discovered one summer, in the blueberry fields north of St-Pascal, at home, in Quebec. One summer, our woman.

And now, what was he doing? He was growing old in Little Canada. There had been many winters and still he was a fish monger every day from morning to night. From morning to night, tired, exhausted, the children in the room next to theirs. The baby with them, Aurelie, tired all taken up by the children, tired all taken up by work. When would he be young again?"

"And what other kind of fish do you have? she asked, "something perhaps in the back?"

His heart beat hard so that he was afraid it would burst out of his chest. He looked at her.

She raised her eyebrows.

He closed the door. "In the back, I have something for you in the back of the store."

You think your anger's over and your anger's just begun. It takes you as a dive takes the diver, falling like a stone.

Avery

Denis Ledoux
Lisbon Falls
is a market gardener and writer

You think your anger's over and your anger's just begun. It takes you as a dive takes the diver, falling like a stone.

Avery

Denis Ledoux
Lisbon Falls
is a market gardener and writer

Rick Doyle
Bangor
works in a shoe factory

Late the next evening, Avery was watching "The Tonight Show." He was watching from the outside; his date, once removed, by a pane of glass, was the divorced Mrs. Milner. She's a bad woman, thought Avery, but she's not being bad tonight. At least three times within the past month she'd had a male visitor when the lights went out. Avery was checking on her, and he was tired. Excuses to wife Martha peeked at his brain precisely as wife Martha peeked at his brain when he had no excuses.

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terribly important to know what people are doing and exactly how they're conducting their lives in order to govern them properly. Often he felt like a priest in trying to encourage good writing, so terribly important to know what people are doing and exactly how they're conducting their lives in order to govern them properly. Often he felt like a priest in trying to encourage good writing, so terribly important to know what people are doing and exactly how they're conducting if we want a picture and a short harem trousers.

"And:)

He walked over to her chair, put a hand on her shoulder, "Martha, I'm a poet. So if I get moody now and then -

I thought that took time

b)" He got all excited.

"I guess not. I never thought of it that way."

"I can find it."

"This will cost some," he said, unfolding, "It's fifty dollars a page. That's a hundred if we want a picture and a short biography." Martha looked puzzled, sought to understand, asked, "You're paying

"And?

"And they accepted one of them!"

"You're proud of me, aren't you?"

"I want to help."

"I'm so proud. Will you recite the poem?"

"Recite the poem," she said. "Tell a fat lesson, to the delicatessen."

A silence filled the room, the quiet, the tiptoe as if he knew something, something was about to happen, he wondered about her upholding. Nose to window, he tucked her in, then departed.

A ROCK

As God is my judge,

I will not budge.

Soldiers can sail

Over the wine-dark sea,

Soldiers of fortune

Can fight in Tripoli:

Acrories can rocket

All the way to the moon,

Farmers can leap

Over the pickled prune,

Adventurers can trek

Over hot desert sands,

Girls will be chased

Till they catch their men,

Sinners they do fall

All the way to Hell

But angels will trumpet

A few to enter Heaven on Judgement Day pell-mell.

Teachers try hard

To tell a fat lesson,

Children run off

To the delicatessen.

But as God is my judge,

I will not budge.

What am I?"
She walked to the closet and opened the doors. Avery held his breath. Placing
sticky fingers on the burger bar, she leaned in and tipped something off the top
shelf. When the doors were again shut, he tried to sniff the imprint her touch
had left on the bar above him. This was unprofessional. Had been squaring too
long, lost is balance. He keeled over with many great hangs.

Mrs. Milner screamed, Avery screamed. He gulped and pulled the panther
down over his face, thinking for a split-second. "Arse or genitals?" Mrs. Milner
kept screaming, as Avery pounded away at the fallen door, forgetting in his
panic the inverse combinations. The clothes closet looked evilly animated from
the outside, like some poltergeist scene in a movie.

Avery figured things out and finally leaped to the fore. This time Mrs. Milner
shrieked, as the masked oddity tumbled its way through the living room, over-
turning this and that, took a wrong exit into the bathroom, breaking everything
not porcelain, and staggered out the front door. Mrs. Milner, soon bathrobed and
more composed, chased a few yards but was uncertain as to the proper cry, for
it was an uncertain sort of crime.

Avery, nylon rabbit-ears flapping in the breeze, fled down the awakening
cocktail-hour street. He was late for dinner that evening.

***

He kept close to home for an awfully long time, lending credence to rumors
that he had become introspective over the upcoming obituary vote. There were
scans, though Martha was not among them, who thought he had gone up the
mountain in despair over the folly of transvestite believers. They felt he could see
their sins even as he was a burning bush.

While nothing could have pleased him more, Avery actually was going through
the literary bends down at what he now referred to as his writing desk, a TV
dinner table his wife half claimed at some lawn sale during the summer. It was
always circled quite impressively with wadded-up pieces of yellow paper, for
effect, most of them quite blank.

Late one hostile afternoon, he wrote. Because he had found one of his lines with
the word "orange" and was experiencing a sort of intensity and lost in a panic of
intensity. Patricia's name, he thought. "I'm not going to throw this thing in with our
own mail," he said. "I'm going to plant it someplace else."

"Darn you! Can you learn to knock before you enter my den?"

"Den?"

She looked round at the ancient washing machine, the lump pump, the Christ-
mas ornaments.

"Don't bother me, Martha, I'm writing."

"Avery, you don't smoke!"

He chewed crimson on his pipe. It wasn't filled. He put the pipe down and took
a Henningway pull from a bottle of beer.

"Damnation, woman!"

"Sweet Christ, Avery.""And I might as well sell you; I've decided to grow a beard."

"Avery, what's happening to you? You look sick."

"Writing is hard work."

"Horsefeathers. Why are you doing this to yourself?"

"I must suffer for the sake of Art."

"Horsefeathers. My mother was right. You belong in the puzzle house."

He took another gulp of beer, grimaced.

"I've got deadlines," he said. "And I am going to grow a beard."

"You've got dead lines, all right, and no you're not going to-"

"There's a sense of tragedy in this room. Leave me now."

"Avery, I'll talk to you about this later. And I want you to throw out those maga-
ized."

"Leave, Martha."

"Dinner will be ready in ten minutes."

"Okay, wife."

He poured a warm beer and chugged a wicked half. He checked his watch.
He contemplated the yellow pole of verse. He had written thirty-two poems that
afternoon, and it was time to pack it in anyway. Writing is hard work. He ap-
preciated this, and in a very arguable way it made him an artist, gave him kine
stop with nemnmaid and Baudelaire. He threw up.

***

Most people have their sexual limits, and the immediate steps beyond those
limits become their fantasies. In an ideal world, in an ideal mind, where all is
linear or at least not a whirlpool.

Avery found himself outside Mrs. Milner's window. He had vowed never to
return, but that promise quickly disintegrated into a vow to never again enter. Besides,
poets who have recently sworn off must find their obsessions somewhere.

There was plenty of activity going on inside, but no action, no divorced Mrs.
Milner. Just two little kids and some teenager with spiky people hair.

"Okay," she said, clapping her hands. "Time for half an hour."

"Mom said we could watch 'Hill Street Blues' tonight," tried the boy.

"For sure. She didn't tell me that."

"What're we gonna do tomorrow?" asked the girl.

"A picnic. That's who your mom said. And Saturday she's skipping work to
take you to the museum. That's if you're not too nerdy."

"It like it with Mommy better than Daddy," said the boy.

"Right who's that?"

"He makes us go to church."

"Oh wow."

Good for you, thought Avery. Mrs. Milner shouldn't even have the right to see
those kids. He felt he knew the people one must know, and he considered the
possibilities of becoming a judge.

"All week long."

"All week? You're kidding."

"Right times," said the girl.

"I'll buck. I think you mean seven."

"No eight!" said the boy. "Two masses on Saturdays."

"And because of school during the week we have to go to 6:30," said the girl.

"Total crap.

"C'mon, you two. The tub is new. Off the streets."

Avery watched closely, then circled around to the bathroom window.

***

Following any election there is an aftermath, a let-down even in the houses of the
winners, who suddenly have everything they want only to realize they still aren't very
happy. Victory robs us of hope.

"You get rid of those magazine tonight?" Martha was saying.

"I'll get rid of them when I feel like it."

"They've served their purpose, if they had purpose to begin with. I won't toler-
ate this snob in our house any longer. What if we should die?"

"What if we should die?" repeated Avery.

"I can imagine what people will think when they find this filthy."

"They'll undoubtedly realize we were anti-pornographers who had this material
on hand so we could inform others as to the graphic nature of-

"You dimwit. This stuff is illegal now. Isn't that the reference book was all
about?"

Martha scurried around the house, collecting magazines, books, pamphlets,
newspapers, tabloids, video cassettes — dumping everything onto the kitchen
table.

"Avery, you went overboard."

"It was necessary to know what the porno people were up to."

"I'll bet their houses aren't filled with snob. So much of this junk is from out of
state? Europe. Even. It's going to take years to get our names off these mail-
ings lists!"

"You once told me you thought it prestigious to receive lots of junk mail," he
said merely.

"From Boy-Toys, incorporated? Hucks and Dicks Down on the Farm? The
Quid Cul Tan — is this some kind of quarterly we're paying for? You've actually
taken out a subscription in my name? What's this English subtitle — For the Pro-
gressive Pedestrian? Oh, Avery, you degenerate! You can start with the40
carton in the hallway. Shake a leg! And you're not putting this in with our
garbage. You're going straight to the dump."

"Martha, please."

"Don't beg, you chumphead. Start the car."

He did as ordered. He saw with grief that she had thrown his leatherbound
old-embossed copy of New Christian Poets Of America in with the sleaze. He let
it go. But on the sly, he excavated from the carton a certain portfolio put out
by a small firm in Portland.

As he approached the house for another load of snob, he idled at the kitchen
window. Peering through the glass, he observed Martha flitting through one of
the magazines on the table. Her eyes seemed to widen, her lips seemed to smack.

For the first time in all of his little normal adornments, Avery felt certain
stirrings.

He thought about it.

He decided it was well within the bounds of matrimony.

He unzipped his trousers.

Snowflakes were falling. Now and then he glanced fretfully over his shoulder.
Watching his wife, watching his wife, he got hot and close to it all. He feared
his breath was rattling the glass, like the north wind country.

Several moments too soon, Martha closed the magazine in disgust. She began
to clean the oven. She gathered some rags, unwrapped the yellow Dow Chemical
container, spread a newspaper. He was stone cold, hangdog, tired.

You gullied shit, he whispered.

Frank Johnson

Tenants Harbor,

in a three-ounce winter.
He seemed to be defying gravity, rising some centimeters into the air, flesh weightless and bones resonating. He was aware of a dull background roar as if he were underwater. His stunned eardrums registered soft explosions and muffled human cries. Someone was shaking him. He gripped toward both sides with his hands. Cold metal vibrated under his fingers; he opened his eyes. His sight was blurred. Everything within his range of vision was quivering or moving and settling abruptly. He shut his eyes.

A resonating blast, a sudden jerking at many points in his soft body, and he was a parasite plummeting to the ground. With the gunpowder rear still in his ears and his head from body numb, his reflexes strong and thready, and forth on the frozen earth among windfall apples. The noise increased in complexity as a large creature grabbed and shook him lifeless.

When he awoke he wondered if he were dead or if all sound had ceased. The frame upon which he lay no longer vibrated. Feeling with his hands, he discovered a smooth cold surface like a table. Opening his eyes, he saw abstract shapes of shadow illumination sifted into the room between two large diagonal obstructions, so dim that color within the rooms could not be discerned. Moving his hand fractionally, he glimpsed behind him a metal skeleton with an oblong hanging from each arm. The room seemed to have been picked up and dropped. Dust swirled in the vague light and made him cough; he could hear his own coughs as if from a distance. He surveyed the room, his eyes the only thing moving in his unresponsive body. The uniform colorlessness of the room reminded him of November.

He'd luck the cold shotgun under his arm and call to Shrimp. He'd hear the chuckle Lab shuffling through the dead leaves long before he saw the stocky body, brown fur peaked into short stiff spikes of ice from the lake. Around them trees scratched together in commiseration and reached for their lost pigment. Lake and sky seemed cold-shocked to a whiter blue. He usually dressed in shades of brown to deflect the light; he was feeling abstracted and abstracted, and hospital staff did not generally leave waiting for him to come to.

There was space approximately seven feet long and three feet wide underneath the metal frame, barred by diagonals on both sides. It looked sturdy in the event of further destruction. Smoothing the blanket, he folded it like a sleeping bag so it provided both a floor mat and a top covering.

The presence of particles in the air and a clinging stench he detected through the dust in his nostrils made him move quickly. Standing nearly upright, he unhitched the bottle from its hook. He removed an identical bottle from another arm of the support, this one unpunctured. He placed these bottles under his stretcher at the head of his blanket. Crouving toward the metal cabinet, he noticed his own footprints in the thickening dust. He pulled open the cabinet doors. Surgical instruments wrapped in cotton cloth and sterile paper packets filled most of the space, but he removed a large bottle from the rear of the bottom shelf. Unscrewing the tightly sealed lid, he dipped a finger into the thick liquid, sniffed and tasted. Alcohol. He poured some into his palms and slapped it to his throat and cheeks like an aftertaste lotion, then did the same to the back of his neck. Immediately he began to shiver but he felt cleaner. He collapsed trembling just as he reached the blanket.

He raised slowly, aware of his own heartbeat. When he lay completely conscious again, he wondered about the times when he was not conscious. Week from lack of sustenance, he supposed that he was asleep more than awake. He could not estimate the passage of time. He was thirsty and his indrawn breaths felt dirty. Crawling out from under the stretcher, he reached into the metal cabinet and opened one of the cloth packets. He took tiny scissors back to his den, retrieved the half-empty bottle behind his blanket, and cut off its plastic tubing three inches from the rubber plug. Using the tube as a straw he sucked at the liquid, confirming his guess that it was a glycerine solution. The sweet taste coursed along his nerves like an electric current. His stomach became so queasy but he thought the liquid might keep him alive. Peering a piece of adhesive tape into this strip, he marked off five segments on the bottle to divide the remaining liquid into meals. Rather than risk his strength yelling or clearing a tunnel through the debris, he decided to wait until he was rescued.

Realize, he again questioned out of the safety of his barricade. There was no room but a soft shuffling as of sand moving against glass. The subtle silent modifications in the room made him perspire: he felt cold drops running down his sides. The shape of the upright bottle stand seemed altered; its neck was bowed forward. It shivered slightly as the room shifted, gesticulated down at him, then spoke.

“Look at yourself sitting there waiting to suffocate. You have no motivation. I made the earth move for you; now we are breaking up.” The chrome pipes bent further, curved, and snapped off with a metallic screech.

“Your work is over. You treat your power like a mad relation.” Marianne scowled.

“You’re my whimsy,” he whispered. “You even play with high seriousness,” she continued, as the chrome stand bent further, curved, and snapped off with a metallic screech.

“What about the feather?” he wondered, sensation of pole rolling past his feet.

Stooping, he limped two steps to where he could stand nearly upright. To all sides, ceiling met floor and walls leaned inward. A pain in his left foot reminded him he was in a hospital for minor surgery on a bone chip sustained when he slammed his ankle with his own tennis racket. The surgery had been performed although he had been anaesthetized and propped. The slightly swollen side of his foot was stained yellow.

The thought of diminishing light frightened him and he crouched to the floor next to his stretcher. The door to the room made him think of a door to the galaxy. An stainless steel cabinet an arm’s reach away supported the weight of a metal girder. Upon this girder balanced large plates of ceiling and floor materials. In a fissure between two of the slabs, he could see the leg and supports of a bed or chair. Hanging next to the protruding structure was a corner of fabric. He knuckled over to the draping fabric like a chimpanzee and pulled at it in slight tugs until it came loose. It probably had been folded over an empty bed. If a human arm or leg had protruded through the crack as he pulled the blanket free he would have screamed, but the almost screamed realizing he had been expecting this to occur. It waddled the blanket in his arms and carried it to his stretcher.

A percussive blast shook him, and he felt again the recoil of the shotgun against his armpit as he felt the winging partridge. The gardener dropped and flustered raucously; it bounced back and forth among the blossoms in the abandoned orchard. He had expected it to be still.

“Shit! Sit down!” he yelled at the grazing bird until the dog forgot its training and leaped in circles barking, finally rushing in to grab and shake the bundle. By the time the others found them, he was picking feathers off Shrimp’s soft brown maz- zle as the dog stared guiltily at him.

“You got one, Son. “Our Father poked at the hull of disordered feathers with the barrel of his gun. “Pat one.”

When Dad walked off with Lou and Carlisle and the dogs Goldie and Rastus he called Shrimp to heel and went back home with the partridge slapping against his hip. He still had a feather from its indescribable ruff stuck in his boot.
Another pervasive blast knocked him sideways, and he clutched at the metal support near his head. His bottles were clinking together and he could feel debris rattling against his skin. He still smelled the dead leaf odor of the old orchard and it made him gag. He pulled the blanket against his nose, inhaling the thick air underneath the wool, he coughed until he lost consciousness.

After another undetermined passage of time he awoke and pulled the blanket off his face. He thought he had opened his eyes. He could not see, so he opened them again. He brought his hand close to his face but could not see it.

He grabbed the blanket in both hands and rubbed it together in rough spasms until the air crackled and static electricity sparked from the cloth. He was not blind; his former light source was gone. A dampness on one corner of the blanket sent his hands searching hesitantly to the head of his fortification. He felt curves of broken glass in a puddle of sticky liquid, a rubber stopper, but no plastic tubing. Groping further, he found the other bottle intact. Awkwardly he wrapped one of the small sheets around the container, feeling for the tube in the dark and shielding it from the grit being propelled through the air. He hoped he could keep the smell out of the bottle. The odor pressed on his like a weight. He was almost used to the stench now; he pictured himself in a nest of dead leaves. The moldering, the returning to the soil, was natural. Earth was reclaiming him. He curled more securely under the blanket to protect his face from the dirt and leaf mold, pulling the remaining bottle in with him. He touched his tongue to the plastic tubing and a drip came out. He did this again and again, the glucose comforting him with its sweet energy, the rotting apples turning to honeyed cider in his mouth. He gripped the bottle close to his face with both hands. His body swayed from an exterior force and his breathing slowed to keep time with the motion. Someone was rocking him.

"God! He's got a little hunker in here!" They carefully shifted some of the smaller fragments away from his metal stretcher and pulled him out by the arm pits. They watched his eyes squint shut from the sudden sunlight and then focused on their faces.

"You one lucky man," said a muffled voice; a brown face half covered by a gauze mask leaned over his body and a hand poked through the blanket. "Earthquake," the voice explained, then yelled, "We got a live one here! Get him on a stretcher."

A brilliant flash dammed into his eyes and he was surrounded by dogs with white muzzles. He watched them prowl at him with their forelegs until their movements became too quick for him to follow, then he closed his eyes again. They growled. They tore at him, rolled him, lifted him hardly from the ground. They ripped with blunt teeth at the arms holding the bottle, but his hands would not yield this possession to them. He fought and held tightly to the empty glass container until they subdued him.

Annette Hansen-Butryn
Portland
executive secretary for USM Honors and Core

Encore

The way you danced out of the room
kicking your foot high, a stage exit.
You, a man with little hairs curling on your back, disappeared through the door frame. I sat on the bed not moving, holding my applause.
I see you dancing, little hairs curling on your back all these years.
Listen, now I am applauding.

Wendy Kindred
Fort Kent
teaches art at UMFK
and edits Black Fly Review

To Those Who Would Reconstruct the Bangor Dam

The unborn salmon are swimming back
to the same river they left behind,
looking for shallow pools to spawn in.
How clever they are, dressed in their ocean-colored skins,
the fins in their silver prisms carry them leap by leap upstream.

I'd like to run with them, hardly thinking,
pulling my weight against the falls.
I feel my arms growing stronger,
remember the old rhythms, and keep the tide turning.
When seasons change,
I will know what they know:
desire to live in salt water.
The dreams of the salmon are everything to you and me.

Kathleen Liguori
Orono
works at Sea Grant, UAMO
War Babies

Blackie Dunsmore was lost. Not lost, exactly. He'd gotten separated from his company. A hundred or so guys he soldiered with. They were army infantry. Known as Grunts. Well, climbing aboard a chopper, wearing forty or fifty pounds of field gear, it was hard not to grunt.

But he'd lost the guys, somewhere. They'd set out shortly after sunrise. To sweep a section of Southeast Asian jungle. A square on a map. Called a grid. He didn't care much. You worked a sweep out and being dead in three or four minutes. You might survive, if somehow you got about two steps before paralysis set in. You were usually dead in three or four minutes. You might survive, if someone felled you full of vaccine. Right off. And, kept you breathing for ten or fifteen minutes. Then again, you might not. He watched it, till he was sure it hadn't stopped. Or turned back.

Blackie had a letter from his mother. She was on her war-haby kick, which day couldn't be known. The watch was waterproof. Could've run for thirty hours, after his father'd been machine-gunned. Charging off the landing boat. Too, that beach was four times the size of the boat. The animal snapped its head back and turned tail.

Whether, when he watched it, till he was sure it hadn't stopped. Or turned back.

Blackie was youngest of three sons. Six years younger than the second born. Eight years from the eldest. His name, at birth, was Charles Allen Dunsmore. When his mother learned of his husband's demise, she changed Blackie's name. To William Arthur Dunsmore IV. Against her husband's wishes. Three William Arthurs were enough. The second born was born during the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, respectively. Big Deal. Also, Eisenhower and Dertouzou were war-babies. Big deal. She was checking the birth dates of Charlemagne, Augustus Caesar, and Alexander The Great. She was nuts.

Blackie heard a small sound. Like a low breeze had pushed at some ground litter. The snake was back. Or another one. He blew smoke on it. The animal snapped its head back and turned tall. Maybe the snake had its scent. Blackie'd heard that snakes smelt with their tongues. Maybe human scent tasted the same as a rat or mouse. Who could tell with snakes?

His mother ended with a warning to be very careful and especially alert. "I believe there is something terribly significant in being the fourth successive Dunsmore war-baby." Significance was her favorite big word. Though she never explained what it signified. Probably couldn't have. As for his being careful and alert, where the hell did she think he was? At summer-camp? There was P.S.: Tom Szabo says hello and not to kill anybody.

Tom Szabo. Another war-baby. Almost every kid in the neighborhood was. Not more than a year separated Blackie and his friends. Pinky Pinkham. Bugsy Cohen. Bill Roby. Fat Clarke. Abe Ross. Tom Tummy. James Ault. Ros Pettengill. Tom Szabo called Ros, "Boobs." Man, she had 'em, too! Even at twelve. Tom gave everybody schwifty nicknames. Some stuck. Like "Blackie." One day Tom says, "What's Dunsmore, anyway?" "Scotch," says Blackie. "Yeah? Well, how come your folks are so light and you're so dark?" "I dunno," Blackie says. "Must be a hook in the family, somewhere," says Tom. He and Tom got into a fight over that. But he could never shake the handle. Tom got kind of strange, after his brother Arthur'd been killed. Arthur was two years older. He was run over, one summer, by a tar truck. Blackie sucked in some smoke and held it. He gazed up at a tiny piece of sky. Through a million mosquitoes. They didn't touch him, though. He was greasy with repellent. New stuff. Worked great. And didn't stink like the old stuff. He heard rifle fire. A half-dozen quick shots. Followed by several bursts from an automatic. They were a long way off. Guys must've flushed a few gooks. Maybe just blew away some shadows. Anderson and Phillips were real jump. He'd tried to get them to take 'em up a little. Before doing sweeps. They'd looked at him like he had two noses. Were they war-babies? How about Cole?

Peter Cole. The ice-man. The guy was a cat. Always alert. Always calm. A superb killing machine. Did three hundred sit-ups a day. A hundred push-ups. Fifty pull-ups. Tied weights to his boots and ran two miles. He hunted the perimeter at night. Almost every night. All dressed in black. Takes a Russian-made nine-millimeter bandung, a knife, and a garrote made of stainless-steel wire. He brings back ears. It was a war of body counts. Cole gave them bodies. He came back after light, one morning. While the company was eating breakfast. He'd dropped a woman's head on the lieutenant's table. The lieutenant nearly slugged. Then vomited his breakfast. Cole didn't bat an eye. He said, "That's the V.C. gal they've been looking for. Tell 'em they don't have to look any more." The guy could give you the creeps.

They'd given Cole about every medal they have. The army'd made him and they loved him. When they pinned the second silver star on him, this general said, "Sergeant, you are a shining example in our fight for God and freedom." Real low, Cole said. "General, there is no God. And, I'm not fighting for anything. I'm just killing people." The G.O. was standing right next to the general. He damn near crapped
in his pants. But the general smiled. They absolutely loved the guy.

Cole got that “no God” stuff from that French philosopher he was always reading. The French guy said man is free to choose. That he is responsible for what he becomes. Cole said, if that’s true, then the world is already sunk in shit up to the eighth floor.

The joint was getting too short to hold in his fingers. Blackie clipped it and dragged in a lungful. He’d write his mother, after evening chow. Tell her to knock-off that war-babies crap.

If you add it up, the Revolution, War of Eighteen-twelve, Civil War, Spanish-American, World Wars One and Two, Korea, all the little fights in between, and now, this dirty business, well... about half the country was war-babies, about half the time. There’s nothing in that.

P.S. “Tell Tom I haven’t killed anybody, that I know of.”

A last drag singed his lip. He dug a little hole in the black earth. Dropped the roach in. The guys should be coming back through pretty soon. He’d decided on stock-brokering.

Blackie heard the familiar belly-scrape. The jungle is a funny place. Noisy. But Blackie figured it out, that the noise came at different levels. What you heard at one level, you often didn’t hear at another.

He peered through the brush. At ground level. Saw the snake, its tongue sniffing out the way. Like an electric current. Blackie was out of smoke. He would have to kill it, smash its head with the butt of his rifle. He took hold of the gun and stood. And looked into the wide eyes of a skinny gook. Not ten feet away. A soldier of the People’s Republic. He looked to be a kid. About sixteen. This guy had to be a war-baby. His country’d been at war for twenty years. The automatic rifle looked monstrous. In his slender hands, Blackie smiled at him. He wanted to tell him how extraordinary it was. That they should meet, in all those thousands and thousands of square miles of jungle. But he fired about thirty rounds into Blackie.

The first or second slug blew up Blackie’s heart. The rest was just wasted ammunition. But the gook was wired. He couldn’t get his finger off the trigger. The force of the bullets turned Blackie around. He fell face-down. Stop the snake.

The young soldier circled Blackie. Poked him with the muzzle of his rifle. He took hold of Blackie’s arm and lifted. To turn him onto his back. The snake slid out and bit him on a sandaled foot. The gook gave a high shriek and hewed the reptile to pieces. He sat on the ground and soon stopped breathing. He fell over onto his back and died spasmodically. He and Blackie stared at each other.

Blackie went home a hero. He was buried with honors. On a day in October, annually, the V.F.W. places a flag on Blackie’s grave. A little one. There are a lot of little flags in that cemetery. On that day. Many years later, on the day of his mother’s funeral. Tom Szabo thought about Blackie. On that day. Tom was on his way to see if he could fly. From the top of a twenty-story building.

Robert P. Bourassa
Portland
has held 14 jobs since 1970
The Silver Service

Reva Donahue walked through her blue-tinged kitchen preparing for the
holiday meal. She was thirty-six years old, alone, single, attractive. She was wait-
ing for her father and stepmother, whom she had not seen in ten years.
She paced around a kitchen. She had known this kitchen for five years. Yet she
paced around it as if she had moved in that morning. Staring at her blonde hair
she pleaded to the Holy Mother for help. The pots and pans she needed for the
weekend somehow eluded her. What silver to use, what dishes? Her stepmother
would approve of none. Her father would not care. He would sit, watch the
packets on TV, drink Coors and wait to be served. He would inhale the dinner,
and walked away. She heard her father's steps as he lumbered across the
room and sat next to her. She shut it, and walked away.

Then there was the first
Your mother would make me some tea and sigh while she fingered her Beads.
Shed know. It's times like this shed know." He smelled funny, and his voice
seemed far away as he gently touched her hair.

"Ah Reva," he said. "You've been so good to me." He wrapped his hand in her
long blonde hair until she felt pain. He released her and moved from the bed.

"Someday, Someday." It was a chant as her kerchief from the room. Reva would
always remember that night. It was the first night. The night that began it all.

Someday Someday," Her father's words bounced around her mind until she
finally drifted to sleep.

Several nights later he came again. Lingered at the bedside, stroking her
hair and pulling her into a semi-sleep with his garlic chanting. Finally there was
the night, that first night, when Reva remembered that his voice stopped and he
waved and fell asleep at her side. In his sleep she felt his hand reach out for her
and she stretched for the outside of the bed.

Now it became a regular thing. Her father would come home, sit by her bed,
and finally stripping himself to only his underwear fall asleep beside her. Reva
lay in her cotton panties waiting. For what she was not sure. At school her
friends whispered and giggled. Boys in the locker room. Girls who had done

THINGS.

Reva could not remember when her father stopped the facade of sitting by her
bed and began to simply strip off his clothes and lay beside her. She could not
remember when she stopped feeling it was strange and began to feel that the
comfort and warmth of him was good. Somewhere the nights and the days
became twisted into a ballet of mutual need until the evening meals and the
late night carresses became one.

He came home one night later than usual. He came to her room as he had for
the past two years and Reva knew by the way he breathed and by the way he
hesitated that tonight would be different. That tonight would end something
she was just beginning to understand.

She felt his hands on her as he lay beside her. Soft at first, they became more
urgent. Suddenly he sat up and pulled her up beside him. He kissed her as he
had before but Reva felt something new. Some new demand that she did not
give quite understand. She returned his hugs as he guided her from the bed and onto
the floor. She was placed kneeling beside his knees.

He looked down. "Reva," he said. "Oh Reva, I know you know. It's between
us." He guided her head. "Kiss me in that special way.

And she did.

The years that followed when her father's friend came to visit and then to
live and then to marry, he came less and less into her room until there came a
time when it ended. Reva lay awake those nights afraid he would come and

afraid he would not. She began to understand the wrong, but her need for the
warmth ignited a jealousy of her new mother.

It was then, at sixteen, she remembered, that she began to feel pretty and have
boyfriends. She turned at the needling affection, and recoiled when he might be understood and become unwanted.

She knew she needed to talk. To a friend, to her priest, to someone who would listen and understand and tell her what she was doing now, what she had done before, was alright. She realized slowly that she could tell no one. She had looked herself into a horror that nobody could understand. The revelation so felt at being touched would grow until there was no more warmth. No more closeness. Only a vague feeling of anger and frustration.

Reva Donatius fled through the next twenty years of her life eluding the devils that plagued her. She plunged into her cocoon of work as a widow. She turned to work as a protection against what she felt at being touched would grow until there was no more warmth. No more closeness. Only a vague feeling of anger and frustration.

She kept the secret to herself. She worked and she almost forgot those cutaneous sensations, those cutaneous stigmata that grew up to herself and built an armor around her kindness, guilt, anger.

The silver somehow was polished, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the silver somehow was polished, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed, the fine double damask linen was ironed. The silver somehow was polished, the fine double damask linen was ironed.

The reunion, ending, she recited a litany of language and that word that would grow in the name remember: when, Reva’s father paced until cocktails were offered. They drank ice cold for the sake of decency, and the Grand Scheme of Things once again. It’s getting fuzzy. My God is a Committee.

I figure that these last hits of information will save time and effort in determining good guys and bad guys, and where to strike next. That would be laying it on the line for a lot of folks. But for the moment in her hand looking at the graceful inscribed “D.” Her father rose from his chair and circled near her. Reva held the serving pieces over the lamb as if in prayer.

“Ah, Daddy.”

Donald G. Watson
Hallowell

...the words joked me from the present and back into a place she had chosen to forget. She looked once at the lamb and brought the knife quickly up to present another word. Blood speckled the new potatoes, splashed across the table, and sank red into the double damask.

“Ah, Daddy.”

...the words joked me from the present and back into a place she had chosen to forget. She looked once at the lamb and brought the knife quickly up to present another word. Blood speckled the new potatoes, splashed across the table, and sank red into the double damask.
She turns the key shutting off the car's engine and Michael Jackson's girlish voice on the radio. Silence. Just the tick of the clock. The new clock that keeps accurate time. The new clock in the new car. She sniffs. New car smell. Neither she nor her husband had smoked. They haven't driven through any fast food lines to bring in the smell of greasy fries or burgers.

Her own perfume. Shalimar, fingers softly around her. And her husband's Old Spice could be here as well. It's hard telling. Whenever she thinks of him, she smells him. Old Spice on his skin. His skin. Thinking of him warms her for a moment.

She wonders if he's almost done. She dropped him and his specimen off nearly three quarters of an hour ago and then went to run a few errands. No sign of him at the pale green door. Should she go in? No. Give him at least another fifteen minutes. Doctors run behind, even though this should have been an in-and-out visit.

He'll be pleased to see their prints. The framing shop did a fine job with the matting. The narrow oak frames do not overpower the works of their favorite Impressionists. His Van Gogh's "Cypress Trees" looks especially brilliant and alive. The emotions it evokes for him flash through her, a wave she hasn't experienced since her college days.

She peers the nurse busts of "Monet's "Water Lilies." However, to study this is to find serenity. She loses herself. It calms her whenever she focuses on it.

She drifts through these water lilies, those lustrous petals. Summer's lush, green smell. That is clear. She can trace the lily to its fragile roots a few feet below the water's surface in the gravelly lake bottom. And she and her husband paddle their canoe quietly through the lily pads along the edge of their island picnic spot. Splash. A frog hops into the water. Flutter. A red-winged blackbird sits from the shore. It's warm. The sun's rays penetrate the Bain de Soleil on her shoulders. She turns to catch a glimpse of her husband. But he's not there. She startles. No. He's out here yet. Only five minutes have passed. Patient. Be patient. Hell be out soon. Unless... No. She refuses to think about it.

She sorts through the bundle of letters, bills and junk mail she just picked up at the post office. A born beeps. A pattern of beeps. Beeeep, beep, beep. An old man with glasses and a soft hat sits behind the wheel in front of the doctor's pale green office door. An old woman rattles out on a cane. He leans over and opens the door. She gets in slowly. Lifting her right leg behind her, and struggles to close the door. "Why doesn't he help her?" She succeeds. He revs up the engine before driving off at a snail's pace.

"Will he open the door for me when I'm that old?" It's a bit of nonsense thing now. When he thinks of it, he does. Usually when they're going out in the evening and she's wearing silk stockings and fur coats. She can trace the lily to its fragile roots a few feet below the water's surface in the gravelly lake bottom. And she and her husband paddle their canoe quietly through the lily pads along the edge of their island picnic spot. Splash. A frog hops into the water. Flutter. A red-winged blackbird sits from the shore. It's warm. The sun's rays penetrate the Bain de Soleil on her shoulders. She turns to catch a glimpse of her husband. But he's not there.

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A Man Remembers His Wife

(Lisa Grundstrom-Whitney
Virginia Beach, VA recently moved from Maine)

The room disappeared. Did it matter where he was? He loved her. He took one look at her face and he loved her all over again like the way it was the first time, for the last time. It was the last time he would look at her face, though he hadn't known this was the way it would be. He had thought he would not get the chance to see her now; he hadn't the courage to make it happen on his own and now in her presence, or in the presence of her physical presence, he saw again her beauty and felt the loss and the loss as they bound up tight in his throat. The longing was no longer a burning, but a dry powder on the blackboard of his soul that no amount of water or alcohol could erase. It was true that he drank, but she overflowed. Which one was the chicken before the egg? Oh, he was all scrambled up as he'd been for a long time now, but for a moment the reasons were clearer than they had been in years. Yes, she was beautiful and he loved her beauty, but it was not that that would stay with him. It was the wit, the sharp wit of one who was a survivor, loved the thrill of the chase, and walked the fine lines that separate humor from armour: Oh Christ, how cold she could be then and how cold she was now.

His feet had brought him here, his feet and three of her siblings. They were bare feet next to her casket, huddled together, the outcasts from out of state who had chosen to leave and/or were thrown out of town — the ugly ducklings who wanted more or less than what was expected of them. The death of their mother was the final wedge in the split of that family tree weakened by jealousy. It had been going on for years and it was going on now, the three of them huddled together near her sister's casket as he stood in his long black shoes near the body of her Jeannie, the beautiful, the comedian, the flirt. His wife.

It was his shoes that brought him here in this room full of her relatives and the wide-eyed and tear swollen faces of his own five motherless children. His shoes had walked him here as they had carried him out onto the dance floor the first night he had held her in his arms, as they had walked him into so many meetings, so many miles, so far away from the kids who stood there needing him. His shoes had carried him beyond being needed; he could not, would not retreat those steps, re-face those family ties that strapped him for money and took him dancing shoes away.

When his feet bit the icy pavement outside Columbine's Funeral Park, he shrugged his shoulders, walked in the path that presented itself to his dress-shoe feet, and did not try to hide his face from the sharp April wind.

Ann A-boe
Beloit, Wis.
reaches in the public schools
Fluxions
for Patrice Proulx

Janek
hadn't been called by that name
since he was thirteen
Then it was Jan
They started to talk to him in small words
again
Almost exactly on his eightieth birthday
And after they lit his dessert on fire
and he had forgotten
for a moment
what it was all about
Screaming instead of blowing
They called him Janek again
Not father or papa
And laid him on his back
by a big window
With a view of the White Mountains of
New Hampshire
That reminded him of the Carpathians
at Zakopane
And they closed a door
The mind wouldn't go forward anymore
The images got all mixed up
A kettle of tea left on a low burner
of the white enamel stove
in the cottage near Poznan
Then they forgot they had ever wanted tea
And Jan was told his father's emphasis
on education
was a good one
They were lovely friends he had grown to know
And at the medical college in Krakow
Still more beautiful
There the minds were really together
Even through the dark days
when there were changes to the west
There was still time
to look out the window between surgeries
onto Świętokrzyska Street
Where the fat dust artist
Clad in ever-changing rags and swatches
Fingered his thoughts on the windows
of parked cars

Or was that Warsaw
When the wall went up
And there were fewer surgeons
And as Jan walked past the wall
for the last time
He saw the dust artist
being admitted
Smiling
He said he owned nothing
Never had
The guards turned their noses
As he was surrounded
by new friends with fewer rags
than he
If they had had the strength
they would have borne him
on shoulders
This smiling man
With the precious rags
Which they plucked
as carefully as eider

He went in
While Jan went out
Now it's Janek again
And the last memory of Poland
is the first to return
There is another man
in the room
They say he is sixty
But it is unbelievable
If Jan could remember the old procedures
He would help him
But there is uncontrollable drooling
over the man's shirt
A nurse comes in with a bib
And calls him Pauley
She turns to Jan
Asks if there is anything
he needs
Jan looks out the window
and says
"It was a lovely snowfall
Everything is nice and white"

Robert T Klosa
Orono
teaches Biology at UMO

Looking For Signs

Facing west, I see the sun,
windshield high, multiplying
in metallic paint, whirling
myriad circles of darting light,
concealing,
more completely than shadow,
cars, lanes, direction.

Minnie Bowden
Orland
writes a poetry column
for the Rockland newspaper
My Wall Street Relation

The painting I show you
is from a polished art book —
Vincent's turbulent passions
condensed to an 8 x 10.
Under your St. Laurant sweater
your shoulders shrug casually
your eyes say ‘So What?’
You see a potential investment
and want to flip to the last page
to the climax of the struggle
because in endings there are no speculations.

I stop you. I tell you
that is our great grandmother
in Lithuania. She stoops without your ease
and agility. When she bends her bones crack
with soft clicks, like the tumbling lock
of a safe. I say this is her husband
who works each day past sunset, like his father,
like our grandfather, year after year until
they developed an immunity to sunsets
which you somehow inherited along with their money.

After dusk they go into the house
and eat cereal for supper. They stare
into cracked bowls where stale oats
soak up milk like the greedy earth sucks up
their small portion of hope. You say you hope
their plow was sharper than the dull one
in the painting. Dull, like your jokes
and banking dreams on long winter nights.

I can't show you the sharpness
the sharpness of a razor
a razor that attacks a man
in his home, then cuts off a sensitive ear.
You tap your Gucci foot and change the subject.
You forget about grandparents.
You put their picture in your wallet
and forget that wallet on a bus
somewhere in Bermuda.
You even forget it was you
who gave me this book.

Donna Baker
Portland
 teaches aerobic dance
and studies at USM
Two Chapbooks

Wade's Wait / Jonathan Aldrich

The poet and his muse are the vibrant focal points of this relatively short work. Aldrich himself, the reader, and the reader's muse engage in a series of conversations through the voice of Wade. The poems, written in the first person, are set in a small town, where Wade, a young man, finds refuge from the outside world.

Samuel Sewalls for Home / Robert Chute

The sonnet opens with the speaker recalling a moment from his youth. Sewall, a young man, was given a book by his mother, which he later rediscovered. The poems in this collection explore themes of love, loss, and the passage of time.

Terry Plunkett
from Wade's Wait excerpts

My visit seemed to be
gearing off on the wrong foot,
wrong but predictable.
whenever I go out, some sort
of trouble follows me.
You gentle folks
at home romanticize a gambler's
walk of life
who think it’s kiss and kill.
No, no — more like a drawer of socks,
forever unearthing your darks
and lights without a wife,
then all this
walking on goddamn tip toes.

I hadn’t slept since Gregory first
shouted us back to bed refusing
to phone the police or
about it, he said and I lay dutifully
in bed thinking about it until
the light came through. And crept down,
I couldn’t claim to be the tough guy
of my youth, but I felt an old thrill
returning...

Jonathan Aldrich
Teaches Liberal Arts at
the Portland School of Art

April 2, 1874

I'm sick my sickness is mortality...

Benjamin Guard, age seventy,
having for a year or more lived in
this abandoned, filthy spot,
in open outsider yard was seen
carousing with a roan mare.
This day, for brutality,
Benjamin Guard, bound tightly,
comes to the gallows tree. There
the mare was brought and struck down
screaming in the mud before his eyes.
Would he wake before he draws? Wold he take to Paradise
Or Hell this vision of great brown ors fixed forever on the ground?

Robert Chase
Poland Spring
Teaches biology at Bates

Review

Good Trembling / Baron Wormser
(Houghton-Mifflin, 1985)

I first read Good Trembling on a July afternoon at the Burger King in Gorham
and now I am reading it again on a snowbound day the week before Christmas.
I liked the poems then, and I still like them. They show a man participating in his
world with a nice balance of sympathy and intelligence. It is not just a gathering
of poems, either. The personality expands and clarifies itself from poem to poem
until the book becomes a human being, and the amazing thing is that Wormser
brings this off without talking about himself directly. Instead, he lets himself un-
fold as perceiver, as social observer. It is never surrealistic or even romantic,
but Augustan or neo-classical, Aristotelian rather than Platonic, the self sub-
ordinated to the world it sees.

The strongest impressions are the series of people that emerge almost novel-
istically from the poems. The woman in the soap opera, Charlene (who loves
Elvis Presley), H.L. Mencken, the Jesus freak, Stan the legless veteran, CI, the
urnamed woodworker, the boys on the mowing crew. By accepting the limita-
tions of the narrative self, Wormser escapes the austere and obsessive intros-
gazing of so much contemporary writing and returns poetry to its place as an
exacting instrument of social perception and commentary. This is a poet not
alienated but engaged, distanced by intelligence rather than exile. One recalls
Browning's essay on Shelley, casting poets into objective or subjective categories.
Wormser is working on a return to objective poetry, in which a love of the
world outweighs self-love. Even his formal concerns point in this direction.
Rhyme, for example, skillfully and delightfully appears as a limiting device, as it
was used by Pope and Swift, a return, a reminder that our concerns as humans
are real and finite.

I can think of some readers who would not like these poems, people who dis-
trust the intellect or who think poetry ought to take them off into another
world. For Baron Wormser, it is clear that there is no other world. "This is the
table of life," he says, "one and many, human." The poems glow with the ordi-
nary details of Maine life: a yard sale, a stock car race, a Legion hall. Snow. The
poet stays up late, worrying, thinking about these things. He is interested in
social movements, the history of art, the history of ideas. He forces his way out
of the rather narrow range of present-day poetic diction and once again allows
the language of thought and reflection to join the language of direct experience.
And Wormser's endings are always always sure and smooth, returning the
reader to a place close to where he started but a little bit different, a little dis-
tance beyond:

A little butter remains on a crust of bread.
The living succeed, and the dead remain dead.

I'd recommend these poems to anyone who feels disenchanted with what modern
poetry has become. They offer a possible way out, not the only way perhaps, but
a way that is sane, thoughtful and humanistic, and that gives you, in full
weight, just what it promises.

Bill Carpenter
Stockton Springs
to a poet who teaches at COM
One week after its national release, Mike Kimball’s Firewater Pond made Maine’s bestseller list. Already in its second printing it has received critical attention from Topsham to Bangor. Like Carolyn Chute’s Beans of Egypt, Maine, it has a bit of magic propelling it forward. Stephen King has helped and it is riding the wave of the “Real Maine” hoopla. In reality, the book needs little help. It is both well-written and entertaining.

But is it the “Real Maine”? I think not. It felt like real Massachusetts to me. After all, Mike grew up outside of Worcester. Maybe the real New Hampshire, my home state. In fact, the book’s fictional setting, Camp Wind in the Pines, might be anywhere. Perhaps in the real midwest. Mike went to school in the midwest. Then I found it. On a trip home to my folks in southern New Hampshire, needled appropriately beneath a nationalized Maine folk is that they either ignore or view with disdain the perfect backwater. Classic Massachusetts. A principal characteristic of fictionalized Maine folk is that they either ignore or view with disdain the strivings toward American material wealth. Not so the folks of Firewater Pond. We are presented with America–rejected, in the 60’s hang-on, Zippy Jones, or America–accepted, in his yuppy twin brother, L.A. Jones. There is Dolly Root who would rather have her feet set into concrete than be evicted from her shoreside trailer site. And there is Nighthawk, the camp’s token Black, who abandons his shack, wife, and collection of pornographic literature to don a loin cloth and shout the neighbors’ livestock with a bow and arrow in spite of his lack of Indian blood. An obvious metaphor for urban stress-related ethnic role rejection. Each in his own way is acting or reacting to the pull of mainstream American materialism. From cheating the camp store, to cocaine and real estate scams, the campers crave a foothold. Their problem and the source of humor that drives this fine novel is that they are getting absolutely nowhere, and the harder they try the farther they sink into the quagmire. Definitely, Massachusetts folk.

Firewater Pond moves along like an express train, gearing through an endless series of intertwined plots and characters. Kimball’s narrative is fluid and his gift for comic situation is uncanny. In the end we are drawn to the Firewater folk with affection. At all times the action is fast-paced and sometimes frenetic. My favorite chapter. “Cowboys on the Moon,” is one of the few in which there is a pause in the plotting and the characters are allowed to stretch and interact freely.

Firewater Pond is first and foremost entertaining. But beneath the fun there is much to hold on to and the sobering potential for more. And if it is not “the real Maine” it is the real somewhere else. Perhaps the real New Jersey.

Art Mayers
N. Whitefield
Free-lances in many areas

Clear Blue Lobster Water Country
/ Leo Connellan
(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985, 157 pp., $15.95)

Bop, Bop, Bop, Bop, Barreboop! The sound of Bop weaves its way through this complex trilogy by Leo Connellan. Bop is short for Boppledock, a nickname for Leo when he was a small boy. All of Leo’s troubles go back to this time. His mother died when he was seven and since that time his demand for love has outstripped the supply. Several limes in the hook he asks his father if he will love him after death — a common theme in Connellan’s previous books.

Bop’s adventures go through three stages. First, an attempt to find and beat in a race one Kelly who beat him up at a summer camp when he was a boy. The narrative goes back and forth in time and takes in other Kellys such as John Kelley, the famed Boston marathoner. Connellan will never find his actual tormentor, through the poetry he certainly makes the Kelly clan pay.

His own debts are worked off in a small deconyiatric center in Connnecticut hospital. The story comprises the second part of the trilogy. It is grim and gruffly funny, familiar to those who have been in a place similar to this and frightening to those who haven’t.

Boppledock and the various other “O’Docks” and their Irish, Portland and Rockland doings make up the third and title section of the book. Bop dreams of the big granite house in Portland that his family owned at one time and sold off. In the poem Connellan claims to have been discriminated against in Rockland in the 1940’s because he was Irish. I find this highly unlikely since I went through the same school system nine years later and never heard a single remark of that kind.

In this section, Connellan has a long digression from his own troubles to describe another son of immigrants who goes from his father’s pool room to law school and ends up County Attorney. Later, the man is in private practice and is shot by one of his clients and seriously wounded. Though the writer has changed the names and circumstances slightly — this person would be readily identifiable to most adults in Knox County.

This calls into question how close the poet should approach the absolute truth. Connellan comes pretty close, particularly when laying out his own needs for love. And you might well ask if that isn’t what poetry is all about? It is, to a large extent, and Leo is a mature master at it.

Though his book is long and complex, it is well worth the effort to decipher it. One might first want to read his Crossing America and Death in Lobstertown to get some of his background. Connellan’s biographer will have plenty of gritty material but you can read it first in Clear Blue Lobster Water Country.

Kendall Merriam
Richmond
in a freelance writer
The revision process was a terrible grind: two months of during-work music teaching, after-work, and weekend revising, with a deadline that came on like a freight train, and every change I made sent shock waves throughout the book which affected other characters and events, which in turn sent their own shock waves, and so on, approaching infinity. There were times, suspending plot matter in my imagination, grasping for solutions, that it all nearly cost me my sanity. I think Bertrand Russell spent his best years on volumes of mathematics only to prove the existence of the number 1, and afterwards he claimed he was never able to concentrate again. Maybe I made that up, but that's the way I feel now. My new book about a milkman has only four characters; pity the poor fifth who tries to steal in.

Dear Alan, 12/6/85

New title idea for Wind in the Pines: Firewater Pond. I wanted to bring in the water theme somehow — Nightshade demonstrating to Carl Daxen and later Carl demonstrating to Larry that the filthy pond water can land must be drunk. I think FP will also convey a sense of the vastness of craziness and alcoholism consumptions within the book's covers. And that there's an unbalanced Indian therein. Am I on the right track?

Best, Mike

Dear Mike, 2/4/85

Thanks so much for your good and swift letter of 12/6/85. I think your title suggestion is excellent, and I fully expect us to go with it. It's strong, in itself as well as for all the associative reasons you mention, and that's a splendid combination. You are the boss whenever we all think of it, for sure. I only want to underline what I see as the main role of editors and interested friends — mainly to act as the first reactors and to stimulate your own consideration of whether you are saying things as constructively and effectively as you want. Basically I think this book is in very fine shape, so not to worry about whatever I come up with.

Yours, Alan

Dear Alan, 5/8/85

Here are two copies of my revised and improved it! hope Firewater Pond, the marked-up copy of WP which you provided, and a copy of your 37 revisions letter to me.

First of all, I've enjoyed watching the story take better shape, and I thank you very much for taking on this book. I made all the changes you suggested, plus a few of my own — which I sincerely hope doesn't complicate things too much on your end.

Second of all, the fact that FP is now 509 pages where WP was 441, there aren't 68 new pages. Additions I had made to WP transcribed, for example, 314A, 314B, etc. probably totaled 10 or 15 pages. And deletions I made after printing WP (p. 562; pp. 98-100) have so far cut 4 more. I estimate the book is now 112,500 words.

The biggest additions of pages were the new "twins" material (pp. 241-252; 229 pages), which I've already shown you; and the new ending (p. 326; P. 8-331), which required setups (pp. 142-144, 257-261, and p. 285) — 23 more new pages.

I hope the new endings work. Having Larry simply carted off to jail for bidding a health official didn't bid him from the campground. And claiming, as Carl did, that Larry didn't have anything in writing was sort of last minute grabbing on my part. The new ending gets rid of Larry and Sylv unquestionably — and it contains some twisting, as well. I borrowed a device from Steve King's "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption" — at least I tried to. I plotted a hopefully obvious clue earlier in the book which hopefully will elucidate the reader because of its context (pp. 142-144). If it doesn't work, can it — or should it — be made into? Other points. Your suggestion about Chp. 1. possibly following Chp. 2. was well taken. In fact, after I had written the first few Chps. I went back and tried doing that. But it seemed awkward at the time, so I opted for the forty beginning. However, your point about focusing on Carl at the outset was a point I had overlooked. Does the short introductory Chp. "Fried Egg Man" do the trick?

There's another new scene, one that I think is important thematically (p. 157, P. 9-158). It forecasts the climax scene in which Carl drinks the pond water in front of Larry (p. 317). I want Nightshade to affect Carl in that way — showing Carl that the love of land is greater than the love of property. Is that overstating it?

The Maurice-raccoon scene (pp. 224, P. 3-227) is pruned, less anthropomorphism, and now interwoven with Nightshade's second dream scene. It sets up tension between mouse and dog and of course explains how Maurice bagged the coon. And it's more credible: Maurice no longer has a chain around his neck; and he jumps only 5 feet into the tree, instead of 6 feet could make it 6 feet. I like the scene because it's like those "best dog" tales local hunters like to tell — except that here it actually happens — and it's not an expensive, pure-bred Lab but a sadistic poodle. However, if it still bothers you, let's cut it.

The Best animal euthanasia business has likewise been moved (p. 149, P. 30), shortened, and made more credible. Alan, people up here do actually provide such services. Since my town refuses every year to donate money to the Augusta animal shelter, it's pay as you go there. So offering an unwanted litter of kittens becomes an expensive proposition. Animals too squeamish to take until matters into their own hands (torturistas) can seek out hardier souls to do the dirty work — cheaper and closer to home. One man in town throws them in a sack and backs his car over them; another swings the cat-filled sack into a tree trunk; mast just thrown them. The "Unwanted Pets Laid Away" sign is real again, however, I'll defer to your editorial expertise — and objectivity (mine has taken a beating these last few weeks).

Zippy's transceiver is real (pp. 86-88). It's a homemade radio telescope — typical hardware used by member of SETT — Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. I found plans for the transceiver in the April 1985 issue of "Sky and Telescope." The chicken wire antenna is likewise real — an astronomer friend saw one at a SETT conference he attended. I hope I've made it clear (p. 86, P. 31 and 107, P. 21) that the transceiver was damaged in Zippy's house fire and sometimes mistakes spoken words for coded signals and sends them the last word it heard directly to the readout screen.

I moved Gunnar's interruption of the wedding ceremony (p. 281, P. 22) as you suggested, but I let Larry and Carl glimpse the fish during the ceremony and exchange a couple of whispered comments. I've tried to throw in bits about the geography of the campground, Norwood, and Oxford here and there in the book. A description of the campground is in new Chp. 1. (p. 12, P. 2) and again, in more detail, (p. 68-69); I hope it's enough. (Does a forty-foot hill ridge seem too high to you? I've vacillated from 30 to 40.)

And I hope the lengthened scene in which Carl first confronts Larry (pp. 97-101) is enough to establish Carl's affection for Susie, so that their Carl & Susie later wedding eve exchange (pp. 256-261) does not seem so grafted on.

I discussed with you cutting "Shit Everywhere" (p. 404), the lavatory flood scene. And I did cut it. But then I put it back in, slightly revised. Don't we sympathize with Carl when he has to get down on his hands and knees in that water — when his fried egg gets ruined in Chapter 1? I also like the lavatory scene because it's true. I know a campground owner — the man whose story this, loosely, is — against whom that crime was committed. Ed: It was cut again from the final revision, I think.

I enhanced Zippy's showering scene and then juxtaposed it with the phone call to Harvey (pp. 301-305) to add a little more tension and surprise when Zippy's aliens turn out to be Weasel. For the same reason, Weasel does not forecast his coming by calling Larry (as he did in WP, pp. 395, P. 9-396).

I've thought lots about "Patience is the hunter," but it still seems all right to me. "Patience is the snare" would probably stand up to analysis, but isn't it messy rolling off the tongue? And it's not so strong — or decisive — as "Patience is the hunter." Also, a hunter friend says he liked the expression — when he hunts he waits for the game to come to him. Maybe you have a suggestion I haven't thought of.

Alan, I'm glad you said you were brave — my mind is boggled by these revisions, and I'm glad to be putting them in the mail. Unhappily, though, there's so much new stuff — including the new ending — I sense we're not finished. I'm going to plant my garden this week and take my family down to Massachusetts on the weekend. But when I return, I too will be brave again, and ready to have at it again. Ed: Kimball contracted pneumonia the next morning and was laid up for seven weeks.

I'm anxious, as you must know, to hear your response to all this, good or bad. Please call when you have time.

Best, Mike
Not Maine!

Modern art is the machine: the forms relayed from the environment of technology, the machine, technology. Art, its rhythm, now, a reaction to modern civilization, an acceptance of the machine, the "physical" world.


Noise. Violence. This, to the human emotions, and to the human spirit — the physical opposing the spiritual.

And so it is modern art and its form changing in Maine. The paper mill is an unnatural environment for human beings: it is the environment of modern civilization.


Modern man is the machine. Murder of the soul. (Only on paper.) Run the machine: run the machine: run the machine: Pine tree — chickadee.

Tom Fallon
Rumford
has worked in a paper mill for years.
RE viewS

The Bagels of Bangor, Maine
/ Minnie Greenberg

Minnie Greenberg's classic novel, The Bagels of Bangor, Maine, has been re-issued. Originally called only The Bagels, the book's title has been lengthened by its publisher as a ploy to capitalize on the national interest in our state. It tells of life in the Jewish satel of Bangor, and of the coming of the messiah to this troubled community. In fact, scholarly articles in local dailies aver that Greenberg's original manuscript was called The Baptises of Bangor, Maine, but the title and ethnic setting had to be changed because of whispers of a scandal long since buried by history. Minnie's book is essentially the chronicle of one miracle after another. Messiah fever breaks out in Bangor and consumes the entire state. In no time at all, the entire population of Maine has converted to Judaism. The governor fan-Ish lad from Portland who changes his name to Joseph Brennmanstein offers Maine as a homeland for all Jews everywhere. Brennmanstein's offer solves the mid-east crisis as the people of Israel decide to move here en masse — leaving Palestine for the Arabs to fight over among themselves. Biblical scholars, tracing this move to Maine back to biblical sources, point out that for years the God of the Hebrews has blessed the state, for at the end of every prayer 'worshippers do not utter the Christian "Amen, Father." They say, "Ah-Maine." Perhaps the most interesting change in Jewish terminology that occurs because of Maine becoming Israel is in what used to be called an "Aishah." An aishah is the word that refers to a Jew who migrates to Israel from another country. By the end of The Bagels of Bangor, Maine an aishah is referred to as an "ah-ah-ah." The book and its sequel, The Potato Lakhties of Poland, Maine and The KlopachuK of Kennebunkport, Maine are now offered by the publisher as a boxed set. Minnie is appearing on television and in Parade magazine. She has made so much money from the trilogy that she has sent one carrier pigeon with $1,000 bill strapped to their wings to deliver to poverty-stricken writers all over the state. One result will be that by Christmas, 1986, The A.Y. Times best-seller list will be made up of nothing but books from Maine. All of these will become literary classics, will be studied for centuries to come, and will be Book of the Month Club Alternate Selections. Maine writers will be the vanguard of a new renaissance of American letters. Each book will have a title with either alliteration or anassome in it, and each title will be composed of a family's name, a town name, and concluded with the word Maine. Already in Androscoggin County a novel is being readied which is called The Cucumbers of Cumberland, Maine, and here are reports of yet another named The Summer Squash of Sagadahoc, Maine. The Times predicts they will sell at least as well as the Burpee Seed Catalogue, which by the way is adding to its name the words "...of Backport, Maine."

Mark Melnove
with Terry Plunkett
So. Harpswell

Play On! / Richard Kent.
(Windswept House Publishers, Mt. Desert, Maine, 1985.3)

Soccer once existed midstream in the backwaters of American sport. People who played soccer were either ethnics, outcasts, or too small to play anything else.

A new generation of soccer players may change that label. Youth leagues with swarming parents, soccer camps for 8-year-olds, games on artificial turf, such things are suddenly the horizon. And, of course, today's youth will likely absorb images of sport from television rather than the printed page.

Still, there exists a hardy tradition of sports books that light and shape the imaginations of readers young and old alike. Richard Kent's fine little book, Play On!, places soccer within that tradition. Kent uses the formation of a high school soccer team to touch the painful, real conflicts of adolescence, with the sport itself as a poetic template to the story.

The setting: a paper mill town in a remote area of Northern New England. The plot is ordinary. The main character, Skeez Gilpatrick, is a teenager orphaned by auto accident and placed in a group home. Skeez begins to adjust to his new home, becomes the leader of a rag-tag soccer team coached by a mysterious, ill-regarded, but wise old gaffer who seems to have been born with a soccer ball attached to his foot.

His lessons reflect the ideal of the sport: teamwork, purposeful motion, the use of space, and deep respect for the traditions of the game. The team slowly improves and its progress carries across the players and the community in profound ways. And if the characters seem typed (Who would declare themselves on type at all?), the situations predictable, the settings nonetheless believable and finally, poignant.

And in his writing, Kent describes the action of the game clearly:

It was a direct kick forty yards from the Hamlin goal. Nat set the ball there, then lifted it to Andrew in a corner Andrew lapped it cleanly and moved quickly to his right, eluding a defender. His chip shot flashed to Digger — the ball never touched the ground as the forward snapped it out of mid-air with a turning shot. The keeper never had a chance, though his lunging dive was spectacular.

Whether as a gift for a young reader, or a touching and engauging diversion for an older one, Play On! offers a fine advantage.

David Adams
Bath, Ohio
A poet who plays and coaches soccer
William Carpenter wins prizes before his books are published. Three years ago, *Hours of Morning* won the Associated Writing Programs' annual award, from U. Virginia. Now his second collection has done the same, with Northwestern U. He writes in large, rectangular blocks of print that look like bricks on the page, or in triplets, linked three-line stanzas, both ways liming prose-poetry, but not pretty "poetic prose." Arguably, he is the most readable, entertaining, serious poet writing today. Ten years from now he will be in the anthologies.

He knows his literature. Franz Kafka's short story, "Metamorphosis," begins when Gregor Samsa "awoke one morning... and found himself transformed in his bed into a giant insect." Kafka does not justify nor explain. The reader either makes the leap from the literal to the surreal or not. Reading Carpenter's poems is like this. One begins, "I wake one morning to find myself the Pope." Usually, the transformation occurs abruptly after a perfectly reasonable scene is set. In one, a routine canoe trip quickly turns cannibalistic. In another, tourists arrive and set up camp to look at the ocean; within ten lines Carpenter has them walking straight into the water, over their heads; they keep going, "a fat floating away like a white ship." Or, a man suddenly begins to burn down his own house. In another, a group of widows on a fall foliage tour gets into the men's room. Carpenter's eye for the particulars of an environment plants himself from an unidentifiable trout to "the Pope." 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Review

War Stories / H. R. Coursen
(Cider Mill Press, P.O. Box 211, Stratford, U.T. 78667, 1985, $4.95)

As we read the literature from the years of our various wars, the attitude toward the heroic changes. The nature of patriotism changes too. Writers of WWII read like romantics stunned by the electrodes of the Gatling gun. There is no less horror from WWII, but it is balanced by justifiable belief in the value of action. Thus far, Vietnam books suggest by their scarcity as well as their content that the issues and higher motivations are beside the point — what matters is the nature of the experience, unmediated by conviction or ideology. Somehow in our "Forgotten War," the Korean, the war of Hellen's Catch 22 and of M*A*S*H, attitudes and values begin to change. The absurd appears next step, the above. We know that 56,000 Americans died in Nami; we have forgotten that 54,000 died in Korea in only three years and one month between 1950 and 1953. Perhaps we do not want to know that the North Korean and Chinese forces suffered 1.6 million casualties, nor that three million civilians died in the North, and another half million in the South. Such knowledge inevitably changes those who lived through this period, specifically Americans in their mid-fifties and sixties. It is what Herb Coursen calls "that strange new-time."

In a way, Coursen's ninth book of poems is mismatched. Only eight poems of the 34 here treat military situations, and one of those is about Stalin in the Civil War and another a Nazi in 1946. The other six appear to be set circa 1955-57, and offer vignettes from high up in various airplanes, the poet bailing out, or flaming out, or landing a damaged F-31. All are fine poems by a man of his generation coming to terms with experience that must seem extravagant today. Brisk, humorous, flip, they are offered in that throw-away tone characteristic of the post Korean American male, understated, the heroism of snafus, the glory of goss-to-one, the poet is trying to land a small plane that is on fire. "About to die," he thinks. "Damn! A lot of getting laid was lost." In another, he hangs from a parachute over the ocean, dropping his helmet. "There it goes," he says to himself. "Watch it. Watch it, skull-showered, and dropping out of sight." What is happening here is too serious to be taken seriously, and Coursen, author of a 1984 novel about the Red Baron, knows it.

In another way, the book is perfectly formed, for the rest of the poems which stretch out to 1984 make it clear that "War" is a metaphor for the stress of non-normal activities: teaching, shopping, teaching, loving, living near the ocean. The metaphor works. It "controls" a variety of material. It is extremely important to our culture to have minds made in the crucible of these earlier years remember Coursen does, in "Long Gone Jobs of the Late 1940s." This kind of material must not be lost, nor left to turkeys at CNN Sports to vulgarize. A case should be made for the value of what a skilled writer writes about. The contest. Few poets approach such subjects. Take the poem on the 1981 baseball strike. Or take the elegy to a halfback from the New York Giants who "seeks the open space with dying eyes/ slitting the everlasting sideline." There is love in these poems, and loyalty to one's passions. And an awareness of time: half the poems carry dates and many have holidays in their titles. As if the poet himself a survivor of real and metaphorical wars, celebrates the present given to him, "skirting the everlasting sideline." Coursen is definitely not out of touch.

Terry Plunkett
reviewed at UMA

Flame Out: 1955

Here in the unresisting stratosphere,
sound is a mere ripple across leading
edge and canopy. No friction grates on
this effortless spooling through the upper

arc of a bubble blowing towards the sun.
But silence implodes, and the gauges went
down from green to zero. The ice-trail
behind me dies. I roll, powerless, nose
down, seeking the invisible strands that
criss-cross down blue altitudes, down angels
etched in cirrus, down into the grip of
that rubber-stained and cross-winded concrete.

H. R. Coursen
Brunswick
teachers at Bowdoin
What a Cambodian Learns in America

You should not put your hand on the round red place on stoves. Snow is white, falls like lotus petals from the sky, turns to water when you touch it. Red marks by your nose, meaning you wear glasses, can read, will not cause someone to cut your head off. And no one comes at night taking fathers.

I can see my country like my dreams on the t.v. Some people here are sad with me to see the before of mangoes, monks in orange robes, coconut dance, and now the war, the camps, the dying.

When students call me nigger slanteye, it means I am not the same color as snow, do not see with the same eye.

Judith Bradshaw Brown
Farmington

SURVIVOR'S MANUAL
(1/8/69 - 8/31/70: Vietnam)

If your arms and legs are still intact you are a survivor.
If your nightmares will wait for the night you are a survivor.
If the faces of passing children remain the faces of passing children, you are a survivor.
If tall meadow grasses delight you with sudden pheasants you are a survivor.
If you can find your way back into someone's love you are a survivor.

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing
Published by the University of Maine-Augusta
We are proud to circulate our ninth annual publication. Each year we have increased the number of pages, while maintaining our usual run of 5,000 copies, distributed free throughout the state as a service to the community. In this effort to bring Maine writers to the attention of a wide public, we are supported by the UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA. This egalitarian enterprise has come a long way since 1975. Hundreds of talented Maine writers have helped. In general, about half of each issue is given to writers who have not appeared in these pages before. Back issues, 1981-1985, are available upon request. Deadline for submissions for next year: 9/15/86-12/15/86. Send SASE. Copyright held by writers.

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