When I Think Of Christ
I Think Of Provincetown

When I think of Christ, I think of Provincetown
On Sunday mornings in early March
When the clear light angles up across the streets
And we can be seen, briefly, as what we are.

Walking from the Uxmal's of our dreams
We wash and walk to breakfast in a suite of grace
Transparent, fragile and ineradicably pure
That here, between what we have done and that which we must do
We are holy, pure.

What can this tell us of God?
Does Divinity alter from place to place?
Could Quetzalcoatl preen his feathers more?
In this tentative pale sun
Amidst the crocus buds
Scratching his belly track in the patchy melting snow?

Would Buddha drop philosophy
Like fat ripe figs
On the steps of the Kreisler Museum?
Clearly No.

The gospel here is singular and plain,
We are to leave such mysteries
Behind the doors of last night's rented rooms
Or draw them beneath the clean flat surface of this Sunday's sea.
In Christ's name, we are admonished to let go.
If you meet me in Provincetown some Sunday next March
I shall tell you all (or nearly all)
Of what I know.

E. Chetman

Newsgirl

Every morning, except Sunday, whether it was bitter cold, drizzling wet, or fierce with snow flurries, the alarm clock in her room went off at 3 A.M. The mercurials froze — always frightening. But she learned quickly to wake up just before it screamed into life. If the weather outside was reasonable, waking up was the only bad part of delivering newspapers.

The town, busy by daylight, slept on undisturbed by my familiar footsteps. Its houses, in winter, were tucked into bed with blankets of snow pushed up under their chins. Many times I felt like Santa Claus leaving presents for little children.

The man at the restaurant wanted his anchor clockwise with a rock. The grandmother in the upstairs apartment wanted her between the railings. The Hart family hung out a special basket for theirs. And those who had no special place for theirs, received a dry copy between their doors.

At times she felt like a city kid, weaving in and out of back yards and short-cutting down alleys. She knew the places to hide if any danger threatened from the streets. She knew which steps were slippery. Every dog recognised her, even though not all of them liked her. She was never bitten. If the milk man passed her she knew she was running a little late. He always waved.

Most of the time she felt removed from the troubling thoughts of daytime. She became part, was part, of the silent, natural nighttime. The hush of night nestled against the town and held her gently. It whispered to her from the river to hurry but go in safety.

Sometimes the bitter cold kissed her cheeks, leaving a healthy, rosy glow. Wisps of hair paled under the moon. Her breath in the air like balloons. The cold slipped at her heels. She was prompt with the papers.

Always sounds were as crisp as the early mornings. Snow cracked under her feet. The trees groaned. She heard icicles shatter on a concrete doorstep. Chunks of ice fell from roof-tops. Snowdrifts whispered in the wind. On snowy mornings the soft whooshing of snowflakes masked all other sounds. The air was a sea shell pressed to her ear.

She learned to judge the smells, sounds, and tastes of those hours; to predict the weather from them. She could tell if a storm was coming and whether it would be snow or rain. She knew whether it would be a big storm or blown over by the next morning. In the spring she learned to tell how warm the day would be.

The woods of the quiet town held her in its magic. The carefully placed newspapers were like four seconds that measured her way toward dawn.

Holly Bayer

April 1979

KENNEBEC
University of Maine at Augusta

David Adams, China
Richard Aldridge, Sebasco Estates
Holly Bayer, North Vassalboro
William Carpenter, Bar Harbor
E. Chetman, Kents Hill
Gordon Clark, Head Tide
Leo Connellan, Clinton, Conn.
Christopher Fahy, Tenants Harbor
Jeff Fisher, Brunswick
Jo Marlan Going, Little Compton, R.I.
David Gordon, Alna
Beverly Greenspan, Brunswick
Burton Hatlter, Orlington
Charles Howell, New Portland

Willis Johnson, Gardiner
Stephen King, Orrington
Alice R. Larkin, Boothbay Harbor
Kathleen Lignell, Lubec
Robert McGuire, Newcastle
Patricia Merfield, Castine
Carl Morse, Saco Head
Charles Oakes, Port Clyde
Terry Plunkett, Hallowell
Douglas Rawlings, Mt. Desert
Guy Scarfino, Port Clyde
Jon Schlenker, Augusta
Lee Sharkey, Skowhegan
Deborah Ward, Portland

H. Bayer

KENNEBEC, April, 1979

$1.00
The dog plunged down the steep bank and ran toward a small meadow over its bed in the ferns, then another, and the third. I lay concealed, observing their habits for the first time as a mocker to smaller, weaker men like myself. As though they knew I was watching, they spread out in concentric rings, the gloomy stillness, and the spindly lower limbs of the pines snatched my soul. Sometimes, if I could find a good spot, I would be a hunter, making surprisingly little noise for such a big man, rolling and melting into the woods. At dusk, the twilight, and felt secure that I could almost make out how I would do it. Then I would leave town, letting it be known that an unexpected promotion made it necessary for me to transfer to another branch of the company I worked for. I had, in fact, arranged a transfer, and was deeply pleased to be prepared to leave at a minute’s notice.

Everything went perfectly, as planned. One shot, carefully placed as the orange-clad figure emerged at the rim of the glen. A soft-nosed hunting bullet. No question that it was fatal. I heard the body, making surprisingly little noise for such a big man, rolling and melting into the woods. At dusk, the twilight, and felt secure that I could almost make out how I would do it. Then I would leave town, letting it be known that an unexpected promotion made it necessary for me to transfer to another branch of the company I worked for. I had, in fact, arranged a transfer, and was deeply pleased to be prepared to leave at a minute’s notice.

Sometimes, of an evening, the barroom talk would be hushed as the men hunched low over their drinks to contemplate the sacrifice of an acquaintance to the glorious cause. Hunting accidents were common. The victim was either a marksman, with a good reputation as a hunter, or he had no doubt that he could outshoot me as well. Yet I was a hunter, too, and was deeply pleased to be prepared to leave at a minute’s notice. I had stumbled on the trunks close together like old men creeping to the bottom of the glen. Be.

The plan was that I would wait a day or two when George was declared missing. Even join in the search. Making sure, of course, to lead the搜shing party in a direction away from the scene of the crime. Then I would leave town, letting it be known that an unexpected promotion made it necessary for me to transfer to another branch of the company I worked for. I had, in fact, arranged a transfer, and was deeply pleased to be prepared to leave at a minute’s notice.

I was about ready to let the pup run off, but I don’t purchase them just to have them weld their tentacles to my skin. Sometimes, if I could find a good spot, I would be a hunter, making surprisingly little noise for such a big man, rolling and melting into the woods. At dusk, the twilight, and felt secure that I could almost make out how I would do it. Then I would leave town, letting it be known that an unexpected promotion made it necessary for me to transfer to another branch of the company I worked for. I had, in fact, arranged a transfer, and was deeply pleased to be prepared to leave at a minute’s notice.

I thought it was strange, not much longer, I told myself, that it was not on the local news. About George’s disappearance. Dora had decided to wait a day or two before going to the police to call. That was part of the plan. We were to have no contact with each other until she joined me later, after the ripples of George’s tragic fate had died down. It might take weeks, even months, before the estate could be settled and she would be free to leave without questions being asked. That was the hardest part. The waiting. My days were tinged with anxious longing. The nights were a torment. All that I held was the memory of Dora, and the sweet certainty that our life together would be a succession of the possibilities those circumstances recalled.

For six months I relived that moment when I had caught the first glimpse of a blonde orange cap coming into view over a slight rise as the forest trail entered the glen. The head, slightly bent, concealed the face under the cap’s brim. But I knew it, too; it would have been obvious a hunt, incident. Another of splash and ripple in the bottomless pool.

The nights were a torment. All that I held was the memory of Dora, and the sweet certainty that our life together would be a succession of the possibilities those circumstances recalled.

After much anxious consideration, I decided to go back. There could be little danger now. I had friends there. No one would question my returning to see to acced to the estate. I would be a hunter, making surprisingly little noise for such a big man, rolling and melting into the woods. At dusk, the twilight, and felt secure that I could almost make out how I would do it. Then I would leave town, letting it be known that an unexpected promotion made it necessary for me to transfer to another branch of the company I worked for. I had, in fact, arranged a transfer, and was deeply pleased to be prepared to leave at a minute’s notice.

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bar was of trout flies, the smut run, and the upcoming baseball season. I stepped into a stool in the bar, joining into the conversation and being accepted, almost without comment, as though it had been only yesterday that I had sat qualified a beer in their company. But it had been longer than that, and the consciousness of that fact seeped slowly along the bar, eroding the natural course of their thoughts. Inexorably, those thoughts turned back to the time that I had left.

Someone inquired about my new job. I countered easily, in a genial manner of my activities, then, deliberately, I brought up the event of my sudden departure, the "unexpected" transfer. I pushed my mug back to the bartender for a refill, vacantly, "The company didn't even wait until I got my deer!"

A dammed shame! Wouldn't you know! Guffaws meant to express sympathy, but reflecting a shade of gloating from hunters recalling their own triumphs. The recollection progressed, as I had waited to see which way they would hunt. The hunters recasting their own triumphs.

"Too bad about George. You knew about his death?"

"Of course! I kept an eye on him all the time he was alive."

"What a terrible thing! If I had known!"

"Who told you?"

"Dora. She told me he was shot between the eyes.

"Man got killed and cuckolded the poor fellow, this George, I believe his name was, met a fellow in a bar just before hunting season opened and bought his wife a coat and a cap, just like his, and a gun. "He run down the night before hunting season opened and bought his wife a hunting license. Bought her a hunting coat and a cap, just like his, and a gun. She'd never hunted before, you know, coat and a cap, just like his, and a gun."

"Hey, mister! Mister! Where are you going?"

"I'm just going for a walk."

"Hey, mister! Mister! Where are you going?"

With a bloodshot eye, the gun-toting fellow told him about a chest shot. In my

"You didn't even know!"

"Well, I didn't want to know."

"What about Dora? Where could she have gone?"

"The strain and anxiety of six months of waiting and the shock of what I had heard was too much for me. I hurried back to the motel, shook a double dose of sleeping pills into a trembling hand, waited for it to fall, and then the bullet that was to have killed me, another man - a "sweetie" - and with great difficulty, like a sculptor working in marble, I fashioned a new self."

"Poor fellow! But Dora, his widow!"

"The group weren't getting along, and she'd just run off like that. Some say she had a reason."

"Dora just using me to hide herself in the bushes there, you don't think so?"

"She'd never hunted before, you know, coat and a cap, just like his, and a gun."

"You're going to the woods with him all right, but they say she had this boyfriend she had been sneaking around with. Must've been waiting for her with a car, and instead of sitting down and doing like he told her, she circled back around and ran off with this fellow. Poor George, though, he never knew it! Hadn't got halfway into the woods, walking down this woods road to drive the deer in to her, when some hunter shot her for a deer and she died. The woman was being bianiped and polishing furiously. "Like I was a pig! You know me, I'm a woman! I'm half-crazy, some of them. Will shoot at anything in the woods that moves. Some folks tried to say she killed that shot him, but the fellow what sold her the gun remembered what I said! It was, and the bullet that killed her husband didn't match. I know."

"Hey, mister! Where are you going? You didn't finish your egg..."

"I ran out of the place and the woman ran after me, screaming manically that I hadn't paid for my breakfast. The car started with a roar and I booted it around viciously in the street, hitting her, slammed the gears in high and lurched out of the driveway. The tires squealed with an agonized scream that repeated itself again and again inside my head. Dora! Dora! Beautiful! Beautiful! Dora! Starlight motorists skidded out of my way and cursed me as I screamed down the road to the mountains, but they were only a blur to my glazed eyes. I was-was David Gordon, the perfect oval of her face framed in soft, brown curls, seemed to hang in the air before me. The smooth Red River valley was so straight and prim in repose, that quirked upwards merrily when she smiled. The man straight nose, ascendant and hearty..."

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"Long time gone, this George, I believe his name was, a fellow in a bar just before hunting season. I cheated especially while my body went tense with anticipation. They were drinking, and this fellow was broadcasting his hunting story while I watched. He great ox looked solid, taller than the two big bucks the fellow said he knew was here!" (I chuckled, remembering the last-minute rush of thought added when I told George about my acquaintance.)"
large brown eyes that seemed perpetually widened in wonder under thick straight brows. My knuckles were white on the wheel, but my fingers were remembering the softness of her skin, the deep, voluptuous cleave between the white perfection of her breasts. Tormented by my thoughts, I overshoot the entrance to the woods road, then slammed the car in reverse, jolting it backwards.

I leaped from the car, leaving the door hanging open, and ran crazily up the woods road to the trail through the woods. My head screamed, Dora! Dora! Or was it my voice screaming? Running, panting, screaming, I tore down the trail to the glen. Dead branches raked my face and I flailed at them with my arms as I crashed through them. At last I burst from the gloom of the pine forest into the sunlight and stopped, gasping, for breath. Here! Here on the spot where the trail ended at the top of the glen was where I had glimpsed the orange cap. Where I had carefully drawn my sight to the left side of the blaze orange jacket as it appeared. The blast of the gun, the body pitching forward, tumbling, rolling. It all came back, spinning, as I did, I looked down in horror at the sight before me. The coat, torn from the blast of the bullet and rotted from the dampness, had pulled away in my hands and the upper torso lay exposed. I gasped. The chest, a ghastly, putrid whiteness, withered with maggots, bloodless white like the flesh they tunneled in. The body had flattened and bleached as it lay on the ground, but a smear of the dank, black earth was wedged in the deep cleft between the breasts, leaving no question as to their roundness. I felt my own chest plunged suddenly into an icy vat of terror as I forced my eyes upwards to brown curls that spilt out of the cap. Maggots crawled everywhere on the face. They whipped and squirmed in nostrils, slithered and writhed with bared teeth where they had eaten away the soft flesh of the lips, and boiled in a squirming mass in the sockets of each eye. The eyes! I knew the shape of them, even with their ghastly tenants, and above them, the wide, straight brows gave them an expression as to their roundness.

I gasped at the back of the orange jacket with my two hands and flipped it over. It rolled, grudgingly, and one arm, flopping, fell across my foot. I leaped back, kicking it away from me, and as I did, I looked down in horror at the sight before me. The coat, torn from the blast of the bullet and rotted from the dampness, had pulled away in my hands and the upper torso lay exposed. I gasped. The chest, a ghastly, putrid whiteness, withered with maggots, bloodless white like the flesh they tunneled in. The body had flattened and bleached as it lay on the ground, but a smear of the dank, black earth was wedged in the deep cleft between the breasts, leaving no question as to their roundness.

The nurses here don't care how many times a day I have to scrub the maggots off. Sometimes I think I have got them all, and then I stagger back to my cot, exhausted. But always, While I sleep, they come crawling, crawling back, and I wake up screaming. The little blond nurse who comes on duty after midnight hears me scream. She runs to the side of my bed and hands me the washcloth, without asking.

A. T. Larkin

Near the bottom, my legs shot out from under me, and I fell. I picked myself up, half turning, and it was then that I saw the blaze orange cloth. Half-hidden under the furs, the body, or what was left of it, lay sprawled face downward, the orange cap, knocked away, still covering the back of the head. My chest sweated with the madness of my beating heart, and I laughed out loud in the ecstasy of anticipation. Now! Now! I would see that it was not Dora! Not Dora at all, but a nameless, worthless hunter, so unimportant to the world that no one had even declared him missing!

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A. T. Larkin

After Longley

Phil Paratore

Whenever I went into the State House in Augusta during the final three months of Jim Longley’s reign as Your Governor (as he called himself), I skirted the second floor where Longley was holed up behind his locked doors.

I was afraid.

I knew that somewhere behind those doors Longley was lurking, perhaps pecking out occasionally to see who was passing. And so the doors were locked for four years. Even I, or one of his helpers might, and he would sound some sort of alarm and the State Police would come and arrest me.

This was after my book, The Year of the Longley, had come out. Longley’s commissioner of Finance and Administration had tried to stop me from being sold in the State House cafeteria. Longley had telephoned former Governor Elmer Lugosi in Paris in the middle of the night to try to get him to fly home from a business trip and denounce the book. “For the sake of your good name, Ken,” Longley said.

The Associated Press found out about the book ban, and soon Longley’s commissioner of Finance and Administration was back apologizing to the book stall clerk and denying he had tried to ban anything.

Curtis, who had been kicking himself for four years for taking Longley’s political ambition (it was Curtis who had put Longley on the government cost study that catapulted him into the Blaine House), suspected his “good name” really wasn’t in jeopardy. He turned Longley down.

Your Governor finally had wound up issuing a “memo”—as opposed to a “statement!”—saying he hadn’t read the book, wasn’t going to read it, and would have nothing to say about it except that it was all a pack of lies.

I had an uneasy feeling that the book — Longley took to calling it “his book” when he had to call it anything at all — might have earned me a place on Longley’s enemies list. The list was many people who over the years had stopped short of calling Longley a wonderful governor. I wasn’t sure that was enough to get me on Longley’s enemies list, but it made me feel nervous about going into the State House.

But in January Joe Brennan became Maine’s new governor. I was. I was. I was. So one day I went up to the second floor, passed through the Hall of Flags, and approached the governor’s suite to see what it was like without Jim Longley.

The first thing I saw was that the Dutch door was gone.

This was the door Longley had had specially installed so nobody couldn’t get into his office. Although he often had said his was the most open administration in history, he seemed to like the Dutch door in secret. And so he kept his doors locked for four years, and you couldn’t get in.

Except for one door, the Dutch door. The bottom half of the door was gone but the top half was open and if you had some business with someone inside, you had to stand out in the corridor and announce your business over the bottom half to an unsmiling, aloof receptionist some distance away in the outer office.
Brennan had been governor for weeks and yet he had remained silent about such dangers. Not once had he warned us about professional politicians who hold the party above the people, sincere-seekers of bureaucrats, state employees on coffee breaks, special interests with pork barreis, union leaders who didn’t speak for their memberships or liberal newspaper writers who attacked a person and his family. Had these villains suddenly gone away? Or had they possibly reformed? Or . . . could the silence mean that our government was no longer there?

“Oh, it’s here,” Larry Snippel, Brennan’s press aide, assured me. “It’s just that it’s government without hysterics.”

For the moment, Longley’s holy war was over. Headline writers, editorialists, political analysts were going to miss him. Not because politically he was naive or naive, wise or foolhard, good or a harried, a precursor or a freak; but because, if he was nothing else, he was fun to write about, to tell stories about.

If anything is portended by my dream, however, he’ll be back. I have had this dream. I am in an amusement park, bumping along through a tunnel in a little red car on a track. Ahead of me in the darkness I can make out a door. As the car approaches it, the door slowly opens and a stiff dark figure, the figure of a man, emerges.

I anticipate — I am trying not to be frightened — that the figure will be wearing a black cape and will say with a diabolical Transylvanian accent:

“Welcome to my castle.”

But as I am drawn closer, I see the figure is clothed in a dark blue business suit and that it is wearing a gold watch, a Bowdoin College class ring and a lap pin which appears to bear the emblem of some life insurance organization.

The figure glares at me with intense blue eyes. It opens its mouth to speak and I am filled with dread.

“Willis,” it says in a Maine accent even more diabolical than Transylvanian, “that was a real cheap shot.”

Willy Johnson

I built a false grandfather

With a toppad for clothing skiffs for his shoes, barnacles took the place of whiskers, pot warp ‘stead o’ hair.

With the comenstance of a can busy, #3, he looked very cute — Almost real.

Charles Oaks

The election campaign was over and Longley was gone: but Brennan seemed to sense his presence, like a strong scent lingering in the air. He didn’t seem to want to make the horde of professional politicians — or antagone Longley and his followers. He submitted a modest budget and reappointed several of Longley’s commissioners. Some of them begged, some of them accepted, some of them were turned away.

Brennan’s campaign and now was one of his top aides.

You could not see Longley’s inner office from the door and, for that matter, you could not see any more of the outer office, either, because the clerks (each man in a room that held the clerks’ desks and a filing cabinet) blocked your view. I understood from inside sources, of three clerks typing memos and statements and filing papers in gray metal filing cabinets.

Presumably because of these polls, Joe Brennan, the former liberal Democrat, started sounding more and more like Longley, who used to describe himself as a “fiscally-conservative-albeit-extremely-liberal humanitarian.” Brennan, however, did not sound so much like Longley as did the Republican candidate, Liwad Wilson, Palmer, who at one point returned to the Longley voice, became the “pro-African politician,” or as did Budie Frankland, the falsetto-voiced Baptist minister who vowed to follow Longley’s precepts for salvation of government. (“Children as well as adults not only need disciplining, but they want discipline.” Longley once preached in Frankland’s church in Bangor.)

The election campaign was over and Longley was gone: but Brennan seemed to sense his presence, like a strong scent lingering in the air. He didn’t seem to want to make the horde of professional politicians — or antagone Longley and his followers. He submitted a modest budget and reappointed several of Longley’s commissioners. Some of them begged, some of them accepted, some of them were turned away.

Yet fundamental changes were evident. I went to a news conference and listened to a confident Joe Brennan answer questions quickly, simply, directly.

When he didn’t know an answer, he would admit it.

Longley rarely said he didn’t know. When he didn’t know, his method was to respond quickly, simply, directly.

An Immodest Proposal

The facts are startling. Today, one out of ten Americans is sixty-five or older. In the next five years, one out of six of us will be over sixty-five. Today, women outlive men by eight years. For those women over sixty-five, not all in danger of being made impoverished.

Of course, for some, widowhood means the loss of identity that the “role voids” created by age and a spouse’s death. We must recognize trends to bring elderly people and children to-
An Interview with Stephen King

Why live in Maine? I’ve (Tubby and I) have both lived in Maine most of our lives, and I think you are where you live even more. It’s a very peaceful place. We usually go away for a couple of weeks in the dead heat of July and August to some jolly subtropical place where young men with hair processors and nosegays play guitar beside the pool. We usually have a pretty cruddy time. Maine people are all grim masochists at heart, I think, and they find they can’t remember. When I was a child of such children’s books as Bomba the Jungenen.

Anyway, I’ve wanted to write for as long as I can remember, except for a brief period when I wanted to be the guy who went around in the old pick-up truck chanting, ‘RATS!’ out your rear wheel as well. They plowed that one out anyway.

Were you interested in writing or becoming a WRITER? It wasn’t a case of wanting to be a WRITER or a WRITER. I just liked making things up, especially exciting stuff. Having fantasy adventures. Telling myself what would happen next.

Any special writers you’d recommend to young writers? If it’s fiction writers you’re referring to, I think, they should read James M. Cain, who knew how to get his probe to the bone and make it sing at the same time. Thomas Williams for the peculiar tone and weight he can give to physical things, and for serious prose that never postures. Ross MacDonald for heart and honesty, Raymond Chandler for pace, K. R. R. Tolkien for story and feeling and that curious ability the best fiction has to create a trompe l’oeil that makes fiction somehow real, more real than life. Also Mickey Spillane, of course. Jackie Canby and a thousand others for what not to do.

What’s the best motivation a writer can have? The best motivation a writer can have is hunger and the desire to make money will destroy him as an artist. But that’s not to say he can’t make money. He’s an artist. His integrity and the honest intent to do well aren’t worth a shit anyway.

*Since defeated for re-election*

I can remember, except for a brief period when I wanted to be the guy who went around in the old pick-up truck chanting, ‘RATS!’ out your rear wheel as well. They plowed that one out anyway.

But I suppose there are other things, a desire to entertain, to explore character, perhaps even make a serious comment on the human condition? Yes, I suppose that’s what I try to attempt. I attempt to convey, along with the need to make things up and create a fantasy for myself (if you need a fantasy for anyone else, it’s interesting), what I also write out of the fear that, if I stop, I’ll never be able to start again.

But fewer people pay any attention to you, anyway. They seem to think some far less important in our society. Is literature itself becoming a neglected form? Yes. I think that all forms of literature are now endangered. It’s not an accident that each year a hundred or so of them rush into the hands of the entertainment conglomerates. Poetry as a popular literary form has ceased to exist, except in the form of doggerel. There has not been a best-selling collection of short stories since John Fowles’ The Ebony Tower, four years ago. Since then, the only book of short stories to receive any recognition has been the simply fact that we didn’t leave. We’ve never been there. But I suppose every writer has his or her own reasons for believing that the black ink lies more in the direction of what has been called ‘Made-for-TV movies of the mind’ — books like the John Jakes Bicentennial series (or Kent Haruf’s plain Jane, which is a literary novel that has not occurred and probably will not for years, if ever; but there has been a steady degeneration in literary and in reader imagination. I would guess that fully 60% of all novels now are written by people who have never published a book in some way or other — usually with trepidation. I’m glad to append.

Steve King’s The Stand

All of Steve King’s novels are about disasters, and about the survivors of disasters. “I only am escaped alone to tell the woe.” These words serve as the epigraph to the last chapter of Moby Dick; the chapter in which Ishmael tells how he survived the destruction of the Pequod and returned to tell us of Ahab’s mad quest for revenge. And so it is with Steve’s novels. I am no more responsible for the events in The Stand, Steve King’s new novel, than the survivors of the “superflu” attempt to exterminate all life on earth, and the virus that they have botched up the world, but the idea was that we could buy a really nice house and pay for it out of $20,000 a year. The idea was that we could all live in half of a half of it, that my son and brother and I and maybe my old mother too and my dear old dog Whiskey Chippy, but most of it was the simply fact that we couldn’t leave. I guess we’ll all be there when I’m done.

What first got you interested in literature? I can’t remember. When I was a little kid I was sick a lot and used to copy stories out of such children’s books as Bomba the Jungle Boy and such. Anyway, I’ve wanted to write for as long as I can remember, except for a brief period when I wanted to be the guy who went around in the old pick-up truck chanting, ‘RATS!’ out your rear wheel as well. They plowed that one out anyway.

Many writers have complained that their formal education interfered with their becoming writers. I don’t think anything happened at UMO that hindered me, I was a good student, most notably by Ted Holmes, who taught creative writing at that time, and by Bart Hughes, who teaches there now and who insisted that there was an American idiom that could be pursued fruitfully in the popular novel or in the mystery or the writers who are “made” by college are those who have seen the really good ones (say, Faulkner) take little or no impromptu from any sort of organized education. If you like a book, read it again and read about how he was four dollars per image of His opposite number, and is always trying to get back home.

Glen Bateman’s view of human society is bleak indeed: but as we watch the story of this book develop, we realize that the hlack ink lies more in the direction of what has been called ‘Made-for-TV movies of the mind’ — books like the John Jakes Bicentennial series (or Kent Haruf’s plain Jane, which is a literary novel that has not occurred and probably will not for years, if ever; but there has been a steady degeneration in literary and in reader imagination. I would guess that fully 60% of all novels now are written by people who have never published a book in some way or other — usually with trepidation. I’m glad to append.

While The Stand reveals to us the fatal flaw in society, however, the book also consistently suggests that a willingness to live on is the key to the survival and inner strength of our society. It is a testament to our human condition? Yes, those things motivate me. I must say, with all the popular horror novels here. Our great supernatur- al/horror writers have died broke (Poe, Lovecraft, De Camp, Jack Williamson, Richard Mathers, A. Donald Wandrei). That’s because what Americans have seemed to want most of all until recently is railroading and tities; the true American dream up until the last fifteen years or so might well have been long railroad tracks lined with tits (see the last page of this month’s G&F magazine). I have always written about the supernatural and the occult because I like to live in a world where anything can happen — extraordinary situations...what Hemingway called “the breaking strain.”

That I’d
The simple satisfaction of being with other people — this, to be sure, is red in all. And as we read The Stand, we feel our stomachs turn. It’s just not fair. Our main character, Glen Bateman, is at best only half-right: that the glow of human society is not only our primary means to improve our outlooks, but also our elemental need for one another.

The power of The Stand inheres (for me at least) primarily in its carefully maintained dual perspective on the nature of society. In virtually every episode, we can see both the tragic and destructive tendencies in society as a whole. A case in point is the story of Nick and Stanley, two characters of the central characters. Nick is a redneck; he is also a homeless orphan; and when we first meet him he is being assailed by a gang of good ol’ boys. Thus, we see how the world is turned as Harold Lauer. Yet again and again in the course of the life of Nick, the result is that Glen Bateman is at best only half-right: that the glow of human society is not only our primary means to improve our outlooks, but also our elemental need for one another.

The Stand demands a complex response to us; and it deserves such a response, for it is perhaps the great question: Where do you get your idea of the world?
The Scare of the Black Hundreds

Down the snow-filled path we go, Kate and I, along the hedge, under the ancient apple tree, its bark clinging to it like lava, into the shed of the Lepman's old farmhouse. We balance our house gifts in mittened hands, stamping our feet and calling.

The Lepmans have heard us. The back door flies open and out they come, explaining, warm, enveloping. Bearhugs and kisses all around.

"For you," Kate gives Emily the loaves of bread she'd baked this morning. "You like the oatmeal and I tried a pumpkin, too." 

"For you," I say teasing. "Someone heard you," she says. "You may not have a goose, but you're getting the feathers."

We all look at each other in the happy intimacy of old friends, no words needed.

Mike picks up his bag, laughing ironically. "Those were summer memories. Winter ones are not so good."

He hands us our drinks, continuing.

"When I look at Mike's square back, now, sturdy, enduring; when his brown eyes are fragrant with the odor of roasting vegetables. We grew everything, all the way.

"When he'd return from his trips, he looked very imposing, not too tall, but big, with a full, gray beard. Big fur mittens, Persian lamb hat and boots like yours."

"Like Father Christmas." "Or St. Nicholas?" "How about the old Polish Santa Claus?"

Mike acknowledged our flippancy, but smiled warmly as he hands me my drink; he think of the horror hidden behind his eyes; I think of the nightmares of Michail and am awe-struck. To have been through Armageddon and to reappear with such grace and charm, such goodness, makes me ashamed of my easy life touched only by the usual little incidents of time and stabs of fate, wrong choices rather well-balanced by lucky ones. While right there, just the thickness of a thought away, lies such a reservoir of memories, deep, dark, slippery. One unconscious step and you may plunge to the bottom.

This time, Mike notices my boots, rather fancy ones Kate gave me for Christmas. "Ah," he says, "Reindeer hide. A rich man."

"Look at those red laces," Emily laughs. "It's the Russian Ballet."

"Petrouchka?" asks Kate.

"No, no. This is Lapland." Mike throws a log of applewood on the fire and stands before it, soaking up heat before he sits down in the big green wing chair.

"My grandfather was a fur dealer, Jacob Gurewitz, my mother's father. He used to go to Lapland and buy furs. Then he'd leave the Lapps and come back to us and sell the pelts to a wholesaler. A rich man.

"When he'd return from one of his trips, he looked very imposing. Not too tall, but big, with a full, gray beard. Big fur mittens, Persian lamb hat and boots like yours."

"Like Father Christmas." "Or St. Nicholas?"

"How about the old Polish Santa Claus?"

Mike acknowledged our flippancy, but an old memory was stirring and, like a prophet possessed, he was forced to speak. To cleanse himself? So that he might return to the studio? Our memories are all computers. A wheel turns, gears grind, and out comes an answer. What has been fed in must come out, no matter how painful. But why am I telling you? I'd frozen the pain until the next time? Only until the wheel turns again?

"We had a synagogue in Zidikai (it was right behind our house, but Lithuania is largely Roman Catholic so, of course, we had a big church for all the peasants. It was at the end of the one street in the village, beyond the cemetery. This church had two bells, a small one to ring daily to call people to mass, and a big bell called the Gevald bell that was rung only for something important like Christmas, or Easter, or in time of danger. Except for holidays, this bell only rang three times while I was living in Zidikai.)" 

"I remember the first time I heard the Gevald bell was about this season of the year, just after Christmas. Oh, it was cold! Sometimes 27° below for days. I had stayed close to Edward and the other boys and it was dark as I turned in at our gate. The icy road was empty and out of all the houses along it shone yellow lamp-light. At the end of the road, behind the black trees in the cemetery, a red sunset shone sullenly. It looked so familiar, so safe."

"Then I walked into our kitchen."
At the Dairy Bar on Route I
During a Late June Thunderstorm

Two flat tires on the way to work,
a '52 Fairlane with no springs,
cold coffee, and now you've smashed your elbow,
blamed, on the tailgate of Heine
Mueller's truck.
do ya say, binky, your silver fingin' looks close up like greasy tin foil?
by the way, Maggie the barmaid called.
says she needs to talk about last Saturday.

David Adam

We're waiting for quick service,
someone's hand reaching across the tiny window with a basket
of fast food to go.

Inside, the electric fan is circling against humidity.
Skies crock; the lingering stizz of grease on my fingertips.
The blue evening heat is like pain.

Kathleen Linnell

Above us, insects are surrendering to the heat, the cage wires snapping like tongues of lizards curtaining flame.
Nothing survives. It traps small things whole, and back what it can't digest, satin wings and six thin legs.
The dust on the county road is settling into rain.
Renovation

Married four years and very successful, Richard (law, and Sally (women's fashions) were ready for renovation. So, when they spotted the sign "Glotz, A Common Laborer," they pulled into the drive.

"We seek to achieve a home that is truly ours, that reflects our personali-
ties yet preserves, extends and en-
hances the architectural heritage of our civilization," Sally explained to Glotz who resembled a giant toad.

"But we," said Richard, "know the history. We know that attempts to improve and re
build must often be preceded by an
epoch of disorder. All societies contain
disharmony doesn't mesh with my
values.

Glotz blinked his heavy-lidded eyes and flexed his wary fingers. "You're on the show, with the thin-wire, trouser
lips."

That very Saturday Glotz bashed and ripped.

"Promptness," Richard said. "Good
sign. It shows concerns for a feeling for the right and hopes of whether looking at the guy you'd never guess it
to terms."

Glotz nodded, dull ripples of mottled
we have no
no response.

"We're expanding the kitchen area, reworking the dining area and enlarging the family area though we have no family. The extended family scaredly exists in this country nowa-
days, you may not know that being a
communist laborer, it's not your fault that
I'm a professional and you're a toad,
I mean laborer, I'm sure it's a quirk of
is standardized, a horror really, but no
all, we need you for it.버 discriminate, Pepsi Lane number 235, lots of ripping and bashing. So what do you say?"

"You've let flies in, man. Not that it's
hurt things, how could it hurt anything in a suit menu. It's just that — well, I
you suspect a certain sensitivity to understand, an aesthetic 

"I hate it now," said Richard. "Order is preserved by law. Need clean trim polished
pissed.

"He had diagrams," Sally said with a worried frown. "A sheet of plans. You don't suppose?"

"He wouldn't dare. No, even destruc-
tion requires method, sequence, step
by step, that's all it is."

"No sense of style. Just circuses and bread
but the noise was grating on her

"You do feel," Richard said. "The

Glotz stopped for a second, turned a
shocking fat lump of tongue protruded
from his lips then disappeared. He set to
work again.

"Did you stick your tongue —?" Richard scowled. "Did you actually
stick —?"

Glotz turned again, abruptly this time, glaring, and Richard swallowed. "Get on with your business," he said with a
wave of his hand. "And ... take care of these flies!"

Glotz pounded after dark. Richard, dressed for restaurant, shouted, "You're certainly well suited for your
job. Did you take an aptitude test?

Read the works of Genghis Khan? Attila? We're
to bring those exter-
cutors in now, and you've certainly
pulled it off, I'm afraid.

My god it's cold! And will it — express our personalities?"

Glotz stopped his ripping, wrecking bar and hammer.

"What about my person-
ality?" he asked with narrowed eyes.

"I've been thinking about that myself," said Richard, "and you really ought to ask yourself. You're nobody. I mean we're not
on time these days, hard to get it to do
your unquestioned bidding as in days
gone upstairs and was under quilts,
then, nostrils

Shocking! The door was unlocked and
they soon saw why Glotz was still
at work. 10:49 PM. He looked fresh
and his eyes glaze is light. And, it had
been rapped, all nooks were gone and two partitions, too.

"For a toad he's such a prima donna," Sally said.

Richard, coat on, drinking coffee,
roamed the patio. Glotz's noise had
settled. "Squatter's rights!"

Glotz soared. "Oh how can one have a dialogue with you when you stand there
like a rock? All right, I have to leave, but one
more thing — does it hurt? You get out now and then, you smash yourself, does it? You fascinate me in a
way," and as Glotz reached up to 'rip a
bead, Richard struck a match and held it against the dark thick callused el-
bow. "Humph!" Glotz roared.

"You do feel," Richard said. "The
neural network, the spinal references.

By its common name — squat-
ter's rights.

Glotz eyes lit up. He burst with laugh-
ter. "Squatter's rights!"

Richard scowled. "Oh how can one
have a dialogue with you when you stand there
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ter. "Squatter's rights!"
arts as well as his chosen field, a build-
er with English tongue. It's raining. Glotz, a
some plastic is in order! Suppose we
had a family in this family room, can
you see what a fix we'd be in? Hello?
Okay, don't answer, but—

Glotz sprang from the fenced-off hole
with a grin. Richard hung up the phone.
"Do you understand what I'm getting
at?" Glotz hopped around grabbing
tools in his wiry hands. He ripped
and bashed, fixed a floorboard up.
Richard's voice was drowned in the
sound of the huge red reciprocal saw
he shouldered, "Glotz! We're prime
consumers, keep that in mind! We
make the world go 'round no matter
what your ilk might think. 'I like', ha, let's
see you calne that word! I have thirty
pairs of shoes, a hundred suits!"

Glotz showed no sign of having heard.
"You're important too," Richard said.
"Is that what you're thinking? Because
you consume colossal amounts of
beer? What is that to the
whole."

Richard hung up the phone. Richard
backed up slightly. "Well, it's
impressive," he said,
"Could we peel away this bark and
their lives, natty nine-fingered Richard
 grew it groaned it shaped the timbre of
that's the way it is with creatures of
human."

Glotz showed no sign of having heard.
"All right, we're going, we're going,
we'll hit the Virgin Islands for a bit, no
sweat to get time off in my profession.
In barn you don't suppose your line of work pro-
des such options but you probably go
someplace when amounts to roughly
the same thing. You want me to pick up
some rum for you while I'm there?"

Glotz grabbed his reciprocal saw and
swirled it soared it shaped the timbre of
himself as
a wicked hook out on my feet
and lose

Richard shook his head. "It isn't us!"
he said to the lumpy Glotz who climbed
green-skinned down a rope from the
turret's top. "A man's home is his
property! Is that the level of your sensi-
bility? You've made a grave mistake,
this lichen on the ceiling, it's excess;'
and Glotz stood there with folds of skin
in his eyes. "Alienation, Glotz? Is that
it? Well sure, we're all alienated, I'm
alienated, Sally's alienated but it
doesn't excite this incredible lapse of
taste. It's a case of not knowing
your limitations, we all have limitations
and I think at your age — I mean
you're not a kid. On your abysmal lack
of ability to communicate! Is this the
thanks we get for trusting you with
our kids? This wooden dragon or worm-
even, really! I'm afraid you were
inately ill-equipped to undertake —

"My masterpiece!" Glotz roared with
waved red eyes.
Leo Connellan’s Death In Lobster Land (a review)

Eudora Welty, in her examination of place in the poetry of the South — Booth, one condition we may hazard about writing: of all the arts, it is the one least likely to cut the cord that binds it to its source. And it is this sense of place that is the strength of Leo Connellan’s latest book; it is the source of his poems. Lobster Land is poetry about sources — about people, about the land, about the Maine the poet loves. These poems, in their celebration of place, are poignant statements of that sense of loss that makes up our personal equation — a need. Where are we, in the context of our own equation? The immediacy of place, the places of Maine, the places of the heart, inform these poems with a harsh lyric sensibility.

The flipper of a sea wave slapping inches of the shore. Scent of deer moss and fern scoured, all the silence shattered by the abrupt dog bark of gun blast, rattling the knuckles of water that let a stranger’s boat lie bobbing and the foreigner loosing!

In the blood night of chaotic poverty Otto took me to get the Gaylor sisters in Union, to drive some place full of pine and boozed smell in mosquito heat and plague into.

It is a truism that writers write best about what they know. Some accomplish this by staying where they are. Leo Connellan went on to other places — The Gunmen Of Old, A mother Poet In New York, Crossing America. Yes, there have been other places in the poet’s life. But Connellan’s ability to handle sensory detail, to transmit the feel and smell and taste and touch and sound of reality, wherever encountered, evokes from the underlying sense he has of his place — Maine. The urgency, the harsh immediacy of Maine life, a bitterness imposed by the salt water beginnings of his own life, are the deep roots of his poetry. His bitterness is the bitterness imposed by reality; a bitterness controlled by his literary skill and made eloquent by his love for Maine.

In the beginning I deployed my armies casually along the equator to acknow my son off guard

“You’re spreading yourself too thin,” he warned.

“I like warm weather.”

My armies held the American south, Central America and Brazil, North America, the Mediterranean lands, India and the roads to Mondial.

Except for Australia, he concentrated his forces in the north — Asia, Europe and America. We studied the board.

He looked up, eyes cold blue and gray — a twelve-year-old Alexander.

“Dad, it’s a good thing for you weren’t a general in World War Two!”

“I’ve got my strategy,” I cautioned.

We rolled our dice.

He came like Attila out of Asia, dividing my lands running the warm seas.

I spread myself too thin in a jints toward Alaska, lost heavily along the Andes.

Then a pincer movement out of Australia and Asia was his. I counter-attacked desperately into Canada.

“That’s a dumb thing to do!”


He swept west, circling the Mediterranean, lost in Africa as I strac from Brazil. He moved massively from Greenland from Europe. I was decimated trying a thrust into the Orient.

“I don’t think, dad,” he said gently, “that Alexander the Great was very careful.”

The end came abruptly. His hordes swept pitilessly over my scattered armies until only two remained, holding desperately in the Eastern United States. He prepared for the kill.

“I surrender.”

“What do you mean, surrender!” He rattlenashed his dice, eyes cold.

“You can’t just quit like that. Make a fight for it!”

“Sorry, son. I surrender — and live to join another day.”

“But that means I haven’t conquered the world!”

“Neither did Alexander the Great. It’s the risk one takes.”

It is autumn now in my country. From time to time words of conquest and defeats reach me from beyond the borders of my stink, seasonal world — terse communiques from far countries in response to my observations. He again reminds me that my strategy are mine. He has his. But at least our communication lines remain open. It is the risk one takes.

The Plight of the Maine Artist

Threatened by extinction, subjected to unprecedented poaching and loss of habitat, Arturus Americanus Veritas is rapidly vanishing. Maine’s most vulnerable species can be recognized by their essential beauty, their poignancy and impressions received by the artist freely mingle. The young are especially threatened by this shrinking habitat, for it is here the species is the most vulnerable to poaching. Poachers are those who consider art another commodity, the artist an expendable item. They come from entrepreneurs who have chosen to self-sustain art superstructure that feeds on itself, ignores the purity of the creative thrust. More safely and devastatingly, they come from that mutated subspecies of artists who write off of and in agreement with this superstructure.

The artist has always faced the conflict between the long-term need to tend creative space and the short-term need to merely survive. However, modern economies have driven a wedge deep into the root of this dilemma, forcing a choice, either result of which forshadows the death of the species. Funding does exist for the arts, but granting-getting is usually reduced to the “who you know” syndrome, or the “you can’t be granted until you’ve already been granted” innanity. The same holds true for galleries, who are programmed to accept what has already been accepted. Most young artists can no longer secure positions instructing college art, an area of intense competition and paper qualification. Secondary and grammar schools simply do not allow in-struction of art veritas. Those who look for subsistence here find their creative space shrinking successively into oblivion. Part-time survival jobs are extolled, and in rural areas, non-existent. Self-subistence is a romantic idea, but is a full-time commitment which eliminates any creative space as pressingly as any other occupation. More often than not, Arturus Americanus Veritas begins to suffer from the anemia of factory town, in which the fragile sense of growing self-pales in due proportion with the speed of the assembly line. The stomach aches, the price of art supplies prohibits purchase. And the confusion caused by trying to survive in an economically bred culture with which does and impressions received are basically non-economic, results in near psychos. Survival chances become min-

The hungry reality of this impossible situation is exacerbated for young artists living in Maine. Here reigns an essential paradox: the state offers unparalleled geographical beauty, and therefore provides a constant stimulus for creative energy and a peripheral rebel of igniter, eh; the state has no spot, the interior and exterior opportunities for young artists, and as it is already considered depressed, very few substantive jobs are available. Maine is the perfect place for the well established, older artist. What young artists need are shows and a security in New York City for support. But for the unknown artist, especially one not given to the limelight, a summer stay at a foggy-beach school of art, survival means long, hungry months of begging for jobs that aren’t there, in order to purchase art supplies too expensive to buy, to try to...
express a vision continually depressed by hostile economic circumstances. This is especially true in rural areas, where the artist is considered a strange sort of being, and therefore has not only no economic support, but also negligible human support.

A desperate situation, but not a hopeless one. There is something that can be done, and it has to do with evolving a cultural adaptation long neglected by artists — the voice. As verbal acuity is not necessarily a part of visual creative expression, the voice should be raised to ask only a very simple question: Why cannot employment be created for artists as it is for other members of the labor force? Surely this is an old whisper, but it is time to turn up the volume. For too long artists have accepted their grim starved youth as an integral part of creative development; but the attitude that suffering builds character, in this case artistic sense, is as medieval a concept as flagellation. If artists received employment to insure some minimal level of subsistence consistent with one's work, survival and growth of the species would be assured. Young artists are fleasdrigs who usually need a long apprenticeship to grow into mature artists with realized expressions. If during this time they had what is basic to all human beings, the right to earn a minimal wage, to put food on the table in a manner satisfying to one's being, habitat would be secured. The species would flourish.

A nice idea. But the American culture, for all its wealth and education, still does not recognize art as fulfilling a necessary function. It is dismissed as some peripheral oddity. How does one convince people that an artist-in-residence is at least as valuable, and much less expensive, than that bit of interstate highway or new sewers on Main St.? The idea of a political lobby or union of artists is not only chauvinistic, but also antithetical to the artist's nature. Artists should never have to mute the edges of their individual voices to blend with some collective whole. The art unions that are sprouting up in various towns are without the means and influence to act effectively, and usually tend toward self-aggrandizement.

There are, however, structures already in existence that could serve as megaphones for the voice: the local state councils for the arts. However, the state councils do to date not serve the needs of the majority of the artists for whom they are intended. But if they are relatively new organizations, there is room for growth, and positive action still could be generated and used effectively by and for young artists. The councils can provide funding, in part or full, and offer specialized organization and a sort of cloak of “respectability” for presenting creative ideas to non-aesthetic parties. So if the state and every artist extended personal responsibility to include the raising of the voice, the asking of the question, and the bringing of that question to the state council, the idea of public employment of the artist would begin to generate its own existence. For Maine artists, getting the Commission of the Arts to listen, whose members, welders, occupational therapists, occupying bodies, reaching for castles, airfilled dreams, mattresses of water.

We need something to be crazy over. Our songs are filled with gunmen, empty caches. Our bodies case our minds — flat faces standing in their clocks until the parts wear out. We run like gingerbread men, chased by the woman who has baked us, rolling pin to flatten our cookie.

Gold, we discovered, heavy blocks for hiding; passion green as money, its currency stays until our golden skin stays in flats in finals, we run around as children with bald heads, double chins, pretending last, pretending pretense.

Like ponds reflecting weight we long for their reflections — the green arms and lines of banks as images we bear in pain and sorrow.

Tomorrow, unlike trees, we know we will be bare, futile matter spun to stellar dust.

Going To Haul — Winter’s Day

Oh fuck — 3 o'clock. Turn off the goddam alarm — look out the window. Blowing? Yeah, but not enough — we go. Downstairs, 4 cups of coffee pack of cigarettes feed the cat and out. Skiff on the shore. Motherfucking, that seat is cold — and wet! Aboard the boat. Check her vitals, light her off drop the mooring, head her out.

Exhaust steaming, can’t see shit — open the window. Sweet Jesus — ain’t she cold? Round the light. Harbor estar. Tuck it to her run for the bell. Take it easy, light up. Good day, clear, wind east. Big rollers by Harter’s Island. Outside Gunning Rocks. She lifts gently on the first sea. Old girl likes it.

Nice day, nice day. Bring her around, make for the whistle. She shudders, comes alive, pitches into the seas. A long slow roller coaster ride. On the whistle. Check the marks, first pair — gaff — buoy — block — hauler —

coil the warp — pitch it — coil the warp — pitch it. 45 fathoms. Main trap on washboard — clean it, bait it, 3 in the barrel, 2 overboard, slide it, haul ‘er, tail ‘er, on the washboard, clean it bait it 2 in barrel 4 overboard — check the marks, pitch, tailer, 12 fathoms, pitch the main, next pair —

paffboxblockhaul’ercolipitch — look up — Monhegan . . . beautiful — main trap, tail’er clean and pinchnextpairhaulandpitchhaulandpitch, two hours, side’s running, buoy’s under. Hard findin’ ‘em.

Outside Old Cilley, breezin’ up, swinging to the south’erd — goddam old Novi Shal side to all the time, fuckin’ where your head keep up! Roll your guts out, shit flyin’. By Burnt Island. Last pair — haul and pitch, look up. Black outside Monhegan — fuck! Oh well, one more string. Come about, strike for the bell. Drive her!

Pitch dive jump friggin’ spray wet cold twist turn roll hold on! Bow’s under, slack her off — goddam bitch, you may be old but you still got it. Comin’ up on the bell sonofabitch of a hard place — Old Cilley.

First pair gaff buoy block haul’er (big green one) washboard under hand for the trap hand for me — tail ‘er clean and pitch next pair — look up. Feather white! Fuck, man, let’s get out of here! No hell with it, finish string — haulandpitchhaulandpitchwashboard’s under, last pair, pitch and go, head her home, stick it to her, seas off the quarter — bounces twist white water. Goddam asshole, someday that one more trap bullshit is going to kill you — come on you old whore, get us home.


The Whole Extent

The whole extent of earthly things is matter, we move with starry heavens in us

breathing troubadours, wandering minstrels, shopkeepers, welders, occupational therapists, occupying bodies, reaching for castles, airfilled dreams, mattresses of water.

We need something to be crazy over. Our songs are filled with gunmen, empty caches. Our bodies case our minds — flat faces standing in their clocks until the parts wear out.

We run like gingerbread men, chased by the woman who has baked us, rolling pin to flatten our cookie.

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Patricia Merfield

KENNEBEC, April, 1979
A Visit To Lenny

I got off the bus at Arlington Road. It was hot outside, the searing, midsummer Alabama heat that makes the sweater pop off your skull and slip on like caked mud. By the time I'd crossed the street the headband of my fringe blouse was soaked. I had the sticky feeling you get when you've been crying.

There was a gas station at the corner. A woman inside stared at a TV.

"What do you want?" she said when I came in.

"I'm looking for Oldfield Street."

"I've heard the name but I can't tell you where that son-of-a-bitch is. The maps is over there."

"Don't you have a map of Birmingham?"

"I got Georgia and Alabama. Ain't that enough?"

I thought of giving up then and going back to town. I'd lived in Birmingham five years before moving north last summer. This was my first trip back. There were still plenty of friends I hadn't seen; most of them lived in places cooler and cleaner and easier to get to than Oldfield Street. It was the last day of my vacation, I wondered if it was worth all the trouble to find a ten-year-old named Lenny.

There was a housing project on Arlington Road, a ranch-style development that looked as homey as Alabrats. The dirt patches out front must have been lawns, ten or twenty years ago before the stray shoes took over. A lot of children ran barefoot in the dust. Lenny wasn't one of them. None of the streets crossing the project were called Oldfield. My hair dried in wrinkles of sweat across my forehead. I swept it back under the hat and started walking.

I'd planned my last day in Birmingham all wrong, expecting to rent a car, call Lenny at nine, drive out and buy him a present. For a while he took a ten-year-old boy. I wondered if it was any more possible to find a ten-year-old named Lenny. The plan hadn't worked. The car rental agency wouldn't take a cash deposit. I called Lenny's number, but the phone was disconnected. I wished you could tel any man's number and ask to be put back on the line from now on. I ranted like a child.

I led him back inside. I took him to the bathroom and stood with him while he whimpered. When he was quiet; I washed his face and took him back to class. The paper airplane had been picked up. The children were writing out their names. Lenny put his head on his desk and wouldn't look up the rest of the day. I asked him to stay after school.

"I'm sorry, Lenny. We'll do better from now on. We'll start over tomorrow."

"You act like you hate me."

"I don't hate you. I like you. Didn't I straighten out the problem with Joey? Don't make mistakes just like children. Usually worse ones."

Lenny looked up. He nodded and bit his lip. He picked up his baseball glove and walked over to the door.

"I wish I could go back and change it, but I can't."

Nymph into tree

What if
the pearls of your home went slack... separated, lost their clasp... surrounded you with neat teeth?

Stonebene... your dilemmas granite for your dreamy eyes...

And the lake you chose for summer luped inward, puddle-dried, with elders choked its waters.

Would your heartbark flag through your pulse, scatter rings, rhythms unaccustomed and cellulose?

Would your sap open with soft syrups, spurt like an axe bit, and garniments of leaves slim out your wrists to twigs?

How many of your ankles could suffer this rooted weight?

And your laughter... Would it end?... extinct as wind?... or contact ilamas in some jungle future?

Deborah Ward

"What do you mean?"

"That rotten kid beat up my brother."

We talked to the second grade teacher.

"My students don't fight," she told Lenny."

"How come Joey's all full of bruises?"

"Joey's my only white child. I can't help it if the other children pick on him some. What can I do?"

"Black children know the difference between right and wrong." I said. "If they don't, you'd better tell them. Lenny, Mrs. Kavanaugh is responsible for Joey. She'll take good care of him from now on. If he has any more trouble, we'll go and see the principal."

It was almost noon. Traffic picked up. Air-conditioned cars always seem to speed when you're walking in the heat. The drivers looked pimpt and sleek. They wore sunglasses and dark suits, and kept the windows rolled up.

"What do you do if you don't have a pencil?" Lenny asked in class the day after the fight. "What if you crumple your paper? What if you don't want to listen to directions? What if it's a dumb assignment and you don't want to do it? You tipped his chair back, and smirked at the class. "You can't even think of an answer!"

"So you're tough," I told him after school. "You want to be a big shot. You'd better stop. We've had a hard year. I don't want trouble. Bes des, thought you were friends."

"Why should I do what you say?"

Lenny shrugged. "I'm not scared of you."

"What happens?" he asked boldly a few days later, "if you're so bad, and nasty, and mean that no one in the whole world can make you mind?"

Someone giggled. Lenny rubbed his hands and stood up. A boy gulped.

A desk tipped over with a crash.

"The teacher keeps you after school and gives you extra work," I replied.

Lenny put his hands on his hips. "What if you don't feel like staying after school?" More giggles. A fist thudded on a desk-top.

"The teacher calls your mother, and she comes down to school and gives you a thrashing."

Lenny crouched in his seat, chin propped in his palm. "What if the teacher is dumb, and your mother is dumb, and they tell lies about you and you get so mad you're meaner and badder than before?"

The giggles began again, and the guffaws, and the pounding fists. Lenny blew on his knuckles, rubbed them against his chest, and bowed with a grin. Some of the children crossed the street the headband of my fringe blouse.

"That's not true! You hate me. You don't want to get rid of me. You wish you never knew who I was."

I led him back inside. I took him in the bathroom and stood with him while he whimpered. When he was quiet; I washed his face and took him back to class. The paper airplane had been picked up. The children were writing out their names. Lenny put his head on his desk and wouldn't look up the rest of the day. I asked him to stay after school.

"I'm sorry, Lenny. We'll do better from now on. We'll start over tomorrow."

"You act like you hate me."

"I don't hate you. I like you. Didn't I straighten out the problem with Joey? Don't make mistakes just like children. Usually worse ones."

Lenny looked up. He nodded and bit his lip. He picked up his baseball glove and walked over to the door.

"I wish I could go back and change it, but I can't."

Silence. Mouths opened, but no sounds came out.

"And never come back?"

"Why come back? I'm in charge of this class, and everybody knows it but you. If you don't like it here, go to the prin-

Principal and tell him you want to go to a different school. That should solve the problem."

"You know what?" said Lenny quietly. "I think I will. He stamped across the room. "You want me to get out," he screamed in front of my desk, "and that's what I'm going to do!" I reached for him, but he bolted into the hallway. I ran after him. He headed for the front door. I chased him around the building, past the playground equipment, and out across the base and monuments. He tackled in center field. He lay sob-

bing in the hot sun.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean it. I don't want you to leave. I want you to stay in my class."

"That's not true! You hate me. You want to get rid of me. You wish you never knew who I was."

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"I wish I could go back and change it, but I can't."

To War Dead

Boys who walk through coffin blossoms I do not know why you die, leaving our young women like penguins with great open flippers because you have slipped forever out of their arms. 

Leaves of your young flowers fall like shook Horse-Chestnuts trees. You drop at my feet like field mice caught in moon fire.

Boys, your cries screech my dreams. We advance to live on the moon, slaughtering our world behind us; leaving no trace that we were ever brothers.

Leo Connell
I sat in a diner that afternoon, and brooded over a cup of coffee. I had to be back in the city that evening, and my train didn't always work. Toughness was a kind of caring. But I never grabbed children by the neck, nor massed them in s rash nests, nor way teachers did. I never dreamed I'd hurt anyone.

Lenny never challenged me after that. We never spoke until the next day.

"Where do you live?" he asked at lunch. "What do you do after school?" I bet you've seen the circus lots of times. I bet you go to ball games. Have you got a girl?"

He laid his fork down, waiting for an answer. He watched me as if he had a child on leave, or a bruise that tackle in center field. I hated to think I'd let him down.

"I'll take you to the circus if it comes to town," I promised.

But school got rougher. Instead of teaching, I broke up fights and settled arguments. My hands began to tremble when I drank my coffee. The circus came to town, but I was too exhausted to take Lenny to see it. The children followed him, made him a lunch room. I didn't eat with Lenny any more.

By 12:30 I still hadn't reached a residential neighborhood, not even the run-down kind Lenny's mother, with her welfare check and social security, might be able to afford. I was ready to give up, to picture the abandoned cars swopped by Two old men started from a parked car I felt ridiculous. Teachers don't go on hikes a thousands miles from home, looking for kids they once had in class. You don't catch them with dusty shoes and soaked-through hoodies. But I never argued children by the neck, nor massed them in a rash nest, nor way teachers did. I never dreamed I'd hurt anyone.


What had I expected to find? What had been the odds that Lenny would be there? I'd arrived unannounced. I hadn't phoned or written. That empy doorway seemed as predictable as my excuses about the circus, the unwritten letters. I scanned out at the rows of houses and yards. My lips began to tremble.

I walked back to Arlington Road. There was a convenience food store a few blocks north, with a bus stop in front. I bought a newspaper and a coke, and sat under the air conditioner. I opened the newspaper and tried to forget about Lenny. But I couldn't escape the memory of what I wanted to do for Lenny waited for me everywhere that night. Behind the sports page, at the bottom of the glass of scotch, behind the captain's rumble and the stewardess's smiles. My failure still followed me, about the restaurants and jet planes and air-conditioned cars, and all the rest of the soft, comfortable, privileged parts of life. I never dreamed I'd hurt anyone.

I stepped at the top of a hill. It was almost one o'clock. The sun glared. It seemed no use going further. I looked for a bus stop. Half-way down the hill there was a sign hidden in a clump of bushes — Oldfield Street. I started to run.

There were no gas stations on Oldfield Street or any other places selling food or fuel. Just a row of two-story stores or housing projects. Only small houses, row houses, and picket fences. The buildings were older at the other end of the street. The yards were smaller. Fewer trees, shrubs, and trees disappeared. Cheap fans clanked in open windows. I was gasping by the time I reached Lenny's house. The door stood open. I climbed two broken stone steps and stopped carefully on the porch. Empty boxes. An old trunk. No one. No Lenny. I knocked on the doorjamb and stared into the empty frame. But there was a sign hidden in a clump of bushes — Oldfield Street. I started to run.

"I wore that bandanna around my neck for a preface to my story," Boris said. "I heard he left a whole fortune behind in New York for the peace of that island."

"I heard he was unhappy in love."

"There are plenty of stories," a woman said. "Everybody has a story, everybody that didn't know him."

"I hear there's another one coming. Boris told me. ""Something deep, but you can't say."

"I don't think so," said the woman. "The loneliness. The wind. How about you?"

"I haven't given it a thought."

The next morning a native rowed him to Manana Island, where he had been perceived. For weeks he sat by the sea, searching for a reason for his return. His men do not undertake extraordinary deeds. He had murdered no one, nor contemplated it. No serious injury on the dental chair could be written. For weeks he sat by the sea, searching for a reason for his return. His men do not undertake extraordinary deeds. He had murdered no one, nor contemplated it. No serious injury on the dental chair could be written. For weeks he sat by the sea, searching for a reason for his return. His men do not undertake extraordinary deeds. He had murdered no one, nor contemplated it. No serious injury on the dental chair could be written. For weeks he sat by the sea, searching for a reason for his return. His men do not undertake extraordinary deeds. He had murdered no one, nor contemplated it. No serious injury on the dental chair could be written.
One day it occurred to him that he was going about the task backwards. Of course he couldn't find a reason why he'd so impulsively moved here. Nothing is so simple as to be explained by a reason. His life itself must be the reason, and instead of waiting for a reason to begin his Life, he must set to work on the LIFE and find in that the reason for his exile. The book would be the means of discovery. He set to work. "I am the second hermit of Manana Isle," he wrote. "This is the third month of my hermitage. It is likely that I will remain here forever, untouched by human contact, under contract with Monhegan Island and out of the doggedness of my own soul."

"It may seem that for a man of solitude the task of self-knowledge is an easy one, but it is no less easy than for a man of the world. Perhaps harder. One might expect, for instance, that one would have clear reasons for choosing such solitude, yet I confess I have spent the last month searching my memory and my soul for these reasons, and I have found none."

"I can only look to my life itself, and hope that an effort to retrace the course of my life will provide the illumination so fervently desired. May these memoirs open the doors to wisdom and understanding, and forge the legend of the second hermit of Manana Isle."

He copied these words over rag paper, and marked the top of the page — Fireface. On a fresh page, he wrote —

Dedication: to my solitude

For the first time in a month he slept soundly and didn't wake before dawn.

Yet no legend emerged. There were no secrets, despite months of searching. Halfway into his LIFE, Boris began to perceive just how it would turn out — flat, dull, a story not worth the telling. His life on the mainland, predictable in every way, had not really lead to Manana. He sorted out dozens of incidents, hoping they would add up. But nothing. There was no driving force behind his life.

Who was he, then, to claim this island as a hermitage? Who was he to romanticize a way of life that, after all, was as dull as any other, with the daily chores of cooking, washing, tending the sheep, the odd jobs, walks around the island, quiet gazing out to sea or over at the long busy street of Monhegan and the people, gathered at the lighthouse, waiting for him to light his lamp.

If they thought this was romance, it was their mistake. Of this he was convinced. Anything they expected of a hermit's life they must fill in for themselves. His was empty, it might be easy for them to imagine a fine existence for him — they didn't have to live the boredom, the sadness of it, the disappointing lack of heroics. All they saw was a guy all alone on an island, the sun setting, his lamp lit. Sometimes they heard the sheep, the awful bleating like a chok, like a man dying. And out of this they made a legend — he had heard them before he came, at the lighthouse, each with a version of what made the hermit.

Perhaps he should find out from them. They seemed to have come up with more than enough hypotheses about a hermit's way of life and the terrible unknown thing that had driven him to it, for surely he was a good hermit, more diligent than the last, conscientious and strict with himself. He lacked, of imagination, the imagination of people who didn't have to live his life but only watched and thought and speculated. The legend of the hermit lay in them, not in himself, and if he wanted to understand it, he must learn from them, the watchers who made the hermit's solitary life grow. He knew then what he must do.

It would be simple enough to go among them unrecognized. Few had ever seen him close up. He could out his beard and blacken his face again when he got back, until the beard grew in. The only problem would be getting there, for he could not risk having his dory discovered on Monhegan. He would have to swim — no great distance after all, especially if the tides were low.

He chose a moonless night in August. He made sure the tourists had a good look at him, yawning and stretching conspicuously. He ambled back to his shelter and lit the lamp. Then, waiting until just past midnight, he made his way silently down to the shore. The sky was a blare of stars, the lights of Monhegan dim among them.

The water was colder and deeper than he'd thought, and the waterproof sack which held the clothes and shoes made the swimming awkward. He swam head first into a jagged, barred rock, but kept on, and did not feel until some moments later the blood coaling from his forehead. He panicked and lost direction. His arms began to tire. The cords of his sack pulled at his neck. He struggled and flapped his arms, but did not cry out, persisting in the silence to which he was accustomed.

He was found on the Monhegan shore in the morning, his pack still on. No one quite knew why he was swimming, why he hadn't taken his boat, or what reasons he might have had to leave Manana. They knew as little of his drowning as they had of his coming to the island, yet it was the stuff of legend, this mysterious drowning, and the summer nights were full of talk about the lonely, troubled swimmer from Manana, drowned on a star-lit night, in secret flight from some ghost or devil, a man apart from other men, whose evening lamp had given them comfort, who had left a half-burned manuscript too cherished for them ever to tell what it meant. A man of secrets and of anguish, that second hermit of Manana Isle.

Jeff Fischer

KENNEBEC, Volume III

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Night Drive

You haven't lived until you've run over a cat.
The last thing you see are the eyes.
The last thing you hear is the thud in the neighborhood of the universal joint.
There's no point ever in going back unless you've got a gun in case it should still be twitching — and if you haven't, who wants to be clawed by a dying feline, or has the guts to finish it off with a tire jack?

Treasure the vision, fur and dent, the blur and freeze before the light, pursue at ease this innocent connection with the night air.

Remember — It could have been a horse.
Remember — It could have been Billy Graham or Martha Graham.
Remember — It might have been a perfect day.
Remember — It had a mouse in its mouth.
Remember — It was "Patrokus" whom we truly and dearly loved.

Carl Morse