I shrug the stall door open
out through the leeward drift
First time since snow, since the bare
earth of Thanksgiving.
The yearling steer strains
against his chain,
Rotates his spike horns
like handles on an anger
Making me reach over — a matador in boots
—to slip the links free.

Heavy with habit he pivots,
squeezes round and leaps the gutter
But stops — three hooves on the doorsill
— seeing all is white.
His ears scoop forward, tell him nothing,
not his memory, channeled
All his calf winter long in the barn.
I rap the stovel sharply
On the tapping board; he quivers,
then charges into the sun.

January
Thaw

His mother, nine Jersey years
of winter piled deep
Inside her idle bony head,
turns round with all
The bovine aplomb of one
carrying young.
She descends into the gutter
one leg at a time,
Molasses her way to the door
and recognition of the season.

Outside, she goes no farther
than the first length of sunshine;
He bucks, struts, busts his way
clear to the barbed wire fence.
She finds four holes to stand in;
he tears at drifts with his horns,
Streams, regu-locomotive, hooves
flickering in pairs,
Around in circles, blinded by the glare,
in to his mother’s side.

She, . . . takes no notice, hmm,
taking his bully claim,
Perforating this grasslessness
with his empty-headed dance.
All age and wait, salt and water,
she wades into her nestlins,
Re-claims her pasture with a slow smoking turd.
I sight the far treeline:
Gate open, stream frozen.
Throw them fine hay. They will not stray far.
I look the desperado in the eye. "Welcome to Daffodil Acres," I manage to say.

"Yucca Flat." She draws a shiny six-gun and aims at my crotch.

"Don't rightly know, Babe." More squinting. "Hey you! You there, Sonny, and talk about beefsteak."

"I-I'm sorry," I stammer, "but I d-do have some homehrew," I offer.

"Homebrew," whispers Clint. "By god, homebrew! I haven't had homebrew in years!"

"But rather than watch this, we fly away."

"Have you got the beefsteak?" Clint asks. "No piece of paper!"

"Heh ha ha, that was all-organic, Darkey Beefsteak," I stammer.

"Of course. Minnie E. Bowden. Belfast."

From Here to Yucca Flat

Hunkered in the broccoli I am, weeding, basking in the good things of life, when my peace is shattered by the thunderous clatter of hoofbeats. Never, in my little world of swine and goats and homebrew and organic cabbage, have I heard such a sound. Full of fury and vengeance it is, through the ironshod hooves pounding the pavement. Shivering with terror, I crouch in the cornstalks. Below me the roadway is empty, but the clatter of hoofbeats grows louder, louder, as rounding the corner they come, forty-five degrees off vertical, two towering figures on wild, snorting steeds. Cutting them, I crouch, and springing to my driveway, gravel pelting like hail on the pavement below.

"Heya!" Foam flecks flying, feet rearing and prancing, black hides glistening, riders viciously reining. "Whine the devil, devil! Wallow the Satan!" They come to a halt in the chard.

Horses pawing. Eyes squinting: "Who that over there, Clint?" The woman, black-clad with silver spangles. Tall, lean, tough. Long shadow penetrating the margin of the dusk.

"Herb tea!" mocks Babe. She eyes me down the barrel of her six-gun. "We're two hungry, thirsty hombres, and it don't seem to me like you're mean to say, Sonny, a bright green glaze on your silent stare at the world:

"Well, it is the hour of Eye right! Eyes left!"

"Homebrew," whispers Clint. "By god, homebrew: I haven't seen homebrew in so long!"
The Puzzle

I have measured winter in chunks of wood
carried from the stump
found standing dead and dry,
carried again as split fractions,
carried to a pile of ash out back,
carried finally to the plants in spring;
but the cutting is my introduction.
I shake the hands these dead fingers form
almost as I shake apple trees in August,
looking for the early ripe fruit
to drop. I shake with saw and axe and match,
all the time measuring, as if I knew
how much it took to get me through.
And it comes to me
as if I were coming back:
I have held every piece
so many times, I can almost remember
this as the piece the saw cut through first
back in the fall, the piece
that will finish this puzzle,
the one I put together, for the hell of it
face down, while marking time each winter,
the same puzzle I am so relieved to forget
Each spring.
It will all come back.
It will be so easy. It will be
as easy as flipping the pieces over
and putting them together again
as a picture, knowing each one
by the feel of it, but
discovering the scene
for the first time.


Beech Leaves

It's hard to ignore them. The winter woods,
Nigardy as a modernist painting.
Abet them. There are no restless blues.
You can see past everything
To those saplings whose leaves, though slightly curled
And almost transparent, are all still there.
The settlers (books say) stuffed pillows with them
Thus refusing the devil's eddysdown snores.
Their delicacy surprises. How is it they've gotten away
With being indifferent to all skeletal pride?
One might suspect that these dead
But clinging leaves were in touch with something denied
By all other categorizable cells,
Had mastered some Pharaoh's strategies,
Consulted one of the more idiosyncratic
Holy books. They rattle in the breeze.
I thrust amid reviver's false depths
Until a raven commences to crow.
A mooker and reminder of the better facets,
I must agree with it that there are laws,
That it's only January that lends these leaves
A mantle of invisibility.
Men and ravens know another season
Is coming when beech leaves will part meekly
To become part of that undistinguished
Detritus now hidden beneath the snow.
What has been gained? Only this —
That, like men, these leaves cling to what they know.

Baron Wormser
Norridgewock

From Here to Yuca Flat (continued)

"Drink, you asshole," says Clint. He blows his froth on the table. Babe follows suit. I sip. They watch me closely, then drain their glasses.

Clint belches, pounds his empty mug on the table. "Couppe de thiry hom-bres," he mutters. He refills their glasses.

I sit back, sipping and watching. Babe catches my eye. "Drink," she orders. I drink, and she refills my glass. I drink that too. I am not worried. This is my homebrew; I know how to handle it. I feel my courage rising.

Clint slides his mug across the table to Babe. "Fill 'er up, doll," he grunts.

"Fill 'er yourself, Clinty," she says, sweetly sharp.

Clint jerks his feet off the table, then shrugs at me and refills his glass. "Don't s'pose it much matters who pours the stuff," he mumbles. I detect a slight slur of his speech; I watch him rub the spur gouges in the table with his thumb.

"Oh, loopy," cries Babe, draining her glass and pointing out the window. "The horses are playing with the goats."

Clint glances out the window. "Good for 'em," he hunches. "New friends never hurt no one." Turns to me. "Nice place you got here." He continues to rub the gouges in the table with his thumb. "Got some petty. Sonny, I'll patch those up for you."

"Babe gazing at Clint in an odd and curious manner. I watch them

Babe gazing at Clint in an odd and curious manner. I watch them

Babe slides the mug back.

"Clint, I call from the window. When you're done with the garden, I want you to call the goats for their morning milking."

Clint grins up at me. "Sure thing, boss."

"Drinks are all done, boss." Clint sits behind me.

"Wish out the sink," I order without looking around.

Splashing of water. "All done, boss. What next?" I slide away from Babe. Clint is drying his hands on a dish towel.

"Follow me," I say. I lead him down to the garden, show him the work that needs doing, several hours worth of patching, replanting and weeding. "You're a good boy, Clint," I tell him. He smiles at me gratefully.

Back at the house, Babe is reclining on the sofa. I stand, gazing down at her. "You'll want to take those boots off," I say softly. "Be right back."

"Clint," I call from the window. When you're done with the garden, I want you to hitch up those horses and plow up the north pasture."

"Sure thing, boss," he calls back. "Be done by nightfall."

I return to the sofa. Babe is struggling with her boots. She looks ravishing. "Here," I offer. "Let me help you off with your..."

And so it goes, day after lovely day — tofu, bean sprouts, fresh organic produce from the garden, down until dust. Clint laboring in the garden, splitting cord upon cord of winter firewood, growing stronger and healthier by the hour; myself, day after day, languishing in bed with Babe; herself, finding more and more pleasure in our simply homesteading virtues. Until, one morning, it happens — Babe gazing at Clint in an odd and curious manner. I watch them closely, then slip away to the barn.

Satan was always my favorite. Through my weeks of languishing, several things there were that I did not neglect. One was Satan's diet. Nothing organic or homegrown there. Straight unsex ladies Purina (feed it was, 20% pure protein. Now, the stallion paws at his stall. His coat glister, his eyes is wild. I clinch the saddle tight, ram the bit into his mouth. From a grain bag, I pull Clint's hombro outfit, meticulously altered during Babe's afternoon naps, complete with spangles, holsters, and six guns rescued from the compost chute. I don the outfit and mount the stallion. Brandishing the six guns, I sail over the pasture fence. With scattering gravel and thundering hoofbeats, rounding the corner I go, forty-five degrees off vertical. Due west! Ironshod hooves pound ing the pavement. 'To arms, to arms,' I cry: 'The accucins are rising.' Behind me, the sounds of Clint's ax ring through the air, and the softer sounds of Babe, calling the goats for their morning milking.

Hans E. Kirchels
Barryvogues
“Good morning, Sun, my friend,” Alice Harris murmured to the scarlet glow rising behind the pines standing sentinel on the ridge, as she ran water into a heavy oak-encrusted pan.

Another Monday morning — they seemed to come closer together as she grew older. With her housework caught up over the long, lonely weekend, she made plans to hike into the village through the cool sunshine. She would visit the Sandy Branch library and spend a lazy afternoon reading in front of the fire. Dinner would be easy. Charles liked the same things every week — a roast for Sunday, left-over on Monday, hash on Tuesday. Chicken, chops, and fish, and then baked beans with fishcakes every Saturday.

As if summoned by her thoughts, Charles materialized from the hall, wearing a navy blazer, blue tie and grey trousers of well-pressed flannel. He was almost sixty and still handsome and dark-haired, wearing the same size and some of the same clothes he'd had when they married. I haven't aged much myself, she thought. A little overweight, but round-cheeked cheerful faces wear well — even if short hippy figures tend to stop in at Susie Prewitt's.

She sighed as she remembered how her heart had leapt in just that way the first time Charles appeared in the doorway of her family's Victorian home overlooking the bay in Portland, just after the War. So many years ago. She'd been visiting her brother James. How handsome he'd looked in his captain's uniform.

"Something's burning," he warned. "Oh, I've been cooking hours. But I'll have some coffee with you." She smiled, hoping to prolong his amiable mood.

Of course she'd eaten. Last night she'd gone to their bedroom without dinner. Her terrors always upset her for hours. She'd ravenous this morning.

"Maybe I'll be late tonight. I'm driving down to Portland."

"That's too bad. I think I'll walk down to the beach today. I may stop in at Susie Prewitt's." Charles approved of her friendship with Susie, whose husband, as chairman of the school board, had influenced the purchase of large amounts of insurance from Charles. Susie was sweet but totally absorbed in children and cooking. How limiting it must be to spend your whole life raising and cooking. How limiting it must be that good.

The years in Portland had been good. Then Charles had decided that they should move to the mountains, perhaps a plantation overseer or ship's captain. Perhaps in his next reincarnation Charles would be the recipient of some of the orders he'd handed out in this life. She hoped he would be able to adjust. Before her parents had died, she and Charles had lived with them and taken care of them, and Charles had never complained.

Yes, the years in Portland had been good. Then Charles had decided that they should move to the mountains, buy a retirement home. She missed the comfortable old house near the bay. She missed her friends and her children, who didn't like the little brown shingled cottage or cots or pull-out couches. On holidays Alice and Charles usually visited Charles, Jr., in Boston or Mary in Connecticut. Neither of the children was married yet.

She was approaching Four Corners, where the state highway intersected a graded road that circled a lake. A drug store, Elks Hall, grocery store and an old white frame building which housed the post office and the library. Visitors ascending the steep road could see from a long way off the tiny village, the only visible structures for miles up the mountain. Everything else was hidden by evergreen forest.

Alice kept her visit to the library and post office brief. She began the walk home, carrying her books and mail in a white string bag. She wished she had friends in the little village. When Charles was home to stay, where could she go to get out of the house? He'd be telling her how to do everything, picking up the mail. She thought again of Madame Olga.

"Always remember, my children," Madame had intoned sternly, "the principal component of the Universal Consciousness is the communication of love to other beings, both human and otherwise. The power to give and receive love is the reason for our existence. Without it, we are nothing. Without it, we would perish, in the body and the spirit. It is love that sustains us all. Without love we can waste away."

How true, Alice thought, and surely Charles loves me. It is just the expression of his love that is twisted. She longed for love that would surround her in warm rosy clouds, so tangible she could touch it.

Somewhere the idyllic life Charles had promised had never developed in Sandy Branch. Oh yes, there was the fishing and hunting, church suppers and occasional boozed dances at the Elks hall, but everyone seemed content in their own little worlds. With their own friends they'd known since nursery class, their own siblings and cousins and children.

After lunch Alice stood at the kitchen window looking out at the hillside. She smiled when she saw the woodchuck oozing up the boulder, her love, after all.

Consciousness is the communication of love.

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Consciousness is the communication of love.
The Lost Mooring

Someone stole our mooring while we were 'ring off an island in Casco Bay.

Stole it from the harbor, left us with no where to tie our boat. Adrift in the harbor, we cannot leave for Carleton Street, can not resume our studies or start careers.

The boat drifts with the tide. Someone must renew alert always to keep us where we are. We dare not plan trips, who can look to the future? Keeping the boat from crashing is all we can think of.

As we eat dinner it drifts. 

We argue because no one is in control. Each of us has his own thing to do. We leave in the dinghy while the boat swings listlessly.

It is useless. We cannot concentrate anywhere. Back we come to argue more. Who will be responsible for this ship with no mooring?

Ruth Evans
Portland

Somebody’s Brothers

Hunting season: Sixth day
4:30 a.m. in an all night store

Six men
in an old, kaharge-Torino

come into the store
boasting, grating-

they'd just run over an otter.

"That," one explained, "is what's in the trunk."

Several of them remained outside chattering, gang-rap style, poking sticks into the blackness of a huge truck.

"Broke its back but it's still alive—" voice cold as the grey morning fog circling his car.

"Otter pelts worth fifty bucks!"

He headed for the door, opened it a crack, threw over his shoulder: 

"Oughta pay for our hunting trip!"

I locked gazes with washed-out eyes:

A draft of chill morning air sweeps between us.

Jan Johnston
August

Landscape with heron

The hero is not prosaic or reclusive. He's never seems to notice. Madame Olga claimed that everyone had free will. But her options? She was too old to go back to work, too tired, too afraid of muggers and burglarizers. Charles needed help.

Her body twitched convulsively. But not until the clock hands had turned a full half hour did Alice move from her chair.

He writhed about yet seemed pinned of her eye, she saw him grasp his chest, as if from a tremendous blow. He writhed about yet seemed pinned in his chair, his thin lips working voicelessly, his eyes pleading to her. Then he managed to choke out— "Oh, my God!" But Alice did not look up to see the sun-

"And he was so dead set against doctors," Mary remarked. "If he'd had any pain or any warning he probably wouldn't have even mentioned it. Remember how he used to get so angry over doctor bills that he threw them on the floor and stamped on them?"

Alice rose and went into the kitchen.

In the morning, after breakfast, Alice leaned toward her friend. Alice rose and went into the kitchen. Alice leaned toward her friend.

"Well, I did it. I got that old wood-

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In the morning, after breakfast, Alice leaned toward her friend...
Letter to a Younger Brother

I was the continent and wise in the ways of the world. You were an offshore island of soldiers and crusading knights. Your magic dragon accompanied you, faithfully as I never was.

Now the channel of age and awareness between us is drying up fast. We are in a common world, playing these roles. An ocean separates us but as far as I'm concerned it is a mirage over dry land.

G. M. Clark
Bowdoin College
Sarah S. Kurland came to America to join her husband in 1905, at the age of twenty-four, with three young children, from a small town near Bialystok near the Russian-Polish border. Thirty years later, her family gathered around to write her biography, the result of "The Story from the life of an orphan", handwritten in unschooled "Yiddish" English and filling a hundred and thirty-four pages of a dime-store composition book, with her legible handwriting and her children's learning to read. What is printed here is my condensation of the "plot" of Sarah Kurland's life. I have polled phrases verbatim from the source, standardizing only spelling and punctuation where necessary for comprehension.

Sarah saw herself objectively, as a character in her story, and I have taken the liberty of rendering this account in the third person as a gesture toward that spirit that "give them a description."

Lee Sharkey
Skowhegan

The Story from the Life of an Orphan

In a little city, S., used to live a family, with five children. The father was one from the greatest persons of his time. The boys which surronse to become rabbis, he used teaching them. Everybody was knowing him from far and from near. Suppose when anybody was in trouble for they need advice, they came right to that great man.

Now yet I begin my describing about that young mother. She dies and past away. When the young woman was thirty three year old she left and past away from the world into the other world. It was very very sad, for all of them, and especially for the young mother, to live and raise her children, but they can't help. So is the nice world certainly not for everybody. She said, God is so young and I must go to the dark grave.

Then begin awful sadness, quiet nights dark days for the young unlucky orphans. Months past away when others peoples begin to forget that not long before, used to live the good mother. But only which they will never forget, that she was the best father and mother begin to telling about to give his children and other mother, a true mother, but certainly it can't have been. He was thinking that he get for them, the true mother. It was like it is written in the Bible, when two mothers were born in one, Solomon. The nice children, but when any thing used to happen, suppose like children fighting, or anything of course, it was the long ago mother's children. So, so was their childhood lives and years.

The father was unable to send the girl to school. Certainly he was very rich not poor, but it was that which was to happen. It did not exist either, then she begin to try to forget. She thought to herself, Such good things i can get, it is never too true things, a needle or a thimble, cotton. She used to be very anxious, to buy something, my daughter, I try for you everything only you should be happy, and full of praise and thankfulness. But she was not able and they should get it then she going to be satisfied. What else can a mother's wishes been from God about her children it is enough for her the plea-sure, the good time or her own wishes. But she is sure whoie the mothers, she thought to herself, if it was the atmosphere in which she was raised. She was thinking about a life full of peace and to be happy and satisfied from each other. Only in her dreams she had all the wishes.

In the year 1905 she came to America to her husband. She was then twenty four year old. She brought with her three little children. When she come to America, she saw that at that time, even her young child, cannot learn in the schools, cannot entry school and learn the English language, in order to get a little education. She thought to herself, Such good things i can get, it is never too true, but until only circumstance the circumstances, the situation. When you are a mother from small children you can not give away your free time to get education. Perhaps your free time is necessary for your children. It was for her a big tragedy. Whole her life was that only her wishes, she should have something of a life, to be able to get a little education. Then when her wishes can be trued, then it was entirely impossible. She thought with her self, which things shall she sacrifice, her children's good time or her own wishes. But away she is sure whole the mothers, they suppose to sacrifice their ideals or pleasure for their children's good. So was her ideals. She give up everything. She make up her mind maybe she is not happy either, then she still quiet and full of praise.

She dream about education. She begin to wish for her children, she shall be able and they should get it then she going to be satisfied. What else can a mother's wishes been from God about her children it is enough for her the pleasure, the good time or her own wishes. But she is sure whoie the mothers, they suppose to sacrifice their ideals or pleasure for their children's good. So was her ideals. She give up everything. She make up her mind maybe she is not happy either, then she still quiet and full of praise.

Then when old age come, like is winter, come but summer never come back. Her mind begin and her eyes to look about the other, perhaps the better world. Unable to work she begin to miss her childhood years, even her young life did not be so much of luck and happy, but she her self was young strong attractive full of life.

It reminds her from her childhood which is very long ago. She remember like it would been yesterday. It was a summer day it was in month May, all the flowers all the grass the trees all the birds, the persons everything was alive then. Then her father was taking her and her sisters and her one brother he take all of them for the hand and he says, Come my little orphan, I will take you in such a place where is your best friend. He takes them to the cemetery where a big stone was stood and with big words was writing Here is in peace the holy soul from our mother. They was stand by the big gold stone. She can't say a word. Her heart was wounded. Her mind was like she did not exist. She came and awaits to see her mother and she saw a big stone with her mother's name. She call her by name but she did not hear a answer.

Later she know the dreams from a girl when she is young, to be marriage and to have a friend in her life, who will respect her who will thinking about her happy life. It is young dreams, young fantasies, but she refuse to say it was not truth.

She is dreaming. She is the same little girl from the years which they past away when she used to go in her father's where he was teaching. He standing behind the door for long long hours, seeing and heard, dreaming it is the heaven and the stars. Her mind and soul been away very very far near to the heaven.

The life of an orphan.
'Mr. Cooper?' A tap on my shoulder tugs me out of the T.V. "A friend is here to see you," Mary K., the afternoon nurse, announces.

"Who is it?"

'I don't know, she didn't say.'

I look back to the hospital scene on television. A woman is plodding with a handsome doctor. He is thinking with his hand on his chin.

'Mr. Cooper, why don't you come see who it is? She's waiting in the rotunda for you. I said you'd be right down.'

'I don't want to see anyone.'

'It might make you feel good. Why don't you go talk to her for a minute.'

The T.V. woman walks out of the doctor's office. 'O.K., O.K., I'll go.'

'That's good, good for you.'

'I'm not a boy, I'm twenty-seven.'

'Have a good visit, Mr. Cooper,' she says, smiling. She walks toward the nurses' station and disappears behind the glass, all starch-white uniform and powerful title. As I pad down the corridor, I make the brilliant observation that she is the one who's crazy in this looney bin, not me. I feel comforted.

In the rotunda Sarah, my ex-whatever-she-is, or -was, appears small, young, like Alice in Wonderland. Alice in Strickland? Darcy in Strickland? 'Hi, Alice.'

She is frightened but she controls herself. 'How are you doing, Danny?' she asks.

We sit down, I on a plastic sofa, she on an armchair — a distance between us that is a common disease. 'Fine,' I smile, because she wants to see me smile. A sign of my improvement.

'Good, I'm glad to hear it.' She fidgets with the clasp on her jacket.

'And how's your roommate?'

I think of Joh, who hasn't said a word since I arrived seven days ago. Or was it eight. He hasn't gotten up except to go to the bathroom. 'A laugh a minute.'

'Sylvia,' she announces. 'Sylvia? That's pretty, Sylvia.'

'I think it comes from the Latin sylvia, forest, woods, deep dark woods.'

'With cool wind rushing through the pines.'

'How poetic,' she looks at me. 'Daniel. It comes from the Bible. Do you know the Book of Daniel?'

'I guess I used to in Sunday School, but it's been a while.'

'The lion's den. Don't worry, you'll survive it.' She smiles and looks out the window again.

The snow is brilliant. 'Isn't the snow pure and clean? No one's touched it yet. It would be perfect for making angels in the snow.'

'Angels?' She frowns.

'You know, just your average angels. Harp players and wing flappers.' I fan my arms in quick short strokes, hovering near her. She turns to me. 'Do you make angels in the snow?'

'When I was a kid. I can't remember when the last time was.'

She hesitates. 'I made one last winter. It was beautiful.' I can feel her recede into memory, looking out the window at a spot in the snow. She becomes still like marble.

'You know,' I offer, 'I wish I were an artist so I could paint your portrait right now and capture your look next to the window in the late afternoon light.'

With the snow outside.

'I'd be happier if you would make me an angel.'

That evening I draw back the curtains slowly. The room becomes blue from the moonlight. John's eyes open. 'It's O.K., John, I'm going to step out for a few minutes and make some angels in the snow.' His eyebrows tense. 'No, I'm not crazy. It's a present for someone. It'll be O.K., but if they ask you where I am, mum's the word. I know I can trust you, buddy. Mum's the word.' I pat him on the shoulder, ready to embark on my mission. 'Take care.'

The hall is dim and deserted. I walk quietly along the wall, toward the back hall to the left past a dark arts and crafts room. Ahead a square of blue-white light sparkles in the sunlight. I walk over to the table and pick it up, noticing cola has spilled onto the table. With my handkerchief I wipe up the liquid and throw the can into the wastebasket.

'Dani?' Nurse Mary K. She is smiling.

'Sylvia? That's pretty, Sylvia.'

'Sylvia.' I smile broadly watching my arms, lifting my head to observe my legs. It will be a beautiful angel. I stand up, carefully, and brush myself off, then squat under the window, kissing the sill.

Sarah turns to me, pleased with my comment. It is the first time I have made sense today. Yes, I am learning. Lesson one, complete.

Sarah is gone, her obligatory visit completed. It will probably be her last, now that she knows I've survived the split. Brusheless, I sit alone on the couch now, watching visitors come and go. Residents totter about aimlessly. In the rotunda Sarah, my ex-whatever-she-is, or -was, appears small, young, like Alice in Wonderland. Alice in Strickland? Darcy in Strickland? 'Hi, Alice.'

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The hall is dim and deserted. I walk quietly along the wall, toward the back staircase which leads to the basement. The firedoor comes closer and closer. Please don't see me, Mrs. Nightingale. Don't hear the door squeak. The firedoor gives and I am in the cool stairway, descending slowly. At the bottom I take the hall to the left past a dark arts and crafts room. Ahead a square of blue-white light. The basement exit door. I survey the parking lot. A few cars of the night nurses. I open the door with a piece of ice. The air bites at my skin. I crouch low next to the building and sit, then lie back, spreading my arms and legs out. I am shaking, but I love my angel, glistening in the arc light, sparkling in the night. Silent night. The angel needs a friend. I climb into the snow next to the angel, my fingers touching the angel's and gently move my arms and legs, small arms growing to flight. I look up. The stars are bright, small and intense like diamonds on black velvet. My legs and arms stop. It is quiet and peaceful and all I can hear is the wind in the branches. For the first
time I realize that I smell the snow, its dampness and coldness. I eat some, 
lettes it dissolve and trickle down my neck. My senses are alive for the first time
in weeks.

I open the basement door shut behind me. The building seems very warm, 
and I stand at the bottom of the stairs, thawing for a minute. Listening. Snow is 
melting from my clothes. I take off my shoes and carry them under my arm as 
I ascend the stairs. 
The corridor is clear. I open my door and strangely a shoe, as if someone has 
had a knock on it from under my arm, falls in slow motion and crashes, splashing 
melting snow on the shiny waxed floor. I scramble for the shoe, run into my 
room and shut the door, undress in one sweep, clothes flying under my bed, 
and pull the covers over me. I shiver and I am afraid. They will see the snow. 
They will punish me. They will never let me go. Never.

Nurse's shoes squeak in the hall, louder. They stop outside the door, continue 
toward the stairway, become louder again and hesitate outside my door. I hold 
my breath. The squeaking becomes fainter, dissolving into the night.

"Good morning, Sylvia, how's the novel coming?" 

She looks up from her journal. "Oh, hello, Dan, sit down. I have something to 
show you." I sit on the sofa. "Don't look yet," she says, holding the page away 
from me. She holds her tongue to the side as she writes. Her hand motions are 
slow. "Sure I do." She pushes her soup bowl aside and looks out the window. "The 
sun is beautiful on the snow."

"I mean of it, and probably the sooner the better."

"No, it didn't, I can tell. What did she say? Are you hopelessly insane? Raving 
fool."

"No, seriously. Just one favor of you when you leave here."

"O.K."

She lifts a spoonful of soup to her mouth, blowing on it gently and wincing, 
as she eats it. "So how did your meeting with Dr. Su go this morning?"

"O.K. all right."

"No, it didn't. I can tell. What did she say? Are you hopelessly insane? Having 
mad, a lunatic for life?"

"No." Somehow I have the feeling Sylvia knows what I am about to 
say, as if she's been through the scene a million times before. "She said if all 
goes well I will be free to go at the end of next week." Sylvia eats her soup 
without looking up. I know I'll have to continue meeting with her once a week 
at her office in Boston. But she said I could go out now and go from here and 
start to reshape my life. I'll still be on some medication. But she'll cut back slowly."

"Sort of like a drug addict." Sylvia sips her soup. "So what do 
you think?" I ask.

"I think it's great, Dan. I mean eventually you're going to have to make a go 
of it, and probably the sooner the better."

"Do you mean that?"

"Sure I do." She pushes her soup bowl aside and looks out the window. "The 
sun is beautiful on the snow."

"But I don't want to leave you. Leave here."

She smiles at me. "Spring is coming, Dan. The snow will be gone. The grass 
grow again. We've gone through the winter together. You've helped me do 
that. And five weeks ago I didn't even know you. Five weeks from now, you 
won't know me anymore."

"That's a stupid thing to say, really stupid. If I do leave, I'll still come to visit 
you. And who knows, we might get to know each other better and when you 
feel you can leave here, maybe things will work out."

"Leave here!"

"You do want to leave here, don't you?"

"Yes, I go insane. I haven't thought much about it."

"Anyway, there's no reason we can't go on seeing each other. Is there?"

"Dan, you won't visit me."

"Sure I will. Or do you want me to?" she asks.

"Play with her spoon. "Please Dan, just promise me one thing."

"Anything."

"No, seriously. Just one favor of you when you leave here."

"If I leave."

"When you leave. What I want you to do is this. Next winter, when there's 
fresh snow on the ground, and you think I'll least expect it, come over here at 
rush, when I'm asleep, and make two beautiful angels in the snow. Will you 
do that for me?"

"It would be nice if you would help me make them."

"Will you do that for me?"

"Yes, I promise." she asks.

"Thank you, Dan, thank you very much."

"Hello, Mother," I say, getting up to greet her. She has sad eyes but smiles, 
glancing beyond me around the rotunda.

"Oh, Dan, how are you feeling?" she hugs me. That familiar smell, I have 
known longer than any other smell — her skin. And her fur coat. I can feel 
its warmth and softness through my clothes.

"All right. We sit."

"Are you sleeping well?"

"Yes." I want to tell her about the angels in the snow. If I tell her this, maybe 
she will let me stay at Strickland longer. I want to tell her of Sylvia, but then 
she would know.

"Well, Dr. Su and I have been talking. That's why I'm a few minutes late. She 
feels that you are strong enough to come home now."

"Home."

"Well, what I mean is we both thought that apartment of yours would be too 
depressing for you. Sarah's moved her things out. And your father's moved all 
your things back into our house. For now. We thought it would be best if you 
came home to me and Dad for a week or two until you went to work again 
and could find your own place."

"I reach out and touch her brown fur coat, the one that used to excite me 
when I was young. Sunlight sparkles on the hairs, flowing over it like tinsel. I 
feel you can leave here, maybe things will work out."
**Angels in the Snow** (continued)

She smiles. "I know, I know. It makes me happy to hear you say that. I feel as if I have my Danny back, the Danny I knew years ago." She puts on her gloves and we walk silently to the front door.

"See you Friday," I say.

"Same time!"

I nod and she goes out the glass doors into the sunlight. As she walks down the front walk toward her car, I know that I will be moving in with them in a few days. I have given in, and I feel anger, because I know she, too, knows I have given in. I think I detect a triumphant gesture in her walk, as she crosses the parking lot. I am angry because I have always let myself be overpowered and manipulated by her.

I turn, my eyes meet Sylvia's and she turns quickly back to the T.V., which she pretends to be watching. She has been watching us talk. She understands. Our conspiracy against her and Strickland.

I have been living with my parents two weeks. Nothing has happened. I have seen Dr. Su once. I almost asked her how Sylvia was doing. As the T.V. flickers in front of me, I wonder if Sylvia is sitting in the rotunda at this moment, writing, looking out the window.

She swallows and pulls her graying hair away from her forehead. "What do you mean, honey, I don't understand." She looks strangely at my hand, as I would come to visit me, Dan. But you did. It makes me happy.

I ascend the front hall stairs. Mother is vacuuming my bedroom, where I have always slept. I enter her and my father's bedroom. The afternoon sun is streaming in on the bed. I go to the closet, fold back the accordin door. The oily fur coat is hanging there. I've never understood why she keeps this coat. It's like a childhood, my fantasies.

"Same time!" I say. "I'm back to stay for a while. Room forty-seven, east wing." Sylvia smiles gently and shakes her head. She turns and looks out the window. It's all so crazy, you know? She watches a bird land on the sapling and opens her journal and begins writing. I follow as she writes, "Hey, friend, there's fresh snow out there. Do you feel up to making some angels in the snow tonight?" Then she signs it "Love, Sylvia."

I take her hand. She hesitates at first, then lets her hand rest in mine timidly. She looks around nervously, then our eyes meet, and she grins shyly. I squeeze her hand. "It's a date."

I turn right, following the wall to where the wings intersect and wait against the wall. My watch says five minutes of twelve. I step out into the light of the hall. She stops, surprised. "Hi, it's me, Danny," she says. "Oh." She is relieved. "You scared me." Then she is laughing as we walk up to each other and stop. She is wearing a knitted hat, and her collar is turned up. "I couldn't find my gloves in the dark."

"That's O.K. Warm your hands in mine. And take her hands. She looks at her hands in mine. I kiss her hands, then I kiss them again. Suddenly in the dim light our cheeks are rubbing. Then we kiss lightly. She pulls away smiling. "I'm glad I'm back, Sylvia, with you," I say. "Mother's fur. It was knawed by some rat."

"I'm back to stay for a while. Boom forty-seven, east wing."

**Manifesto**

**Flight**

You could not spell your teeth protruded but you had red hair, exciting ideas. You held my hand when John Kennedy died. Once, you briefly touched my breast, quivered more than I. When I saw your picture in Time you knew you had made it, at Harvard, no less.

You must have found that girl willing to put you through grad. school. I wonder more about her than about you.

**Manifesto**

hell, let's set it up right here there's no more white marble anyway

this waitress will do for a virgin when she bent to adjust her sandal strap her hair slipped forward to her cheeks her back was the curve of centuries though she is young and forgets the salad she shall not go unrewarded as I say let's set it up right here any place will do for the temple

Sylvester Pollet
E. Holden

**Patriot's Day at the Baker's Table**

The braided woman rubs her knee on an absent minded gesture while the man unfurls blueprint and explains

She had the day off so she planted peas on two sides of a fish net fence. The architect was locked out.

He didn't mind until the trumpets stopped and he found the library closed too. Now she tells him she is pregnant.

Some fathers open secret bank accounts Some fathers eat the placenta. I know one who kept it in the freezer for a year, until he lost interest.

The man rubs his temples rolls up the drawings, mentions bread. That's right. It's Monday. She rises, looks like a mermaid stepping out of paint.

Alison Demling
South Portland
The father of my Iranian family was a semi-retired doctor and a colonel in the Iranian Army. At 5:00 PM every day, after we had tea, watermelon, and the usual array of nuts and watched “Bonanza” with Persian dubbed in, he went downstairs to his office. For two hours his patients would open the rusty metal door leading from the garden and walk through the garden; old women clutching wads of springtime cotton around their hips as they passed the fountain where carp swam in circles, splashing water on the blue tiled path. The women never looked up at me, looking from them to the balcony. They would disappear into the office, the come out half an hour later, a medicine bottle in one hand, a scrap of paper in the other, their veils clenching tightly between their teeth.

Next to the office was a shower room, where Papa installed a Western flush toilet for me. On the other side of the office there was a room so dark, after the glare of the street, that I walked past it for two weeks without ever seeing the cook crouching on the dirt floor, bleaching braziers and soaking pots. She made shish-kebabs, stews with lamb, chicken, and split peas, and huge platters of rice we stirr ed raw egg into upst air s at the table. It was long-grained white rice, grown in the half-mile wide strip of fields by the Caspian Sea, separated from the Persian Gulf and the desert by mountain range. Moist, aromatic rice, rich with saffron and golden pan drippings that looked like caramel glazing.

Every morning Mama bolted an egg for me in the top of the samovar, upst air s in the dining room, next to the TV set. Papa believed that an egg and a pint of cow’s milk for breakfast would keep me healthy. They did. I was sick only once when I ate ice cream from a street vendor. Violent cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea. Two days in the shower room. Afterwards I felt fine, but lost my appetite. Food made me nauseous. Mama was upset. The cook thought it was her fault, then decided that all Americans were fools. The American Girl wouldn’t eat; she didn’t like lamb; she didn’t like rice, good, Iranian rice. I was an embarrassment and reproach.

My Iranian sister loved Frank Sinatra, the French singer Dalida, and movies. We went to one at least four times a week. We saw Charlton Heston deliver the Ten Commandments in Persian. We saw Japanese monster films and Indian romances, starring Raj Kipoor, “Gidget Goes Hawaiian”, “A Hundred and One Balloons” and “Francois and the Navy”, with Francis the Talking Mule.

Before the movie started, everyone stood up for the National Anthem. Music blared from loudspeakers under our seats; images flashed on the screen — close-ups of the Shah in his uniform; gashes in his skin; shots of the Iranian Air Force, flying American fighter bombers, streaked through a brilliant blue sky; a portrait of the Royal Family at the Summer Palace; mosques and minarets, blued like water; or, the desert sky. The images never changed.

The sky was always blue, and after the movies Ma-ma-da-la-dy drove us to the Iran-American Society for hamburgers, or up into the cool hills of Shemiran to play mini-golf at the Hotel Vanak. Ma-ma-da-la-lay was the houseboy, gardener, and chauffeur. He had a shaved head and a wide, blindfold grin. He was slow in the house and garden — Mama was always yelling at him to hurry up — but loved to drive. Whenever Ma-ma-da-la-lay had to stop the old Ford in traffic, little boys would fix their fists through the open window and tried to sell me candy, gum, or lottery tickets. “Candy Gum English! Candy Gum English!” they cried, as if it were my fault they were grabbing at my clothing with their skinny, leaving marks. Their eyes gleamed, but had lines at the corners and furrows, like old men’s. The Candy Boys slept outside our walled garden. I dreamed about them and woke up sweating, feeling their fingers pinching my hand.

Beggars came at me from all over the city; my blue eyes drew them like magnets. Fragments of humanity. Men with amputated legs or hands chopped off. Cribs of wheeled carts and on crutches. Old women with empty eye sockets. But most of them were very young children. “Don’t give them anything, they’re a’lara,” my Iranian sister said.

I didn’t know what to do. The children overwhelmed me. I was embarrassed when they asked me for money; I didn’t know whether to give them a coin or not; if they really needed it; if they were making a fool of me, or both. “Mama gives to please Allah sometime, but those beggars are — how you call? — pretend. That boy — he straps his leg behind to look like one-leg. It’s a lie.”

We didn’t have beggars in Princeton, New Jersey. Nobody slept outside my bedroom window under a newspaper and drank out of the gutter. I had never seen poor people up close; I had never seen suffering like this; it had never thrown itself in my face and demanded a reaction.

Iranian sister once poked me. “Candy Boys away from the car so hard that he fell on the sidewalk and skinned both knees. My Iranian sister began to teach me Persian. She talked about Mohammed, said her father was called a Haggi, because he had been på a pilgrimage to Mecca, and showed me miniature paintings of walled gardens in Paradise, filled with exotic birds and trees, flowing with rivers and cool fountains. Once I asked her to write “Mama-dalay” in Persian. I startled at the words for a long time, then copied them down beside of my notebook. Knowledge was in fact English. She added Agha, after Mohammed, the Prophet, and his son-in-law, Ali, made me look at him as a human being for the first time. "I'm sorry, Iran; I hated it. My parents are ignorant Persian. Tiny fingers knitting rug s, Mini-golf at the Hotel Vanak. Fort Knox scored in the Paycock Throne. I didn’t understand anything that summer. The images still don’t fit. Maybe it was the language, the heat, being separated from my home."

...
The Veteran

I'm waking up. The room unfamiliar. The phone rings. I scramble over the bed to get to it.

"You?"

"Stratton, here, Doc. They're bringing up a veteran for you to see."

"Great, what's his complaint?"

"Well, his sons say he's been drinking. They found him at his house unconscious and brought him in."

Folk, I react. It's not worth it. If he wants to drink himself to death, who am I to stop him. His choice.

At 4 a.m. my body complains as it gets dressed. I feel rheumatic, old, hung over. Out in the hall the lights are a freezing white, the silence thunderous. Hurrying along, I review the causes of unconsciousness.

In the examining room an unshaven, yellow man lies unconscious in a dirty sleeping bag on a stretcher, blood stained vomitus ringing his mouth — Harry Foster. I check. He's breathing and has a pulse.

"When was his last drink? When was he last awake?"

"Maybe two days. No one really knows."

The rule of thumb — the farther out in the woods, the more whiskey and cigarettes.

They leave one thought more.

"He lives alone. Drinks. He's not so bad. He raised us all."

I brush my hands over the gray slicked hair, scrutinize and feel the dusty neck. His lungs need suctioning. His coma is profound.

Rounds today are with Dr. Lewis Mencken, a thorough physician and gentleman.

"This is Harry Foster. I present his case."

"Well, I think that dilated left pupil makes us all wonder if he hasn't suddenly bled into his head," says Mencken.

I drag the harried radiologist to the intensive care unit to see Harry. Our patient lies in bed several days of whiskers, yellow nails, cadaverous limbs and a definitely dilated left eye.

"I think we are trying to resurrect a ghost," snarls Fregusi.

The Veteran's case is far from over. Out in the hall the lights are a freezing white, the silence thunderous. I'm waking up. The room unfamiliar. The phone rings. I scramble over the bed to get to it.

"Right, right. That's good. Is this the administration building, hospital, or cafeteria?"

"Well, it couldn't be the hospital or else I'd feel better," he grins sarcastically. V.A. medicine, I think. Anyway, sounds like Harry's synapses still have some snap.

Checking in on Harry becomes a rewarding part of my daily routine. I asked him how he puts aside his troubles so well. He says it's a problem of mind over matter. "If you don't mind, it don't matter."

It helped his orientation to watch the staff. He asks if I was around sleeping. "Is Dr. Simpson sleeping around?" He lies back, laughing, awaiting whatever information this might bring.

Harry gets better. When I finally move him from the Intensive Care Unit to the regular floor I feel that this hospital has accomplished something. The recovery of Harry's cheerful spirit proves it. He gets down to the ward, still flat on his back, sand bags on his groin, but thinking clearly, anaemia corrected and wounds healing.

"What do you think of the fourth floor, Harry?"

He pauses, grins. "I'll tell ya, Doc. ceilings about the same."

His smiling eyes take in his new roommates and I know things are a lot better.

Harry begins walking after a week. An extraordinary recovery. Visiting the beds and gatherings of other patients, he and the other old soldiers swap stories about their campaigns. His sons tell me he'd been imprisoned by the Japanese, had done the "Death March" from Corregidor to Luzon. Said his spirit in the face of death kept him alive.

"Doc, it's about time I was allowed to go outside."

"You're weak Mr. Foster. You're still healing."

"Sure Doc, but I'll heal faster with a little activity."

So we let Harry out on the V.A. grounds. The old buildings were once a resort hotel built by a granite magnate to attract wealthy vacationers. The pools and grounds glow in the late summer evenings. Harry inspects himself outside each night by bringing rags to polish the cannon. Everyone thinks this a touching expression of patriotism until a bottle of whiskey was found in the muzzle. "Harry?"

"I just want to see the geese come into Merrymeeting Bay one more year. Doc, I don't want to hang on forever."

"It's a waste of life."

"I ain't proud of the drinking, Doc, but if I'd known I was going to live this long I would have started sooner. I give you no bullshit about quitting."

I discharged Harry three weeks from his arrival. He will be back, a swallow to Capistrano, hard hit but holding on, the eternal soldier. I hope I won't be there for the end.

Michael Siena
Belgrade Lakes

Elementary

He has put a raisin in his nose while watching TV in the morning with breakfast, unseen by us, and as we're getting ready to leave, he gets up and says

"I've got to get this raisin out of my nose!"

I sweat with panic visions of trips to the hospital, but with a quick swoeze, I get it out, smelly, smoky and wrinkled thing, and toss it in the garbage.

He screams with anger, and stamps, crying, out of the room.

And from under thirty years of crap, a voice within me cries too, speaking his words for him:

"God DAMMIT! Holes are to put things in!"

On the No Vote

1.

The proud and reasonable people of Pompeii believed in their priests and stayed, only to hear the laughter of their children die beneath the bolling dust of a mountain gone berserk

2.

Two thousand years have not taught us much we who would give up children laughing for the promises of our own priests drunk as they are on visions conjured up from the entrails of traumatized atoms

Eric E. Goranson, M.D.
Portland

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon
In Defense of Marshall "Dodge-ism"

(For F. G.)

As Marshall Dodge's performing artistry becomes art for me, the "reality" of Maine life assumes a metaphorical cast and hue. In his "Bert and I" stories, Dodge, like Robert Frost, creates from traditionally flinty, wintery Downeast Yankee realist a social metaphor of light humor which is very human and descriptively incisive. Through humor, Dodge's characters project both a kind of unconscious manifestation of individual isolation and an acceptance of community by Mainers.

Most characters of "Bert and I" perceive as window dressing, attempting to enliven this basic metaphor of individuals accepting their communities by referring beyond them to nature.

Many critics see Dodge's monologues as "stereo-typing" Maine people. But Dodge and his partner, Reverend Bob Bryan, are working, like Mark Twain or Finley Peter Dunne in "Mr. Dooley," squarely within a valid vein of American humor.

Philosophically speaking, the Dodge-Frost metaphorical creation is generally Aristotelian, an empirical breakdown and categorization of life and nature's parts, of their substance and accidents. This has led in Dodge's case to the creation of a "person," often called "Bert," whose actions, responses and solutions implicate Maine.

As if they actually were the Maine persons and communities they represent, Dodge and "Bert's" underlying metaphor is that resolutions and explanations are produced naturally, so to speak, from within the communities and episodes and stories.

This kind of naturalism is inimical to many modern modes of thought and to some social conditions now facing Maine. It is often viewed as "quantitative" or "romantic," a throwback to the "social phylum" of Isaac Newton in a twentieth century age of high technology and abstraction. And as social science analyzes and "opens up" Maine communities, intangible community methods of dealing with good and evil and love and hate seem to disappear. The gulf between intellect and "opens up" Maine communities, intangible community methods of dealing with good and evil and love and hate seem to disappear. The gulf between science and "opens up" Maine communities, intangible community methods of dealing with good and evil, and love and hate seems to disappear.

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Jessica started off to Anne Marie's house right after her nap on Saturday afternoon. She wouldn't have been more excited to be flying around the world. She had been allowed to walk alone to Anne Marie's very often. It was only three blocks away, through the small court of houses where Jessica lived, across the tree-lined boulevard, past the convent and church with his shoulders spurted water from his mouth in an organdy dress with a bow and a quiver of arrows slung across her shoulders spotted water from his mouth — a golden spray splashing off the round surface of his tummy and tinkling to a basin of water where scarlet and yellow birds were bathing.

“Hi! I’m Belinda. Who are you?” she said.

“I’m Jessica.”

“I don’t know you. Where do you live?”

“Down there.” Jessica gestured vaguely.

“By Anne Marie?”

“No. Further. Do you know Anne Marie?”

“I-course I do. You do?”

“Yes. She’s in my class.”

“Oh. You go to the American school. Do you want to come in and play?” Jessica did, desperately. There was a fountain she could see in the corner of the court where she lived. She saw, through her tears, Clementine, their little black maid, rushing toward her. Clementine caught Jessica up in her arms.

“Hi, Jessica!” Clementine screamed and laughed. “Hi! You’re late!”

“Do you have to go to the toilet, Jessica?” Mother said.

Jessica screamed and laughed. “Hi! You’re late!”

The most hateful sound in the world to Jessica was Belinda de Soto. It was a lovely Saturday afternoon. She had gone with her cousins Penelope and Mimi to look at the firecracker bushes. Along the drive of the court where she lived. She saw, through her tears, Clementine, their little black maid, rushing toward her. Clementine caught Jessica up in her arms.

“Hi, Jessica!” Clementine screamed and laughed. “Hi! You’re late!”

“You’ll cry,” Jessica said. The house seemed suddenly to be too large, too full of that week’s work, paintings and crayon drawings and five graded sheets of work exercises, crammed into the front seat. She was hot with her news and her fears and her desires.

“Mother, guess what! Anne Marie and I decided we would go roller skating tomorrow over at her house because the sidewalk’s better there is it O.K. can I go?”

“Let me see your papers, dear.” Her mother took the bundle from Jessica’s hand. The painting with the large purple splatters slipped to the floor. “What is this, Jessica?” The one paper with no gold star pasted at the top and two angry red fingerprints on it stood a mahogany tea table and four small straight back chairs with leather cushions in the seats. The table, laid for tea, was set with china of a purplish hue. Jessica to pass through.

“Look, Mother! Do you like it?” She thrust the picture over the papers. Small splatches of purple muddled a large area of watery green. What looked like balloons on strings lined the bottom of the shoots.

“Oh, Yes, dear,” Mother said hesitantly. “I’m not sure I know what it is.

“You know! It’s that big jacaranda tree over at the Hotel Washington. And this is the class looking up at it. Miss Whitman took us there over today. It’s so beautiful. Mother, can it? Please say yes. Say yes!”

“Well, Belinda, answer me! Who is it?”

“I’m Jessica,” Jessica said. The house seemed suddenly to be too small, too tiny. Jessica was red.

“Belinda, who?” Mother said.

“Do you have to go to the toilet, Jessica?” Mother said.

“This, Jessica?” The one paper with no gold star pasted at the top and two angry red fingerprints on it stood a mahogany tea table and four small straight back chairs with leather cushions in the seats. The table, laid for tea, was set with china of a purplish hue. Jessica to pass through.

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“Yes. She’s in my class.”

“Oh. You go to the American school. Do you want to come in and play?” Jessica did, desperately. There was a fountain she could see in the corner of the garden. A laughing cupid with a bow and a quiver of arrows slung across his shoulders spurted water from his mouth — a golden spray splashing off the round surface of his tummy and tinkling to a basin of water where scarlet and yellow birds were bathing.

“Oh, yes. Can I?” said Jessica.

Come on, Jessica! Let’s go play in my new play house.” Bellinda said and pulled the reluctant Jessica along by the hand.

In back, Jessica saw, it wasn’t nearly so fancy, just grass and frangipani and flickerbrush flowers. Marigold the wall, which was made of stone and very high, bamboo grew tall and delicate. Against the bamboo, as if within a grove, stood a tiny house just Jessica’s size. It looked like a little gingerbread house with a door in front and two windows on either side and sweet little dormers up on top. Belinda goes to first. The door was a perfect height. She didn’t even have to duck her head. Inside was just one big room. A hooked rug lay on the floor and on it stood a mahogany tea table and four small straight back chairs with leather cushions in the seats. The table, laid for tea, was set with china of a blue willow pattern.

Bellinda turned to Jessica and said in a mincy sort of voice, “Would you prefer lemon or milk?”

Jessica stared at her blankly. Belinda whispered vaguely, “What do you like in your tea, milk or lemon?”

Jessica felt; “I don’t drink tea.”

Belinda threw her hands above her head and rolled back her eyes the way mothers do sometimes and Jessica began to feel uncomfortable. Just then she heard the sound of children laughing and then Anne Marie came scurrying bathed in a high pointed arch of flowering hibiscus and then down 9th Street a block. 9th Street divided New Cristobal from Colon. Anne Marie’s house, in Colon, was huge, two stories high and set inside a fence of concrete and wrought iron that ran around half the block. Jessica rang the bell at the gate and waited. She heard the sound of children laughing and then Anne Marie came skating around the corner of the house with Belinda de Soto. Inside Jessica’s chest fires of jealousy and anger burst into flame. By the time the two little girls reached the gate Jessica’s heart was a cold, black cinder of disappointment and hurt.

“Hi, Belinda!” Jessica screamed and laughed.”

“Hi! You’re late!”

The first time Jessica ever consciously practised the Golden Rule was on Friday for the last bell to ring, tense with excitement. As soon as her line was red.

“I’m sorry!” Jessica clapped her hands, too enchanted still to be dismayed.

The front garden was like a picture from a fairy story book. There were flowers everywhere and to one side, nestled in velvet-leaved violets, lay a dark mossy pond. Great gold fish floated soundlessly and serene in the clear brown water. Water trickled over moss covered stones and fell into the pond with a cool silver sound. A child’s tree, leaves small and feathery with cascades of golden blossoms, hung motionlessly above the cool dark water. “Oohoh!” Jessica sighed.

“I’m sorry!”

“I’m sorry!” Jessica clapped her hands, too enthralled still to be dismayed.

The Golden Rule

Belinda stepped off the gate and unlatched it. Jessica ran to the fountain. The birds, fluttering into the air, chattered indignantly at her.

“Lock now what you’ve done! You’ve frightened the birds!” Bellinda said crossly.

“I’m sorry!”

“I’m sorry!” Jessica clapped her hands, too enthralled still to be dismayed.

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The Golden Rule (continued)

“I know what I’m going to do,” Jessica said after a while. Mother continued to comb her fingers through Jessica’s hair, “I’ll get Anne Marie and we won’t play with the Belinda again. We’ll get everyone not to play with her ever. I’m sure I heard the rest pretending one guy standing near the sidewalk group of mongoloids gardening a Chicken Scream watching me walk by the toe. Her fingers felt all thick and clumsy and her head felt hot. Anne Marie didn’t seem to fit. She couldn’t seem to get her shoe between the brackets at around her.

Mother kept on stroking Jessica. And then after a little while she said, “I want to tell you about the Golden Rule. It’s a very important rule, because if you follow it, why then it will help you not to be angry with people even if they do bad things to you. The Golden Rule will help stop that poison from coming into you so it can’t make you sick.

“The Golden Rule, Jessica, is very simple. It’s this: ‘Do unto others, always, as you would have others do unto you.’ Do you understand that, dear? Can you say it?”

Jessica looked up at her mother steeply and nodded. “Yes,” she said. “I understand. It says, ‘Do unto others...as...’ Her eyes closed and then she opened them again. ‘...as other do...unto...as you...as...’ But by then she was fast asleep.

Now it was five days since her encounter with Belinda de Soto. She hadn’t seen her since. Jessica had told Anne Marie the story of all her grievances against Belinda and said it would serve Belinda right if no one ever played with her again. But she refrained from suggesting an outright boycott. Now, hearing Belinda’s scornful laugh again, she bitterly regretted her restraint.

“You’re late! You’re late! You’re late!” Belinda chanted, skating in circles around her.

Jessica ignored Belinda. She couldn’t remember anyone saying an exact time. She sat right down there on the pavement to put on her skates. But they didn’t seem to fit. She couldn’t seem to get her shoe between the brackets at the toe. Her fingers felt all thick and clumsy and her head felt hot. Anne Marie crouched down beside her. She said, “It’s the wrong foot.”

The wrong foot! The wrong foot!” Belinda crowed, standing over them. “Oh, Jessica! You’re talking all day! Come on, Anne Marie, let’s go. Slow poke can follow when she’s ready, whenever that is.”

“Where’re you going?” cried Jessica, alarmed.

“We’re going to skate down by the Bay because the sidewalk’s better there. It’s O.K. Mama said we could.”

Belinda was already out the gate and Anne Marie was skating after her.

“Wait!” Jessica called. “I’ll put my skates on there.”

And so she followed after Belinda and Anne Marie walking, skates in hand. The two of them sailed away ahead of her, like two birds they flew along. It made Jessica feel stiff and ugly to see them skimming along so easily together. And once at the Bay, once she had her skates on, somehow she still seemed unable to catch up with them, to join them. And they were having such a good time without her, Especially Belinda. Belinda was always laughing and whispering things in Anne Marie’s ear that she wouldn’t tell to Jessica even when Jessica asked.

“What? What did you say? What did she tell you, Anne Marie?” Jessica called, skating toward them where they stood catching their breath by a fire hydrant and giggling. “Oh, it’s nothing. It’s nothing important. Come on, Anne Marie. I’ll race you to the corner!” Belinda said and off the two of them went leaving Jessica behind.

After a little while Anne Marie had to go home to use the toilet. She wanted someone to go with her but Belinda said, “Jessica and I haven’t raced yet. You go on alone. It shouldn’t take you but a minute. Come on, Jessica! Race you to the corner and back!”

Belinda had a good headstart so it wasn’t really fair. But Jessica was so excited to be included that she hardly thought about winning. When Belinda whizzed by on her way back she screamed at Jessica, “I could beat you skating backwards I bet, slow poke!”

Resentment, hot and thick, welled up in Jessica’s breast. “It’s not fair!” she shouted. “You had a headstart!” She reached the corner and made her turn—a little too fast. She almost fell. Then the whole stretch of block opened before her. Belinda’s lead was not so great as it had been. She wasn’t quite a quarter of the way down. Jessica knew she could beat her. Knew she could. And she might have, by a hair, only Belinda stumbled and fell. Jessica whizzed right past her without even slowing down.

“Help me!” Belinda started to cry. “Oh, help me somebody, please!” Jessica reached the corner. She still felt as strong, as quick, as clever and as good as Gene Autry or the Count of Monte Cristo. She skated slowly back to the weeping Belinda.

“I cut myself,” Belinda wept. She had. There was a bloody gash on her knee. Jessica started to laugh. It wasn’t easy to laugh. She discovered; it wasn’t just the fat men in the movies make laughing. “Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!” She pointed her finger at Belinda and bent over laughing. “Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!” She pointed her finger at Belinda and bent over laughing. “Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!”

“Why are you laughing? Help me! Please. Help me up,” Belinda wept. But Jessica just laughed some more. Then suddenly she grew very serious. She squatted down beside Belinda and said, each word making a small explosion in the air between them, “That’s the Golden Rule,” she hissed. “Do unto others as others do unto you!”

Karen Baum

In an Abandoned Family Graveyard

The Almakis who once lived on this hill would not Have allowed this. For them veneration was a river; And a life, even in the noon sun, was shadowed By other lines.

Savages, they murdered the grandparents of These intended dead and were murdered in turn. The white men were restless; the soil was thin. This hill belongs to a bank in a nearby city. A few of the children’s stones (for they are smaller) Lean forward precariously. “It’s the frost.”

A neighbor claims, “No Jesus who raises the dead.”

An hour gone, I must turn back but after a few steps Pause, feel the need of some formal leave-taking. Forgive me then these curious footprints, these remarks That lack the grip only adhering love can provide.

Karen Baum

Useless

Windpots tucked in boots
collar up, I face the salted spray and call Odysseus. Come here. Come to this northern shore. Let me sing your name in my poet’s voice.

The wind returns my words, whips my poet’s voice down streets Odysseus never walked, strews it on sounds Odysseus never heard.

Exxon, Burgerking, Champion Autoparts.
Against these odds, Odysseus, what godly use are you?

Wendy Kindred

Fort Kent

I Thought I Heard a Chicken Scream

group of mongoloids gardening behind the state employment building

one guy standing near the sidewalk with his face mashed into the cyclone fence watching me walk by

the rest pretending to watch a normal showing them how to use a hoe, but they was all grinning at yours truly:

the guy at the fence giving me the escape plan with his eyes.

John Gillespie
Camden

Ramon Worms

John Gillespie
Camden
All Those Moslems

As Those Moslems.
The sleeves in their bodies
so different from ours.
One hole leads to a loop
and it tightens.

Overhere, the loopholes
snag and stick
on satin backs of Glen-plaid vests,
just how the parched, white cotton
of those heads
seems simple and serene fearful,
through the haunted eyes of camele
no ambivalence, you see.

Even in rainbows of oil,
sands sliding like rhinestone,
a dictatorship of sun-
seems simple and serenely fearful,

and it tightens.

We sit home and burn oil.
We hold onto our side of the globe
without applause.

And if belief is blood,
Blood dries too soon in the desert.

Myma Bouchey
Machine

Saying Goodbye to a Voyager

A late moon wanes over the cove,
it's light weakly spreads to the edge
of darkness. To walk on this light,
this water to the edge, you must
become a shadow, reimpliment shape
and size, go weightless on tip toe.

There is no promise at the end.
You will have to go as if for nothing,
a long way, without an audience,
without applause. Not even I
will be watching you or caring
if you learn to walk, or touch
the last giotto of light before the
darkness presses against the back
of your neck and you kneel, hopeless
and lost. I will be sitting at home
before the fire reading a good book;
my mind won't be on you at all.
As I read I will be slipping sherry
until I grow drowsy. Nor will I dream
of you as you begin across
the water, walking on light.

My advice it that you skip
the whole thing, eat a good dinner
and talk with friends. No?
You insist? Well. What can I say?
Bon voyage. When you return,
E = mc², whisper in his ear
I am his Sybil now.

He is electrified
His hair turns white

He insists?
I won't let all my secrets out
Poor Albert cries
Then clutching his notes and formulæ
He goes back into the night to die
Or worse live on
Perpetually bemused by the crooked universe.

Edith Cheitman
Kents Hill

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of
Maine Writing

This is Kennebec's fifth year of publication. Our format and newspaper
make possible a selected distribution of 5,000 copies, thus providing
Maine writers with an audience no "little" magazine can offer. We publish as many new writers each year as possible, while trying not to neglect the established ones. In this endeavor to bring Maine writers to the attention of the public, we are supported by the University of Maine at Augusta, Forum A, and an increasing number of writers whose submissions make us to present Maine writing that is worth reading.

The Editors