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TRINITY REVIEW

**Trinity Review, Volume XXVII, Number 2 is
published by the students of Trinity College,
Hartford, Connecticut 06106**

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NIGHT BLINDNESS

*The moon is full and falling —
we press our hands to our cheeks in fear
and our eyes flutter up like large white moths at the pane
to watch it ride clear the dark top of the house.*

*There is a madness in the air past method —
it is lunacy
how we rush the thick dark
and hound the black earth for a shadow,
fearing white dawn will never fall —*

*It is instinct to long for the hour of release
when the heavy head of the old king
will be rolled to safe sleep
in the thin arms of the new and singing moon.*

Elizabeth Egloff

**Second Verse Same As The First
- could be better, but is going
to be worse**

Intro

I am alive
Chances are, I've died

There have been times, too many to number, when, either by accident or
carelessness, I should have died

I am alive
How?

I

Little Adam Sopher crawled away from the camp site, when his mom and dad were
asleep. It was one day ago.

Passing by the time would not be evident: the cry from Adam's mouth was a
non-temporal hunger cry. Adam was damned hungry.

The time was important to Dusty and Debbie Sopher. Their boy was lost, and each
hour of his absence was lined on their faces. Adam must be hungry.

Little Adam Sopher had crawled away a week ago. He was dead.

Passing by the time of death was not evident. He was just a corpse, for three days
now.

Little Adam Sopher had crawled out of camp, three days ago. Adam was very
hungry, even though he was too weak to tell anyone.

Dusty and Debbie Sopher were delighted when they found their boy. Adam Sopher
will grow up to be a fine boy.

Adam was thinking how boring it was out in left field. Why didn't anyone hit the
ball out here?

Finally, a ball was hit toward him. Adam raced in eagerly. The ball sailed over his
head, with Adam a few seconds behind.

Adam did not see the car, even though it was a flashy lime-green, for he was intent
on the ball.

Adam's body was not to be looked at; only buried, or burned, which is cheaper.

Finally a ball was hit his way. Adam scampered in, but the ball orbited over his
head. The ball landed and bounced into the street, with Adam a moment behind.

The driver of the flashy lime-green sportster just missed the boy. Just missed a
telephone pole too. Some guys are just lucky!

Adam was fascinated by the way the shredded paper burned. He would light a bit,
blow it out, light another bit, and so on. All with great delight.

The shredded paper was used as stuffing around his father's shot gun shells. It was
too bad he didn't know what the paper surrounded, for it was a mess when Adam
couldn't blow out the flame.

Dusty and Debbie Sopher were very upset. Their Adam was dead.

Adam was fascinated by the way the shredded paper burned. He kept lighting it,
and then blowing it out, all with great joy.

Dusty Sopher ruined it when he came out and yelled at his son for messing with the
shot gun shells. That son of his was too careless.

II

The rain was terrible. It all came down at once, and then the rest, and then what ever was left over; over and over. Adam could hardly see out the window of his new boat/car, a year old VW.

Adam was in a hurry to get back home. He had to be on the job at 7:30 sharp, and he still had a three hour drive ahead of him. It was worth it, as he got to see his girl friend, (ah, what a memory) but it was dangerous to drive at 70 mph in this downpour.

It was also dangerous to skid at 70 mph, and when the skid ends in a concrete bridge, the effect is mortifying. Adam was in no shape to go to work in the morning. In fact he was dead.

It was dangerous driving at 70 mph in the rain, but at a slower speed, the three hour drive could take four hours.

As Adam came around the corner, he started to skid, which can be hazardous. With luck, and some skill, Adam pulled out of it and slowed down. Four hours later he was in bed, but not asleep.

Why had he driven so fast? He should never have gotten out of that skid. He should be dead now, but he wasn't. Adam fell asleep with the knowledge that he was lucky to be alive.

Adam didn't like to go drinking, but there was nothing else to do, and the guys were fun to be with when they were a little tight. And, of course, they needed a ride from him, so what could he say?

The bar was crowded, and there was a nice red-head over in the corner, but soon she left, so Adam fell to some serious drinking. It didn't take long for the bar to seem less crowded, but instead, alive. The bar was the intestine of some animal, moving waitresses along as it contracted and expanded. The waitresses carried the life sustaining liquid of the animal.

Then, as smoothly as the bar had gained unity, it dissolved into individuals, each the same, and all the girls appealing. Then it was time to go out into the night.

Adam had to drive back. He had never driven when he was drunk, and when sober, thought it was stupid. But now, as with many others, he was drunk and driving. So was the driver of the car, which together with Adam's car, made an explosion that blocked traffic for hours.

Adam found himself driving while he was drunk. The back of his mind told him it was dangerous, but the front of his mind told him nothing.

The sudden vision of another car coming at him finally registered on his blank screen, and he hit the brakes, swerved around the vision, and then his screen went blank again.

When he did eventually arrive home, he was receiving some static, a repeat of a vision of a car. Jesus! He had come within inches of being killed.

Static came through of many other near misses. A lot of luck. But there wasn't that much luck floating around. How come he was so lucky?

Soon the static gave him such a headache that he stopped reception, and collapsed.

Adam Sopher was America's only entry in the cross Indian Ocean, small craft race, for solo skippers. His boat, the Fizzy, was a beaut; fourteen foot long, with a striking orange and black hull, and a nine foot tiger on the spinnaker. He was favored to win, in fact Igor the Russian gave him 10 - 3 odds.

Adam's popularity had swollen in direct proportion to the rise in popularity of single skipper, cross ocean races. He had come out of a swell to capture the prestigious Trans Mediterranean Race; and that and his bold social life, had set him up as the hero of all the hordes of hero worshipers, who had been deprived of their last hero when he failed to re-enter the atmosphere in his private hot rod spacemobile. Adam was the lord high of the crusty sailing elite.

Racing the Fizzy around had given Adam much free time to think. Think about the one thing that had been bothering him for the last ten years, ever since he had nearly killed himself in his car. He had just saved himself. Or had he?

He pulled the little note book out of his pocket. On the first page was the heading:

Times I Should Have Died....

After it were many dates and events. He thought back to the plane trip, on which he had escaped with his life only by an incredibly lucky landing in a corn field. There was no way that plane could have landed without killing everyone, yet here he was.

There were many other times he should have died, yet didn't. Now, luck is one thing, but there were too many times for it to be chance.

In the last months, an idea had started to grow in his mind. There was no evidence for this theory, except that he was alive, and the idea felt right.

Some feelings settle right into your brain, as though they were always meant there, while others just keep kicking around until they are thrown out. This thought had grown suddenly, and was right in place in his mind. In fact he couldn't dislodge it.

Could he have died each of these times, but because Gods were watching this theater of life, and didn't want the game to end, they had put him in a new dimension, like the last, only a few seconds before the crisis? Then they had proceeded to make him forget the crisis, and had saved him. The Gods watched the death, but then started Adam up again for more kicks. Was he a plaything, immortal, so the fun would never end?

Adam lived on risks. He wasn't happy unless he was fighting death. If there was no death, then there was no fight. That thought really scared Adam. He could jump out a window, only to find himself back in the room and the window stuck. He might be an unwilling actor, with an infinite role.

The Trans Indian Ocean race was spoiled when the biggest storm of the decade hit that part of the world. Only three skippers survived. The hero worshipers had lost out again.

Only a little waterlogged notebook was found from the favorite's boat. In it was found a strange list, which one wit said should be enlarged with one more entry.

Only four skippers survived the biggest storm in recent history to hit the Indian Ocean. Adam Sopher, to the relief of millions of sailing groupies, was one of the fortunate. Yet, as the press noted, Adam seemed quite depressed when he was saved.

III

Adam made up his mind. He was going to jump out the window. He had never backed out on anything he had decided to do, so he knew he would do it. He walked to the window and did a ten point full gainer down the 1,000 ft. to the ground. The picture in the New York Screamer clearly showed that he had made a perfect entry into the pavement.

The Gods were having a tough time. The determination in one of the subjects was hard to overcome. It seems that this particular subject, one of the most entertaining, had gained a little insight into the Game. It was hard to keep him on the right track in the new dimension, so he wouldn't kill himself. But, as with the other suicides, there was a doubt in his mind, so the Game went on.

Adam looked down at the pavement. What if it weren't true? A risk is one thing, but this was certain death. No, it was better to wait. Adam slept well that night.

There was one certain way of finding out if his theory was true. If he were immortal he would not die of old age. Sooner or later the Gods would have to tip their cards, and he would know.

IV

Adam was old. He was thinking that he was as old as he would ever get. Next to his hospital bed, lay an open note book with a list, one hundred entries long, in it. It seemed that his theorizing was empty. The Gods had not even shown as much as a big toe, and Adam knew that he would soon die. Dr. Lazarus showed it every time he denied it.

So, he was not immortal. He had really risked his life, and was not just a foolish actor in some game. For the first time in sixty years Adam felt relieved. That was the last feeling he had as he passed away.

Adam regained consciousness with a jump. There were twenty zillion faces looking down on him, all with a look of expectation.

"What the shit?"

All the faces went into a shout of triumph. The whole world jumped up and shouted stupid phrases of joy. One of the faces focused closer. It was Dr. Lazarus.

Adam saw the Gods as the jubilant doctor explained how the purpose of the appendix had been discovered, and how after a small operation on it, man would be immortal. The only losers were those who had theirs out. Adam had been the first successful operation.

Adam clearly saw the Gods as they watched the game.

In their haste for the outcome, the doctors had left Adam in the operating room when they brought him around.

Adam grabbed the scalpel from the table. His hand poised in the air, and he pulled the blade down into his heart.

His hand poised in the air, and he pulled the blade down into his heart.

His hand poised in the air, and he pulled the blade down into his heart.

His hand poised in the air, and he pulled the blade down into his heart.

His hand poised in the air, and he pulled the blade down into his heart.

His hand poised in the air, and he pulled the blade down into his heart.



WHAT IS FORMAL

here is a train come from the sea
its undercarriage cold
and corroded, its windows
rinsed with medicinal salt

goodbye,
I know you look to see
in which style
I choose to leave you
I brace inside the yoke of my coat
and pull away

a female exercise:
my double and I
mouthing in the windshield
disguising the bridled impulse

two mouths,
there are two mouths here
and in my hand
the braille of the punched ticket

I cross my arms
to close the inward scissor
while outside what is formal
is myself absorbed
in the steam
the train gives off

cars couple on the tracks
with such crucial sparks
what need is it
stammers and grinds in this
machinery of departure?

the flag snaps continually north
its pole ringing on the verge of voice

it speaks for me
whose voice diminishes
that the human splice unravel

to let it go, oh to control
the haunches of energy is hardest

CARTWHEELS

*a lilting thing
perched on heron foot
for a cartwheel*

*a hoop-the-sun
that spins light out
into her blue sky eyes
turnover*

*she hop falls
onto one willow arm
whirled-over
spoked legs
kaleidoscope down
to tremulous stance*

*stunned with whipped air
and hurled colors
dizzy rainbows blinking
into place*

*she is proudly balanced
spokes again poised
for another gyration*

*and another
swirling twirling
reeling down*

*and another
and another*

Bonnie Bernstein

REFLECTIONS

*When you first left this place,
I did not understand
Why I should hate my face;
I had done nothing out of hand
To cause such deep remorse;
You deserved better, of course.*

*Lover, did I not turn away
When we agreed it best
To break, be friends someday
And never mind the rest?
Why do I bore myself to tears,
Rehashing high points of past years?*

*Consideration, feeling, tact,
After you left, would save me,
I thought, and keep intact
The image of myself you gave me;
But staring at myself at night,
The same old self comes into sight.*

*No bitterness has brought this change,
I've always been part flesh, part stone,
If the unfeeling part seems strange
It's only by comparison;
In love, my mirror was your face,
You broke the glass, I fell from grace.*

Dori Katz

RAISING THE QUINTS

Funny you should ask, after all these years and articles in magazines. We thought when Tay got married "that's the last of it" — for us, I mean. Sure, there'd be a wire service photo when she had her first, maybe a column if it was more than one. But after thirty years it seemed right that the world moves on to other things, and leaves us here like any other family with our own gladness and sadness.

No, we didn't expect the whole brood — I explained at the very first press conference, and afterwards on the "News of the Week" our doctor, a fine man Jesse Boyd whose son Peter is still our doctor now, rest his soul, he told the story. We expected a multiple birth, that's all, more than one set of hearts tuned in on the 'vining-rod (that was how he said it, Jesse). So we waited. Normal gestation period, not late or premature. Nine months. Then as we paced that waiting-room floor that fateful night — I was with my wife's father Roy Blake from Four Corners who is happily still with us. Where was I? In the waiting-room. Yes. Well, first Jesse came out and said "Light up, Hank, you got two girls now." Then he goes back in and comes back out again four more times! Think of that. Only there's not six of 'em like I counted, there's just five, 'cause when he said two girls that first time he mean my wife and Tay, the oldest. Scared me out of my skin, you bet. Almost conked right there on the linoleum.

And there was this other fella waiting for his wife. I gave him first two cigars, then one more each time — but I only had five! So, like I told the Governor when he called, it's lucky there were only six of 'em. And I offered to give the other fella waiting for his wife one of our extras for free. Wonder what his was.

Ennyhoo, we had journalists from here to Tokyo, you know, running 'round and the county gave us this beautiful six-bedroom house and I got a raise and a local laundry provided free diaper service for one full year. You scientist-types never gave us nothing but a lot of trouble, but I understood how important it was for them to study just how we brought the kids up. There have been only eight families with quintuplets in our nation's history. Sometimes, like when my wife was doing training and the scientists wanted to take pictures I had to put my foot down. But in general they were cooperative, even helped with the housework. Once I rigged an intercom system . . .

Sorry. You wanted to know about the quints as individuals, right? Well, I could tell them apart from the very first day. Norm was the youngest and cried the most, morning noon and night. He was also the biggest, so we figured he just wasn't getting enough to eat! On the other hand Quentin never made a peep. He was always the quiet one. Tay, Ima and Ura had blonde, reddish and brown hair, respectably, so they were easy enough to tell apart. Yes, we dressed them all alike, or at least our girls in pink and the boys in blue for the first few years. You do that even with twins. But write down that we always bought them different toys to play with and they each had their own special-color box to keep them in. When they started going to school they each had an individual desk. We took turns saying grace at supper. My turn on Sundays unless I was away, in which case Quentin. He read the most.

But for my money Ima was pick of the litter. She was Daddy's Little Girl, always hanging on to my pants leg when photographers came by. Just point a camera at her! It was natural they'd focus on her because she was the prettiest, but she was also the most talented. She was a much better dancer than Ura. When they teamed up she carried the tap act. Maybe I'm prejudiced, eh? She's still a good girl, though. Only one who still lives in the state and comes to visit very often.

Where was I? As individuals. Thank you. Well, Tay liked to help with the housework. Baked us a cake all by herself when she was six years old. Don't remember how it tasted — don't want to! The only one who was ever a discipline problem was Norm. Had to paddle him once a week when he was little, seemed. Always into trouble. The girls learnt to do crewel work and stitched their names into all these cloth dish-towels. Quentin was always the quiet one. The really grand coincidence, a-course, was when Ima and Ura got married on the same day to the twins. Got network coverage then. That's all it was though — coincidence.

You got more tape on that reel? I'll just tell you about the annual party. Every fall we all get together here at the house for a big dinner. Used to be on Labor Day but Norm has his chain of hardware stores now and is busy then, so we hold it later. Ima, Ura and their families — Tay too, now — most always stay the weekend. We've got seven grandchildren. At the big dinner I say grace and my wife serves her sweet potato pie, and last year Ima's little girl played the Minute Waltz on our piano. Then, if it's a nice day, we may drive out to Parkview to visit Quentin. We pray, to thank God that we are together. The first year we brought a basket of flowers with small flags stuck through the rim. I guess in that we're like any other American family with our gladness and sadness.

You're surely welcome. Good luck with your paper. Sorry if I rambled or told what isn't useful. I guess memories are like sticking a big old knife in a pot of jam. You can never pull out as much as you aim to.

Joel Kemelhor





MIDDAY TRAIN

*Who is this man
who stares
with pen and paper, who
makes verbal pictures
of me in this closed
compartment
of a train?*

*Who is this girl
deformed of arm and
hand who avoids
my half-smile, my
slight desire
to talk?*

*And who is the balding
young man, with
two strands combed
from extreme left to right,
who sits in noiseless
apathy to the ringing
bell of the soda man?*

*In that lurching
stop we were thrown
forward, together,
baldness scraped by
pen and shrunken arm,
stung by my hands
which tried to prevent
the clash;
each turned to separate
windows.*

Ginny Butera

BREAKFAST LAMENT

cantaloupe comfort
cleanses the tongue
 luxuriantly
with the sun-sponge bath
we bask every noon
 newly-wed
did they think the vows
merged
two
vigorous
voluble
syllables
compounded by distinction?
who cares for the sum
or how it compares with its parts?
I am whole
 not the other half of a cutaway

slice and tumble, tough and pungent
 turtle skin
 swelling fresh
cantaloupes cut
retain their whole-some flavor.

Emily Sullivan

Monday Rain Falls

It was September hot. Rain in large puddles. You step into them and make a ring around the bottom of your shoes, wet ring to show you where you have been. Slashes of water across the window like knife marks. Lines that come at you and suddenly stick to the clear surface in front. Beating on your head. Weighing you down. Slow. Sluggish. Rain.

She had torn her old raincoat on the bus and now wore her mother's until she got a new one. It was too big for her. But she pulled the belt in tight and took up much of the slack. Still, she felt that she looked quite funny. Everyone she saw knew that her raincoat was too big. On Fifth Avenue, grandly aristocratic women, elegant even when wet. She carried one of the funny-looking long umbrellas, down over her shoulders. Looking out at the people from her plastic cover. As if she were in a theatre watching a performance.

Monday again. She walked quickly down the streets, like everyone else. Scurrying along like they did. It came easily to her now. One foot after the other, weaving around people, bumping into some of them, not saying you're sorry. In a few seconds you are half-way down the block. Never walk and look at the people you pass. Newspapers in the gutter, candy wrappers, cigarette butts. Bits and pieces of people (whom she never touched and knew she would never touch).

Had it been another week gone? She couldn't remember. Her. The girl from upstate. If she lasted through all the days just ahead? Five at a time. Drudgery. What life was really like.

She had gotten a job. Five days she had at a time. Not that it made much difference. To her college friends, let things slide. Work for a while, travel, get married. To her, push to be able to afford. She went away to college. She wanted to do things. She chose this. She could live with her cousin in Brooklyn and not pay much rent. Not married yet, no children. Age twenty-two. There was time. You don't account to anyone at single age twenty-two.

If she never went to the office? No one would have known and no one would have cared. Herself alone among all the faces. She might have just kept on walking. A child dressed up in her mother's shoes playing at being grown-up.

On the bus she studied the faces. And the hands. Of the people sitting near her. A game she had read about in a novel. One lady in a white dress, a Madison Avenue type. A man who wore faded pants, the man who made hamburgers in one of the luncheonettes in the Forties. Two little boys who went to a school in the Village every morning. What kind of sandwiches had their mothers given them for lunch that day? Peanut butter **was** better than tuna fish. Like them. She listened to them. And no one else on the bus paid any attention. The bus rattled. Things would get better. She was lucky to have a job. Secretarial work in a big publishing company.

Monday typing was fast, no matter what the words. Tuesday typing would be slower. Four days, six hours, and twenty minutes left. Hope, left over from the summer, of excitement and possibly even romance. Yawn. Michael, where are you

now? At the day care center? She would look there just the same. She would meet him along the beach, quite accidentally, of course. He would be so pleased to see her again. But she would support herself. Maybe she would see that she was wrong all along? Make babies. Be swollen and filled with babies. Type. L - O - V - E!!? How people could work at such jobs for their entire lives. Four days, five hours and ten minutes left. Her brain was shrivelling up in her head. One day she would wake up. She would take a shower and her peanut-brain would fall out of her ear. And swoosh down the drain. Run to your office and home again. There are puddles on the streets of Manhattan. Type.

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in its petty pace from day to day. Lunch time. Reading a novel is a means of keeping one's sanity. Last Wednesday's discussion topic: High School Equivalency Diplomas. Conclusion reached: Get one. She knew nothing of that. Outside. When the sky is dark, it is hard to see the tops of the tall buildings. When the sky is clear and the sun strong, the tops of the buildings shine with light. In case of rain, carry an umbrella. An umbrella can double as a walking stick. Or a handy weapon in case of assault.

"Carol?"

"Oh, hello." Smile.

"Going to lunch?" Pause. "I know a great little place around the corner we could go to."

Pause. Eligible. But rather unattractive.

"Thank you, but I'm waiting for a friend."

She didn't want to bother. He walked away. She tried to remember his name. One of the accountants in the office. She had other things on her mind. The week-end had passed. She had not on any particular spot accidentally found Michael. She had not found any particular spots, or any particulars, or any.

A few of them were still out in the Hamptons, trying to make the summer last as long as possible. College friends demand a full report on glamorous city life. Maybe next time. In a stationary store window, a notepad. Yellow paper with daisies. Like Friday afternoon's note.

Carol — Your friend Anne called and said that something came up and she wouldn't be able to have anyone come out to the beach this weekend, something about Tony, I think? Anyway, she said that she was sorry about it and that she would call you this week and maybe you could come to visit next week-end or some other time. John suddenly arrived and so we left to go to Vermont for the week-end. I hope that things work out okay this time. I should be back Sunday night, I don't know if he'll be coming back here too. There's some money in the strong box if you run out and the car keys are in the desk drawer. Have a good week-end. — Susie.

She had gone to the movies. And read the two books from the library that she wanted to read. And finished that song that she had begun for Michael a long time ago and had never finished. What had he done anyway? Maybe he was in New Hampshire, back on the farm with those friends of his, making love to some other woman? No, she would not think about that . . . No. She was here now, by herself. What's done is done.

"Hey, beautiful!" A voice coming toward her. A stiffness pushed her back straight. She was curious, flattered, disgusted. "Smile!" He walked past her. She barely had a chance to catch sight of him — dark, straight hair, around his face, dark skin, Puerto Rican?, the usual workman's delivery man outfit, strong arms that swung by her as he passed. Rather attractive in a coarse, ordinary way. She had seen him before.

Lunch alone in a sandwich shop. Why is the radio always on in sandwich shops?

That morning on the train there was a radio, too. She had been one of the first to get on the train. She had her pick of any seat. As usual. At the next stop, more people got on. Plenty of empty seats. But a man came and sat very close to her, pushing her against the window, smiling and trying to make conversation. He smelled of clean shirts. The men hid their heads behind their newspapers, but whenever a woman walked down the aisle there was a distinct rustle of paper. She was aged single twenty-two. If only she gave a damn. She could be real good-looking.

And in the office.

"Morning, Carol."

"Morning."

"Have a good week-end?"

"Yes, thanks. I went away and spent the week-end with my boyfriend, out in the Hamptons."

"Oh, that must have been very nice."

Why had she said that? No sense. Words just coming out of her mouth. She didn't care what she said to them. She was other than them. Separated from them. Different. Anything not to listen to them or the radio.

Today Monday. Cloudy skies with a chance of precipitation in the early afternoon. Forty percent chance of rain in the late afternoon with possible thunder showers by evening. Right now the temperature in Central Park is 72 degrees . . .

She found a bookstore that sold wonderful paperbacks. As she walked, the eyes of the workmen were on her. Their game, whispering comments. Hers, pretending that she didn't hear. Busses rushed by. Going to some place that she wasn't going to. She kicked the pieces of paper out of her path, stepped on the cigarette butts, crushing them thoroughly under her feet. The books on shelves were dusty. Only fifteen minutes left of lunch.

In front of the office building. Ten minutes left. She could call Anne now.

"Why, Carol, I've been meaning to call you but things have been so hectic here lately. Tony showed up which was a real surprise as you can imagine and we left to straighten some things out, none of which are straightened out of course, but he said to say hello to you and hoped that things are going well with you. Oh yes, and Tony saw Michael, I meant to tell you that, but you see that's why I haven't called you, I really didn't know if I should tell you about it, but since it has been a long time now, I guess I could just satisfy your curiosity and tell you that he went off to California on some new idea of starting an experimental elementary school and supposedly he's got a woman out there too. But I'm sure you couldn't care any more about him and he's not worth it after all this time. Anyway you've got your own life now, too. I guess the city must be very exciting. It's too bad that you couldn't get an apartment in Manhattan and that you have to commute, but I guess soon you'll be settling down and finding a place of your own. Then we'll all come and have a huge house-warming party. That would be really great! Did I tell you that I'm having a party in two weeks? I can't remember who I told and who I didn't, anyway, you must come and bring a guy if you want, there's plenty of room out here . . ."

Upstairs again. Type. She had kicked away garbage on the street as she walked back to the building. Type. Go away. Type. What difference did it make? So many people. Couldn't have cared. T - P - Y - E, no, T - Y - P - E. Four days, two hours and twenty-five minutes. Outside the phone booth. That man again. Type. Four days, one hour, and five minutes. It was a mailman's uniform. Type. T - I - M - E. What was going on around her? Four days and one half hour. Four days.

She walked to the corner. He was standing across the street. Looking at her again. She stood under the sign for the bus, watched him standing next to his mailtruck. He eased his body against the side of it, watching her, watching her. Her umbrella went back and forth. She looked down at her feet. Small feet, but not bad. He smiled at her. Her umbrella stopped. A drunken man staggered up the block toward her. His shoes torn, part of them flapping against his feet as he walked. He was singing an old song. From some old movie? His beard was gray stubble. He was still there, waiting. She swung her umbrella over her shoulder and crossed the street. They got into the truck. They didn't say anything.

He drove uptown, she didn't care where. The seat was hard black leather, strong and stiff. It didn't give in to the soft weight of her body. Bumps in the road. She didn't care. She thought she saw him smile at her. But she wasn't sure. What mattered here anyway?

She wanted the pain soon to come over her and take her. Michael, no you are not here. She ached. She was getting dizzy. No, it was just the sudden stop of the truck. He had stopped under a no parking sign which didn't count to him. Uptown at the park. Are we near the zoo, she wondered. His body pushed her out the door, onto the sidewalk. She barely felt the cracked cement under her feet. His hand was on her arm, leading her into the park, into the trees, where there was grass which would be soft under her body, away from the faces along the street. Deeper into the park. He knows where he is going, he knows. She would know soon, too. This was what it was like here. He turned to her, pushed her off the path.

"What is your name, anyway?"

"Carol."

"I seen you for a long time," pause, "a long time."

Just get it over with. He moved close to her, touching her.

"You're very nice." He moved in to her.

She clung to him. She wanted the pain. Now. The ache took over her body, swung through her. She clung to him. Now, here, among these trees where there were old newspapers and crumpled paper bags, here in this place. She felt him coming over her. She barely touched him. Overcome with the ache inside her. Then the emptiness turned to warmth. Like a wave coming over her, swelling inside her, warm, burning, filling her, over her, around her. She barely saw the trees, just the man's head above her, his dark, full hair falling into his face. Then it subsided. He stood up, mumbled something to her. She didn't want to answer him. She wasn't sure of what he had said anyway. Only the warmth inside her still.

They went back to the truck. She would take the subway back downtown.

"Stop at the corner."

"Okay."

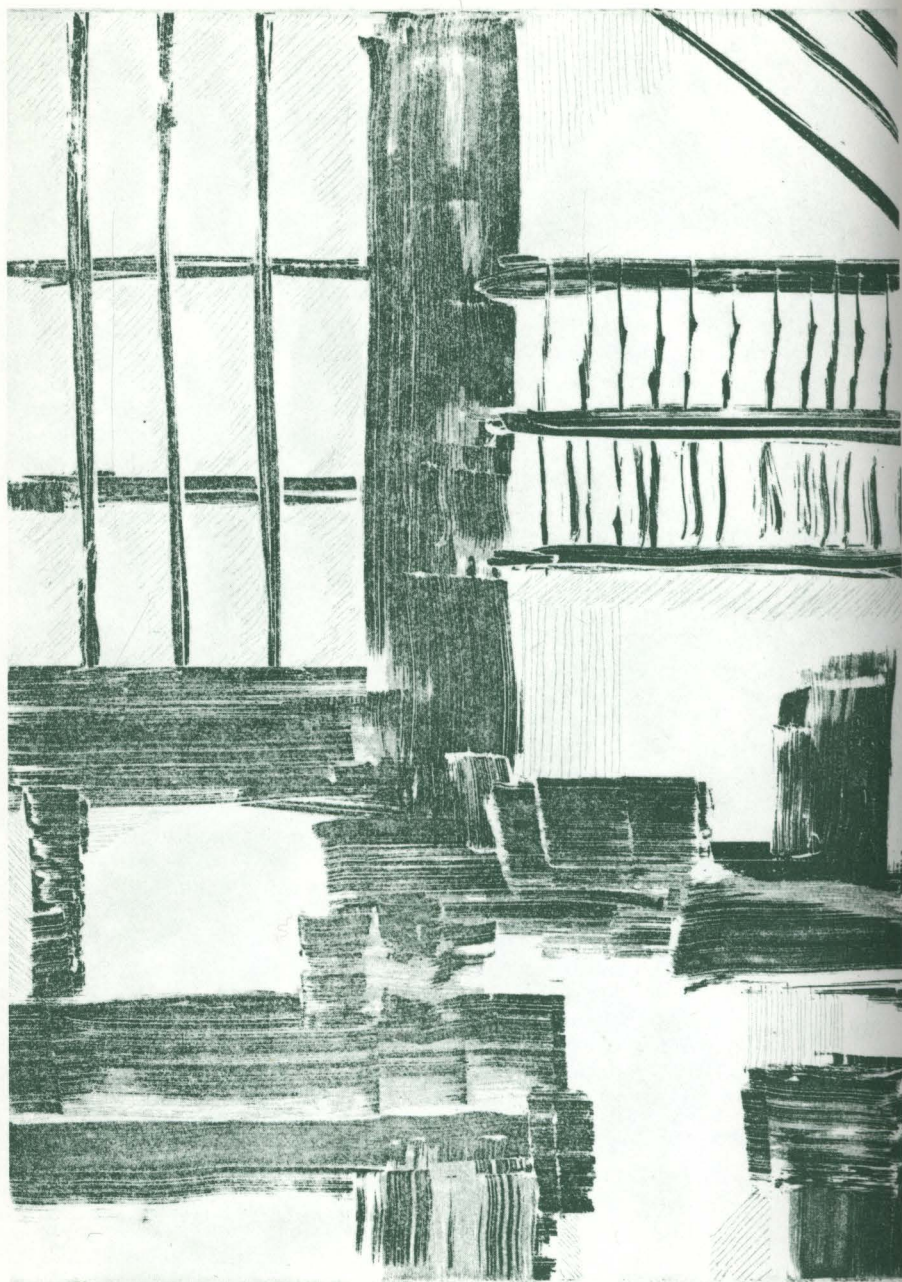
She didn't want to sit on the hard leather seat or to see him. He wanted to talk to her, she was sure.

"I will see you?"

"Perhaps."

She slid off the seat as he pulled to the sidewalk. Before she went down to the subway, she turned to see if he was still there. Nothing. Down the steps, warm, filled with him. Gray faces before her and around her. A mass of faces. She clutched her umbrella again. It swung hard back and forth. It would hit some of the people passing by, not noticing her. She bought her token. People pushed around her. Her head filled with the sounds of the underground, noisy and pushing. It pushed her outside the group of people. Against the wall. Swirled. Jumped. She hit the wall covered with small words glaring down at her. She moved against the wall to a corner of the subway station. Her head was hot, spinning. Her loins strong, aching. She opened her mouth to call out to the faces and she felt her stomach coming up her throat and the contents of the day come spilling forth in a pink wave from inside her. And the man? She couldn't remember him any more. Had he really been there at all? In one of the windows, faces waiting, waiting, and hers among them. She was one of them. Part of the gray of the cement and the empty cans and the paper bags. She entered the subway car.

Lynne Morton



THE PORCH

Above the weaving of the wicker chairs
a net of branches crossed the sun.
All that summer we sat on the porch.
The rockers creaked with age, their gray
fibers plaited and dry.
We sat to watch the trees
whose arms measured our daily motion.
The house smelled of family; only the porch
could break that endless skein of bodies.
Their blood was raveled as an outworn rug.
In those months I grew my hair,
coming to the porch to comb it out,
then smooth the snarls into braids.

That summer, too, you came and sat
on our woven wicker rockers.
You were not of the family.
Once when I stood up you saw
a plaited imprint on my legs,
and said the chairs had tried to claim me
and leave their profile on my skin.

We sat on the porch
and watched gulls fly past
with their great ungainly cries.
I thought them tangled in the trees.
But you said they flew behind
the leaves, and we watched them
emerge unmarked on the other side,
their outlines woven into careless flight.

Gigi Bradford



ON SEEING A SIGN

*"Before the county men put up the sign
I had for years been patient to benign*

*Technicians whose hands sweat soap.
By their good grace we learnt to cope*

*With my disablement. It would be best,
My folks agreed (as dials spun one final test),*

*To bring me up like any normal child.
So I had tropical fish, balloons, and wild*

*Tomboy friends. With them I swiped candy,
Freckled, and hopped shoeless on the sandy*

*Shoulder of US 1, so tense.
Mom wanted a sign, though we had a fence*

*Along the street. When it came the girls all pointed
And liked me more than Zoe, who was double-jointed.*

*While the road has been hard, I regret not a mile;
When awake in the dark, I can manage a smile.*

*Soon I'll walk down the aisle with my college degree,
Caparison'd with cap and black negligee."*

Joel Kamelha

TO CRACK WITH TEETH

*i have come from the lips of the lying
to a mouth where the statues lie broken
and hidden in a garden that is mute,
the boarding house boarded,
the rooms empty with screams.*

*i have come to the shore of
the crystalline sand, the worm
wet blanket of water covered
with lint from the gull's fleeting wing.*

*i have come to the cliffs,
to the root of the tree,
to the spot where the leaves,
without branches, withered and died*

*to crack stones with my teeth
and make of them bread.*

Carlos Martinez

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