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Behind the Scenes

A life not yet attired, a Venus rising from the sea:
What would I give to clothe my visions in that foam! —
I should prefer to see the future somewhat more obscurely.

I would be glad to be concerned
With how the gleaming flesh
In that blue water like a taper burned —
I do not know of any appetite
More pristine than the primal wish
To look upon a nakedness of light.

I propose that most avid one, if you will, the first voyeur,
All of whose apprenticed souls once built
The great cities, the concentrations like a mirror —

After that, after such choice, to find
The vacuous sea, the mirrors going blind —

Now solitaire, appease
Primordial images.

Charles E. Eaton

“Oh, Frau Meinhardt!”

“Ja, Herr Singlewaith. Nach ein Dunkels?”

“Bitte.” Daughter rakes the barley, mother fills the cup . . . up.

Frau Meinhardt returned bearing the beaded clay mug down which the unsettled, rich foam still flowed. It was dark, heavy Bavarian beer made in the vicinity. Irving drew heavily on the cool stein gulping large swallows as if there were no more to follow. But of course there were, there always were. He had just finished serving his country for another day.

Specialist 4th class Singlewaith, I.H. had joined “This Man’s Army” fifteen months ago to the day. Two months basic training (during which time on Good Friday he found himself spread-eagle under the barracks groveling for empty beercans, candy wrappers and cigarette butts, and wept quietly over the crucifixion), two months in a transfer outfit pulling KP and guarding Fort Devens, Mass. (at which point he was so completely intoxicated he passed out during a formation and barely escaped a summary court martial), one month intransient (seasickness and loss of two uniforms), when finally assigned to his permanent outfit — Hq. and Hq. Co., 745th Battalion, U.S. Signal Corps, APO 42D. Location — classified for purposes of National Security. Let it suffice that Sp. 4 Singlewaith had spent the last ten months in the Southern part of Germany — Bavaria — and had but nine more until his Estimated Time of Separation. Nine months to the day, unless — and this held him in constant holy terror — on the ninth month the President should again consider his shores in mortal danger and pull another “National Emergency”. Irvington Heath Singlewaith III could not sustain a year’s extension.

“Nach eins?”

“Ja.”
The stein landed heavily on the rough-hewn table; a pencil rapidly recorded another mark on the coaster.

Very efficient. Germans always very efficient. Big. Gotta be to handle those rakes. Deutschland. Potato eaters. Hands. Whenever my lady love laughs, her cheeks devour her eyes. What big cheeks you have, my Frau. Impressionist. Splotchy. Good hands. Good stock. Hard to believe Barons before the war. Baron Meinhardt. Must be the first. Oh, yes, the Great War. What was it... almost forty-five, fifty years. From Baron to barkeep in fifty years. Not bad considering. From scholar to scum in less than a year. The Great War, the Cold War, hal Baron the Great. Could be, the daughter has a touch. From scholar to daughter to baron to scum... crack.

Irvington looked up toward the tree out of which the chestnut had fallen to the table, bouncing off the corner onto the gravel. He had always liked the Gasthaus Meinhardt, but particularly this small yard beside it. There were a few tables set up beneath the interlaced foliage of the trees, an old rail fence to separate the yard from the drive leading in from the main highway and an ancient trough now covered completely with moss. And as he leaned back in his chair he traced with his eyes the streaming rays up, up through the fluttering leaves entwined above him, up to the rays' flickering origin. Delighted as a child first experiencing a kaleidoscope he remained immersed for several minutes, struggling in an innocence of emotion to suspend his toy above that nether branch. He couldn't. And as he reached for the gray mug, his chair toppled forward.

Shading his eyes he fixed the rolling meadow before him which in the distance erupted into the foothills of the Tyrolean Alps and then... what... Austria, Italy...

The faint buzzing first attracted his attention to the approaching car. It seemed to be coming along at a good clip on the meandering road to the right of the meadow. He knew this road well for he was an inveterate traveller of it. Thirty minutes from the post by bicycle, and Irvington always travelled by bicycle. He held his breath as the Volkswagen arched the last bend, only to sigh with relief as it whipped by the drive to the Gasthaus yard, passing on into the countryside beyond.

Might have been Dawson...

Dawson was a corporal. A spec. 4 had the rank paywise, but the stripe carried authority.

Was it Dawson? Might have been. Dawson had bought a Volkswagen with his “Re-up” bonus.

the age of 25 in your baby blue Volks, kid. Yes, yes . . . you ignorant, arrogant . . . hold it. I.H.S. the third. You know, the stomach. Curious always feel it in the stomach first. If I get a goddam ulcer over this . . .

"Frau Meinhardt!"

It's just another organization, Irv, boy. G.E. I.B.M. What the hell, Defender of the Nation. Ha! Good will ambassador to the continent. Yes, yes.

"Ah! Danke shon."

"Bitte sehr."

To the continent. Deutschland Uber Alles. God, what a life they lead here. Sit in a Gasthaus. Twenty-five cents for a liter. Sure. Why not. Ha! Wouldn't that be something. Yes. A German National. What the hell, if things really got tough, so long Sarge, so long Captain, so long Corporal Dawson. No! Oh, no. Walk right in. "Hey Singlewaith, whaddya want?" "Just an overnight pass, ol' buddy." "All right, here. Hey, what's a guy like you wanta overnight for, heh? Gotta honey? Heh?" "No, it's just that I've come to the decision that I'd rather be a German National, ol' buddy." Then walk right out. Not another word. Heh! Poor boob. Wouldn't figure that one out for three days.

Oh, yes. I can just see it. "Now look here, Captain, I've just received word that one of your men has resigned from the United States Army."

"But, Colonel —" "And not only that, he became a German National, for God's sake. What the hell is going on in this company?" "Well, Colonel, I . . . ." "Don't you 'Well, Colonel' me, dammit! I've been on my damn phone for the last three hours with the Southern Area Command and the only thing I got to say to the General was 'Hello'." "Now, Colonel, I . . . ." "And furthermore, do you know they've even ordered a congressional investigation? Have you been mistreating your men here, Captain?" "No, no, no Colonel. I've only —" "Dammit, if you had to pick on anybody, why Singlewaith? He's got influence, for God's sake! Believe me, Captain, I am not going to take the responsibility for this . . . ."

Chuckling to himself, Irving spilled some of his Dunkels.

God, that would be frantic. It's brilliant. Heh, heh, he's got influence — yeah, sure, every kind but the right kind. Ha. I wonder how they would take it at home. "We regret to inform you that your son has just become a German National." No, it'd be a great blow to mother. A German National, no. An expatriate? Possibly. Ha! I can just hear her. "Well, my dear, you know, an artist, a true young artist simply will not be recognized in this country. Oh, yes, Daddy and I are going over next month to visit the dear boy in Paris." A deserter, maybe. Oh, yes! "Well, my dear, the poor boy. I mean, what do you expect from that hell-hole of an Army? I've sent the dear lamb the names of two analysts in Brussels that I know intimately. Was that three spades, dear?" But to
become a German. No. That would be a great blow to mother. Won't be a German National.

"Ah, Herr Singleватel! Sie haben so viele Bier, eh?"

"Nein. Ist nicht genug, mein lieber Frau. Nach ein Dunkels, bitte."

Irvington did not notice the mug being placed before him nor the automatic marking of the coaster. Flowing into his mind the earlier events of the day took possession of his already blurred consciousness. He was very still, lifting his mug occasionally. Frau Meinhardt obligingly kept it filled.

II

As predicted, the sun rose that morning. Two and a half hours later, per schedule, the Charge of Quarters entered the long corridor and systematically "roused the troops." On each door he soundly pounded with the flat side of his fist three times. Then, while the retort was reverberating down the hall, he expertly flung open the door with one hand and flicked on the light with the other. Shouting over the slamming of the door into the metal wall lockers, he announced the hour of day and explained in rather explicitly vulgar terms why each one of the two occupants should get the hell out of his sack. This task completed, he then went over to the messhall and over a cup of coffee commiserated with the mess sergeant's hangover.

Shaking, Singlewaith stumbled out of bed and pulled on the nearest set of fatigues. Then he staggered into his boots — it was a uniform he particularly despised. It was the standard dress for daily wear.

In the line for the messhall he noticed he had put on the wrong pair of boots. He had worn them the day before in barbed wire-cutting detail and they had become scratched to the point of being shredded. He'd have to change after breakfast.

Breakfast was no more rotten than usual. As he sauntered back to Hqs. Company he thoughtfully smoked his first cigarette.

What the hell do we have today? Weapons' cleaning — no, that's Wednesday. What is it? Laundry's Friday. Oh, God — Tuesday. They'll need somebody for the grease pits. Guess who. Come on, Irv, boy — figure something out.

He critically scanned the company area.

Damn nice day, if I could find something outside. Yes. Something . . . of course! Just the thing. Staring me right in the face.

Before him was a row of young elm trees lining the company parking lot. Girdling each was a whitewashed band extending from the ground up to about three feet. Singlewaith rushed over and inspected each one,
chipping off pieces of bark, shaking his head and muttering. He mag-
nanimously decided to take it upon himself to repaint each one.

Could take all day — excellent day, excellent project. Keep everybody
happy. Oh, and the Captain. “I say, Sergeant, isn’t that Singlewaith out
there painting those trees?” “Yes, I believe it is, sir.” “My, my, con-
scientious boy. Think I’ll keep an eye on him.” Yes, yes.

Then as he flicked away his cigarette butt, Singlewaith stubbed his
toe on a large white rock. A chip of whitewash had come off where he
had kicked it.

Oh, shabby, shabby. Better do these, too. A well-planned day, IH
the third. Commendable. Well, as they always say, “If you can’t move
it, paint it.” Ha, ha.

“Singlewaith! Pick up that butt!” The young second lieutenant bore
down on him from across the street.

By God, never saw him. Must hide in the bushes. Know the type,
though. Square jaw, cropped head. “Barber, I don’t want to see a
single hair over half an inch long on that head.” Where the devil did I
flick that thing? Oh, yes. Know it well. ROTC out of some state
teacher’s college or an Ag school in the midwest. Let’s sit down and have
a beer and argue T.S. Eliot. Yes, yes.

“How long have you been in the Army, soldier?”

Salute, salute.

“You know better than to throw butts around the company area.”

Singlewaith said that was very true. Preoccupied and, . . .

“My God, Singlewaith. Those boots are disgusting. As a matter of
fact those fatigues look like they’ve been worn for a week. Or possibly
even longer. And your hair, Singlewaith! Now you listen to me, young
trooper. You better shape up! As a matter of fact I’m going to make it
my personal responsibility to see that you do. Hell, Singlewaith, you’re
supposed to be intelligent — you went to college, didn’t you?”

Singlewaith informed him, only to the end of first semester of the
sophomore year. He was about to add that as soon as he was through
with the Army he would. . . . But the young second lieutenant, who was
a graduate of Princeton University, cut him off.

“Don’t you give me any of your lip, soldier. I promise you, Single-
waith, your name’s going right into the CO.” He glanced to the left, then
made a nice, sharp military decision.

“Since you’re so fond of flicking butts around here, I think you’d
better police the whole lawn. I’m coming back this way in about an hour,
and I’d better not see a shred of tobacco.”

Singlewaith said yessir and saluted.

The new breed. Oh, yes, Mr. and Mrs. America. Live it up. There’s
your bright young man — right out of Midwest U. What is wrong with
this goddamned, ignorant... my stomach. The animals. A pig—no, it degrades the nobility of the animal. Forget it, Irv. Stomach hurts like hell already. What the hell—he’s probably got a sweet wife and fifteen blue-eyed babies. Heh, heh, and every one has a crew cut. “Sweetie pie, better get a hair cut today. Getting a little shaggy around the temples.” Come on, Irvington Heath, we’ve got a good day ahead of us, boy. As a matter of fact, might even touch up the curb. This could be a two day affair. Yes, sir. ‘Well, well, Irvington, you painted the curb, too, eh? Why I don’t see why we can’t hustle up that promotion, boy.” Indeed.

When he heard the window slam open in the CQ room, Singlewaith instinctively prepared himself for the voice which always started off with a cheap imitation of a Marine drill instructor picked up somewhere in a class B movie, and which ended in an adenoidal twang that was a carry-over from Dawson’s adolescence.

“Hey, you, Singlewaith, gettcha ass over here, willya?”

The voice that launched a thousand ships. And the animals all got together and decided to put them in the big open park, in cages. “Oh, yes, we’ll call it a zoo.” Oh, shut up and relax, Irv, boy. Will they white, the white elms wait—why? “Singlewaith, why doncha whiten up the curb!” Yes, yes.

“Cahm on, cahm on. I ain’t got all day. Now, look, Singewait—I jus been talkin’ wit’ de Old Man, see. We got some brass comin’ to look over the post, see. So de battalion exec., ya know, da Major, he wants ta trow up a 50 calibre machine gun placement—an’ he wants it in a good spot. It’s gotta be very strategic, see. So de Old Man put me in charge of dis detail. De major told de Old Man we’se de only company can do anything good around here.” Dawson stepped back from the window and hitched up his pants. Then he continued. “Get down to supply an’ pick up a 50 calibre, two picks and a shovel. Yeah, an’ we’ll need anudder man. Gettahol’ of Connely. Oh, yeah, an’ a couple a’ sandbags. On the double! We ain’t got all day!”

Singlewaith was struggling to keep the 50 calibre off his collar bone as he walked down the company street. The sandbag he had tucked under his left arm. Ahead of him, Connely carried the rest of the equipment, taking the loose, even strides of a farm boy from the Midwest. His head was cocked to Dawson at his side who was braying loudly at the difficulties of finding a strategic spot. Connely nodded sympathetically and agreed.


Captain Robert Morris was the post dentist. Captain Morris was a very bitter man. He had made one grievous mistake in an otherwise flawless career — remaining in the active reserve longer than he needed. Thus, two years ago when the elections were coming up, the politicos screamed, “National Emergency”, and the Pentagon panic button parleyed itself into a reactivation for Captain Morris, DDS. His wife wrote recently that the American Legion had called and wished to award him, in absentia, the All-County Leading-Citizen-of-the-Month Plaque. She declined.

Captain Morris did not drink. He considered, but he couldn’t bear to stultify his professional abilities. He turned then to gardening. Having puttered around home, he now pursued it voraciously in the front of the dispensary. But never noticeably. For while the lawn was exquisitely manicured and the several beds were orderly arranged, very few people on the post were aware of the Captain’s hand.

Singlewaith recently had had a chipped filling and had gone to Morris. While getting in the chair, he remarked absently on the particularly unique irises growing out front. The Captain engaged him in a long conversation, and hoped sometime they could get together again. But they never did.

The small band drew near to the dispensary. Singlewaith was talking rapidly to Dawson. He pointed out as best he could with the 50 calibre over his shoulder and the sandbag under his arm, that the location was perfect, commanded the main road, brass sure to run smack into it, commendable position, everybody gets promoted. Dawson gingerly walked out on the lawn and outlined a large circle with a piece of string. Connely ambled over with his pick on his shoulder. Singlewaith dropped the sandbag onto the pavement and took the 50 calibre off his shoulder.

“OK, let’s get a move on,” said Dawson.

Connely got his grip on the pick handle and, working the upper part of his body, he arched it back and over his shoulders. Reaching the apex of his swing he paused, then thundered it to the ground.
All three were transfixed by the white fury smashing through the door of the dispensary, shattering glass as the door ricocheted off the wall. Morris still had the end piece of his drill in his hand and the broken cord trailed behind him. The little drill was still twirling as he ran up to Dawson.

"In the name of bleeding Jesus, what the hell are you doing, you dunderhead?"

“Well, it’s... it’s a machine gun p-p-placement, sir, and—"

“A mach —! Corporal, I’ll have your bloody neck for this, you ignorant... .""

Connelly gripping the rooted pick, Morris waving his drill at the vacuous Dawson, and Singlewaith, standing on the pavement almost doubled over trying to contain his laughter, never noticed the Major’s arrival. The Major was a tough soldier, a calculating soldier, a book soldier.

“Corporal Dawson”, he said quietly, “remove your detail and report back to your commanding officer.” Then he turned to the dentist.

“Captain Morris, you will report to the Battalion Headquarters at 0900 hours tomorrow morning.” Everybody saluted. The small drill hung lifelessly in Captain Morris’ hand.

The sun had set and the figures on the coaster beneath the stein were no longer visible. Irvington jerked himself up from a slouching position and swilled the last of the Dunkels. The sound of the Major’s voice persistently repeated itself in his mind as the refrain of a popular song will tenaciously background your conscious thoughts.


“Frau Meinhardt.”

Have another on me, Captain. Battalion Headquarters. Report. To the cows that come home off the lawn under the stars in the early morn in a Volkswagen. Heh. In a bright, red Volkswagen with bells on it. Oh, my God.

“Frau Meinhardt!”

Irvington slumped forward on the table and knocked over the clay mug, which rolled onto the gravel.


She watched anxiously as he uncertainly straddled the bicycle, pushed off, and coasted down and out the drive. Shaking her head slowly, she turned and went into the crowded Gasthaus.
III

Dong...ding ding...

The noise of the bicycle crashing into the side of the barn by the side of the road at the bottom of the hill fretted the cows. The gustful breeze coming down the valley tousled his hair and he became aware of the pungent odors of the Bavarian fields. He drew himself up slowly. Ding ding. Aside from the rent in his trousers and a torn pocket on his jacket everything seemed to be intact. Dong. He started groping around for his bicycle, then stood up straight, looking at the barn. Ding ding dong ding.

I know you. Yes. Heard you all day dinging and donging your damn dell...ding dong dell, baron in the well...can't sleep. Barons, cows, can't sleep, can't even give any milk. No, no milk, baron, and ya know why? They're frustrated, baron! Baron's cows are frustrated, and ya know why? Bull won't satisfy...them. The bull's in love with Anna. Yes, that's it. Infatuated, Baron, bull with Anna. Cows don't get it...no milk. Ding.

He stood motionless shouting.

"Go to sleep! Go to sleep, you poor sonofabitching frustrated cows. Do you hear me? There's nothing you can...you can do..."

Staggering, he stumbled over the bicycle and fell crashing into the thicket. He grabbed a bush and pulled himself toward it.

What else can you do, dear God. Look at me. Oh, Lord, look at Morris. Look at Morris. Look what I did to Morris. I did it. The only possible friend I could have had, and I screwed him. Oh, God. Don't make me an animal. No. No. Only nine months. God, do you hear me—only nine more months. Don't make me one of them...please.

He released his hold on the bush and his face sank into the underbrush.

An abortion. Yes, yes, an abortion.

He closed his eyes and everything was blackness.

Every night on the post at 2300 hours sharp they play taps. They don't use a bugle any more. In today's Army it's a recording. And every evening at 2300 hours sharp they broadcast taps over the whole post. They were playing the record now, for it was 2300 hours sharp, although you could barely make out the familiar notes, so scratched and worn it was.

Somebody wondered the other day why they bothered to play it at all.

Peter Fish
Lovers

Two in among asphodels are sacrificed
While lying close beneath one cloak — and Kypris’s rite.
And doing honor by Her passioned sake enticed
To kiss his flesh and drink her soul which Her excite.

Midst asphodels which speak the language of the dead
And also bear Narcissus’ soul, by love undone.
And gushing with bones of dying race ahead
The dust of ancestors remote, of time begun.

Profound slow hymns are breathed; enthral the sensate Mind.
Her breasts flutter, and thighs, damp, part: godhead’s delight!
What thankful, jealous thoughts Her flesh and spirit bind.
The shadows make Her truth, and purify Her light.

The asphodels say love is for a dying thing
And bend towards the Earth and whisper to the dead.
The asphodels say love is for the self’s own wing
And looked towards Uranus and captured what she shed.

Through skin to flesh then soul his sacred passion borne.
And She is pleased — commands him eat the bulbs in rite
Of asphodels and drink the dew from cupped horn.
It is Her flesh and spirit transforms holy light.

Through the skin to the flesh then the soul he is borne
She is pleased and commands him to eat in the rite
And of asphodels drink the dew of cupped horn.
By Her flesh and Her soul She transforms her pure light.

Lee A. Perron
Penelope

Were Homer there to watch me
Cloistered with my own fidelity,
Perhaps he would have sensed
The inadvertent straining of an ear
At sounds below,
The stiff uncertain shift
Of legs in afternoon,
And realize my womanhood.

But only time, the cruel chameleon
Changing with the sun,
Peered through my windowpane
To watch desire's teeth
Ground sharper with each revolution
Of my wheel,
And see the quick bite
That cut my flaxen thread.

And then
The spinning prematurely put aside,
Those long anticipated stairs.

A. David Lander
To Matthew Arnold, A Lament

You must have grown hoarse
As Philistines, too weary
Of your warning voice,
Plugged their ears with wine corks,
And ignored the stagnant smoke
Clotting in the pores of their souls.

Could you look down
From Thyrsis's side,
You'd find the Sea of Faith
Asleep at its ebb
And know your pounding fists
Did not flatten the earth.

The birds fly farther south in winter.

A. David Lander
In Shame's Carnelian Chamber

In Shame's carnelian chamber
Falling voices seem an avalanche
Of broken glass against your tears,
And so you long for silence
And would be alone.

But when the silence settles
In the gap retreating voices left
You find it, not an August wave
To soothe chafed sand, but vapor
Squatting on a stagnant pool of dark,

and you are alone
With the slow dripping of grief.

A. David Lander
"October Sunburn:

Wearing a Black Dress"

Then the big paradise vanished
like some lonely bird flies
south to vanish into furnace
of burnouts or singeing lamplight
that phrases the north straw
rains into steam,

that now you notice
the cold coral view of her
who shatters all glimpse
of once dear phoenix combing
wind in palamino hair.

The black of sheath on blonde
burns hurricane prospects.

And how to say that
season of dry spectrums
that dries a cool world of once
thermo-pearls for eyes,
is now mere relic
of damp gold-storms
east of paradise,

a dream of orbs racing out
into anachronistic tan.

Louis Renza
Scene: The living room of a ground floor apartment in New York. Packing boxes sit scattered around. The back wall consists of a fireplace, flanked by empty bookshelves. The door to the outside hall is right. The archway to the dining room is left. A couch sits at an odd angle stage right and a few chairs sit in a spot pushed together right, a coffee table in the general area, other tables, lighter chairs also scattered around, as yet unset. Mira Whyte is standing upstage in front of the shelves, inspecting some small bits of sculpture that she has taken out of a carton. Obbie (Oh-be), stands waiting for instructions. Mira Whyte is a former actress, fifty years old, still maintaining the delicate air she once had on stage, noticeably expressed in her gold grey hair which hangs straight and loose. Obbie is a sixty-five year old Negro chauffeur. He had come from the South, found a comfortable job and lived peaceably; well paid and well treated. Angel enters with another carton and puts it down. He is a rather fat, trimly dressed, baby faced young man. Mr. Decker is seated in one of the downstage chairs.

Angel: (puts down the carton, wipes his neatly pressed suit)
Mira: Thank you Angel dear . . . Obbie will take it into the dining room. You didn't muss your suit did you?
Angel: No it's just a little dust . . .
Mira: Now you sit down and talk to Mr. Decker and Obbie will help me with the rest of this. (taps him on the cheek) You're an angel . . . for helping. Obbie I think that box is the candlesticks and trays for the dining room. (Angel crosses and moves down to talk to Decker) You remember Charles' great silver candle sticks?
Obbie: Yes sum . . .
Mira: Well, I think this is the box . . . Come along. We'll take them into the dining room and let the business men talk business. (She turns and exits to the dining room, followed by Obbie with the carton)
Decker: Going to put the place back together piece by piece?
Angel: She wants everything the same. There's no crime in it.
Decker: Certainly not. I should think poor Charles' Melon's things would have been in place so long, they'd be able to walk back into position.
Angel: Mira has a lot of rearranging this time. You can see the place is not half as large as the last home. It's not really what she wanted. She wanted to build a museum for Charles, but . . .
Decker: But museums cost money.
Angel: Yes Decker . . . . What do you want? I want to help Mira, or we’ll be days at this.
Decker: I won’t keep you, John. . . . Let me ask you a question. Do you like playing house?
Angel: Decker please, I thought you wanted to talk business.
Decker: D do . . . Do you like playing house?
Angel: I don’t understand. you . .
Mira: (peeping in) Angel dear . . . Do you remember if we packed the small, engraved silver dish in the same carton as the candle sticks . . .
Angel: I . . . don’t remember . .
Mira: You remember, the one Charles received from the New York Critics circle . . .
Angel: Yes, I remember the dish. I . . . I think we put it with the silverware.
Mira: Oh yea . . . precious, you’re right. Yes (turns) Obbie, it’s with the silverware. (talking as she goes off) Angel remembered it’s with the silverware . . .
Decker: How long do you plan to be here John?
Angel: That’s up to you isn’t it.
Decker: Well I just wondered if there was some secret system of packing here, that only you had the key to.
Angel: Decker, have you come here to talk . . . or to talk business, because there is a lot to be done . . .
Decker: All right. Here it is . . . The Agency is dropping Mira Whyte . .
Angel: . . . why? . . . How can you?
Decker: Why? Because she’s through. She’s through again, I should say. And we can drop her because we happen to have an ethical standard that few people give us credit for, but that we practice occasionally.
Angel: You’re playing games Decker.
Decker: Look, John, Mira Whyte has been keeping a huge house on the upper east side for twelve years since her husband’s death. She has been trying to maintain a museum for a dead American author without the funds to maintain it. She was a fine actress. She saved some money, but in twelve years money can run out. So can time. John, I watched the last three performances of “Mira Whyte Reading the Stories of Charles Mellon” . . . It wasn’t bad . . . It was pitiful. It was embarrassing. She cannot be put on a stage like that again. We won’t allow it. If somebody else wants to sponsor her. Fine. But we . . .
Angel: You want to drop her.
Decker: Certainly. What else? Don’t tell me you think those readings went over.
Angel: I... thought they were quite well received.

Decker: John, they were terrible. Mira Whyte has no right reading her husband's stories. Charles Mellon was a dynamic novelist, who had the skill to be witty and charming, and lusty and grotesque at the turn of a page. Only Charles Mellon could read Charles Mellon. Oh maybe a few swashbuckling actors could fake it, but not... not Mira. Mira is lovely... ah... almost ethereal... a delicate woman. She reads Charles Mellon like a... tea house menu.

Angel: She has great charm, Decker. The people all thought she was charming.

Decker: She's charming. She's lovely. So what! She's pitiful up there. She sits up on stage and relives her life in front of an audience. Charles this and Charles that. This teary glow comes into her eyes. And I don't say to myself, what a wonderful man he must have been... or what a wonderful time they must have had. But... all I can say is what a lost creature that woman is. It's downright embarrassing. You can't put that in front of an audience. Especially not a New York audience.

Angel: I... had thought the tour went well... It seemed everywhere we went that the reception was very warm. Believe me I watched the crowds for some reaction. I talked to the local critics. They were all very very kind.

Decker: Well that's it, John. They were kind. And the New York critics might be kind. But we're going to be kindest! We're not going to allow Mira Whyte to read Charles Mellon in New York. As a matter of fact it might be best if she devoted all her time to... to this Temple...

Angel: What happens to me?
Decker: You just leave and come back to the office. That's all. There'll be something... or someone else.

Angel: Oh... Are you sure?
Decker: What's the matter with you? I said, there'll be something.
Angel: I just... Well you know, I was a secretary for five years. This was an important opportunity... I...

Decker: You'd better start learning right now. I was a coffee gopher for five years before I even saw a secretary. You don't know how lucky you are. I'd say, working with Mira Whyte for six months is a pretty good deal...

Angel: I just thought I could help make it a success. We'd done a lot of work on it you know... I'd sort of made it my own production...

Decker: Well forget about it. You couldn't have done anything to save this one. Not Mira Whyte. It's a damn shame. (Mira crosses up-stage)
Mira: Angel, dear, I do hate to bother you, but would you just peek in and see if you think I've arranged the candle sticks like they were at the old home. I'm sorry Mr. Decker. He won't be a minute. (Angel rises and goes into the dining room)

Mira: (to Decker) This is not as big as the other place you know.

Decker: I know.

Mira: But as long as Charles' things are here, it will be Charles' place. You see I'm going to put all his books and papers and artwork on the shelves back there. They'll be on display for everyone to see. Like a museum. Anyone can come and see Charles Things... I'll let everyone know it's open to the public. Is there a way of letting everyone know it's open to the public.

Decker: Yes I suppose there is...

Mira: Well wonderful. That's what I want. I want everyone who knew Charles to come and see him again. And everybody that didn't know him, to come and meet him.

Angel (enters) They're just right Miss Whyte

Mira: Thank you, precious. You see Mr. Decker he still calls me Miss Whyte after all this time. He's so formal and polite. He's a dear, dear boy.

Decker: Yes.

Mira: Obbie... Come... we'll get the one with the silverware. I think it's in the back seat...

Obbie (crossing after her) Yes sum... I b'lieve so... (they exit out right door)

Angel: She'll be back in a minute. I don't want to talk in front of her. Why don't we meet for lunch or dinner tomorrow and discuss this. I think we can talk more about it... You see... we had a lot of revisions planned. We were going to change a lot of the stories... ah... let her read more of his letters to her... you know play up the...

Decker: I'm sorry John. We've made our decision. Three of us, including Hilbert from MCA, who has no interest in her at all... three of us were there and we all agreed that the only right thing to do would be to take her off the stage and give her back to Charles Mellon... completely. Look, before she gets too involved with this thing... before she gets any more ideas about this show... (Mira reenters followed by Obbie. She lets Obbie take the things into the dining room and stops to talk)

Mira: This is the silverware... and the silver dish... I saved it for eight years... the silverware... I saved it until we were married. It was my mother's. Mr. Decker, we had hoped you would come to listen to one of my rehearsals. I'd planned to read some new ma-
terial. My Angel has been helping me pick some new material. We've tried to pick what the people on the tour liked the best. But we'd like you to come and listen. We want it to be just right for New York. You know how everyone in New York loved Charles. We want it just right. You will come?

Decker: Well I'm very busy, Miss Whyte, ... I ... I'll see ... I think John can handle everything.

Mira: He certainly can. He's perfect. Aren't you, Angel. (laughs) Now you come in and look at the silver ... (she exits)

Decker: When you're looking at the silver ... You'd better tell her.

Angel: Decker ... I can't ... She's all ready for it ... I can't tell her it's off ... You know what will happen ...

Decker: Nothing will happen. You just tell her that Charles would have liked it this way. All she wants is this place to be open to the public ... That we can give her. But we're not going to open her up to the public ... That we can give her. But we're not going to open her up to the public. So tell her ... today ... And call me tomorrow ...

Angel: Harold, I'm sure we could salvage it ... I've put so much work into it ... I'd like to try.

Decker: We'll find something for you ... something else ... Tell her ...

(Decker, about to go is stopped by Angel)

Angel: Decker ... you're not sure what they'll give me ...

Decker: But you can't stay ...

Angel: You're not sure what they'll give me after Mira Whyte ...

Decker: Look John ... I told you we can't promise anything ... You've got a long while yet ... First things first. Give her the news.

Angel: Decker, How about if I told you I'd just as soon stay.

Decker: But you can't stay ...

Angel: As her personal agent ...

Decker: As her what??? You must be kidding.

Angel: I mean it. After all, I've nursed this tour along from the beginning. I think there may be a great demand ahead for Mira Whyte. I think I can nurse her right back onto the stage ... at a good deal more than ten percent ...

Decker: Are you serious about this?

Angel: I think I am ...

Decker: You think you've got a good thing going. You think you can make a quick name and a quick buck from Mira Whyte. You can start at the top. You don't have to work your way up like everyone else ... One chance ... Bingo! OK ... OK ... Macy ... She's yours ... She is yours ... But ... Then I guess I'd better tell her
the tour is off . . . and you're taking over . . . (moves to go to the
dining room)

Angel: No . . . No, I'd rather tell her myself . . . She might not under-
stand . . .

Decker: She's got to be told.

Angel: Let me do it.

Decker: We don't want Mira Whyte calling us up tomorrow asking us
all about opening night.

Angel, She won't. I'll tell her.

Decker: Macy?

Angel: I'll tell her, Decker . . . I promise you.

Decker: Fine . . . After that, you can tell her anything you want about
your plans. They'll be your trouble . . . (he exits right)

(Angel, alone, broods about what he must do . . . and Mira enters
with Obbie. She walks over to Angel, puts her arm through his and
does same with Obbie)

Mira: Well now, how are my two handsome young men. Do you know,
this reminds me of the times I used to walk arm and arm down
Fifth avenue with Charles and Tiger Willis . . . He was a prize-
fighter, you remember . . . Charles loved the fights . . . and we would
all the time. Especially to see Tiger. And I would make them
walk me down Fifth avenue . . . and I'd stop at all the store windows
and make them look at ladies dresses with me . . . Tiger would
squirm and Charles would sigh when I told him the ones' I liked.
He was afraid I'd want to buy them. I loved to show them off to
everyone. They were both like you . . . full of dignity. Now, Obbie
. . . Do you want to get that carton of Charles' rare books and
well begin putting them on the shelf . . .

Obbie: Yes sum . . . Iz dat de ones wid de leatha covahs on em . . .

Mira: Yes Obbie . . .

Obbie: In da box wid de soup label on it?

Mira: I think so Obbie.

Obbie: Yeah . . . Well I think dat's right . . . I think so . . . (he exits
right)

Mira: Wonderful, wonderful Obbie. When I first met Charles and he
introduced me to Obbie . . . that was twenty years ago. He told me
I'd better make friends with Obbie, because Obbie will go on for-
ever and it's always good to know someone who will go on forever.
Charles said that twenty years ago.

Angel: Did he always drive you around . . .

Mira: You know, he was more of a companion than a chauffeur for
Charles. Charles liked to drive so much. Obbie would sit next to
him in the front seat. And then when I came along, Charles prac-
tically gave Obbie to me as a present. I could go anywhere I wanted
even when Charles was busy. I just had to call Obbie. So Obbie
and I are long friends ... I took him to some strange places. I made
him drive me all the way to Pennsylvania to see the caverns once.
Just because I wanted to. I just wanted to see Caverns. Charles was
away and I felt all caverns. So Obbie and I went. I think he was
scared inside. (laughs) It was fun. Obbie's such a dear ...

Obbie: (enters with box) I think dis is it.

Mira: Over there Obbie ... We'll put them on a wide shelf where they
fit and where people can see the bindings. (she opens the cartons
and pulls out a book) (Obbie takes a rag and begins dusting the
book Angel goes to help take them from Mira and stack them in a
shelf) ... Beautiful ... beautiful bindings. Students will love to
come and use these books.

Angel: Do you think they'll be enough room here for everything ...
There are a good deal of things in the basement.

Mira: We won't fit everything, precious, but we'll fit the important
things. The things Charles loved most ... He loved these books.

Obbie: Dey sure ah full oh dust, Miz Mira ...

Mira: Yes ... dust gathers quickly ... That's why we must clean them
often ... Do you remember how full of dust Charles' books were
the first time I saw them. And I went to dusting them myself.
Charles didn't stop me, mind you. He just sat on the couch and
laughed. He laughed and laughed ... and never lifted a finger to
help me ... I wouldn't let him. He was so clumsy at helping any­
way ... So wonderfully clumsy ... The man who could tackle a
lion and flip and airplane ...

Angel: Miss Whyte ... I wanted to talk to you more specifically about
the tour ... about the show ...

Mira: You go right ahead, dear ... I want to know just exactly what
has to be done. You know I was thinking last night how Charles had
never let me take a part unless he approved. He told me; once you
do one bad part, it's just a matter of time before you do all bad parts.
I know Charles would want this to be perfect. It will be perfect
won't it Angel?

Angel: Yes it will, Mira ... or we won't do it ... If it's not perfect ...

Mira ...

Angel: Mr. Decker and I were talking about the tour ... He saw the
last three performances.

Mira: Yes, dear. Did you tell him how wonderful they were to us.
Giving us a reception after the reading ...
Angel: And...yes...he knows...But...he thought...about the material...

Mira: You know...one of the young students in the audience came up to me afterward and asked if he might be able to come visit me...and talk to me and recorded our conversation on his tape recorded because he is doing an important paper about Charles' novels. He told me the name of it...a very interesting title...so very interesting. A lovely young student interested in Charles...

Angel: Miss Whyte...Mr. Decker thought...

Mira: Yes precious (touching his cheek)

Angel:...thought we might use something...that was...closer to your personality. Maybe you could read from some of your famous roles...The people would love that you know...

Mira: Angel...My Angel...Always thinking of me...You're so much like Charles. Always thinking of me. No one wants to hear me speak those lines again. They were lines of other men...I spoke them for weeks, months at a time. Most of those men are still alive...and their plays are being performed every day. But no one ha sever known Charles like I knew him. And no one could feel about him like I feel. And so...I must take him back to his public. This is what they want. They don't want Mira Whyte...They want the man she shared with them...for you know I did...I shared him with everyone.

Angel: I...just thought...the people might like to hear...Ginny from "Nights in Summer" or Miss Cladwell from "Willow Run"...People have asked me about your reading...

Mira: (puts her finger to his lips) Shhhhhhh now precious...We'll read some things today, and polish all our little mistakes...and Charles will be proud of us. And everyone will love it. No "Willow Run". No "Nights in Summer". Just Charles. And me. And my Angel...And Obbie, our most severe critic. Obbie, won't you go down into the basement and see if you can find the cartons we brought yesterday. The one's with Charles' first editions in them. I want to put them on a prominent shelf. I want to put them up first...

Obbie: Yes, sum...I'll look for them... (exits right)

Angel: (has wandered down to the couch, brooding over his failure to tell Mira that things have changed)

Mira: (notices him and goes to him there) What's the matter my angel?

Angel: Nothing...I had just hoped you might consent to reading from some of your roles. You know it's very important to me that your reading be a success. And...Decker...and I...seem to think, if it's to be any sort of success, you should do some of your roles...

Mira: Do you believe it, my dear?
Angel: I . . . I . . . only want you to be successful. I know how much it means . . . You see, I'd like to stay with you, Miss Whyte . . . and help you again . . . to find a place in the theatre. The people have missed you for a long time . . . I believe in you. I would like to do everything I can. I'd like to say and do everything I can . . .

Mira: You will stay with me Angel . . . You will stay . . . But we must work to build this museum for the public. You can help me . . . Yes you can . . . I don't belong to the theatre anymore . . .

Angel: But if the readings fail . . .

Mira: There will be no failure . . . There will be no success. There will just be a performance . . . or two or two hundred until those who care have seen it. That's all we care about isn't it angel. Charles never wrote for success. He wrote for himself . . . And for his people. And that's why you're my angel. Because you're with me here . . . You care for me. While others are chasing the gold at the rainbow's end . . . Our gold is here isn't it precious (indicates the house) Our gold is here. And we will give it to the public. And you will help.

Angel: But we can have both kinds of gold. Gold enough to build a real museum for Charles. Gold enough to live . . . live in comfort. All for us. If you'd let me help you, Mira dear.

Mira: Mira . . . I like that when you call me Mira . . .

Angel: Miss Whyte, if you'd let me help you . . . there are parts waiting for you. We can change the whole format of the readings. We can have success. And a great gold museum for Charles.

Mira: Angel . . . angel . . . You must call me Mira all the time. And I must call you my angel. And you must understand that I have to do this as we planned many months ago. It will be a tribute to Charles Mellon . . . and nothing more. And I will read . . . precious, I will read. No. Hear me read now. I'll show you how I've rehearsed at night. I've been practicing, reading all of Charles' heroines, just as he imagined them. You should here me change my voice, like a child playing voices with her friends. Not like acting at all. Like a child playing voices. Sit Angel . . . I'll get the folder. (She goes out of the room for a moment to get the folder of material)

Angel: (Rises and paces and fidgets nervously, realizing that things are not going well. He suddenly feels hot, and loosens his tie)

(Mira enters)

Mira: Here it is. Now you sit over here. (puts him back on the couch) You are the opening night audience. Oh, you must straighten your tie. It's a very formal occasion. (straightening his tie, recently loosened) Even Charles, who never wore a tie, wore one to opening night. Now, I will take my place and read. (she backs off across stage . . . takes stage . . . holds up folder and reads)
I read now from Charles' second novel; *Somewhere and Someone*, the book in which the unforgettable character of Sheila Mills was created. Sheila was a dreamer, Charles said, but she dreamed with such conviction that out of her dream world she created a super real world, where all men were at her beck and call, and where all came to her with absolute integrity. For an attractive girl, this was a dangerous situation. For, illusions could be shattered every day.

Chapter two: Avery didn't move. He watched Sheila Mills as she crossed the lounge to the far corner and seated herself alone at a table. Avery had been in Nice for four days. Four days spent watching this woman talking and drinking, strolling and laughing with a dozen different men. All of them young. All of them French. But Avery was sure things could be changed. He had seen women like this before, and was reassured by his past success. He moved to her table. "I hope I'm not disturbing you", I'm Harold Avery... I wondered if you'd like to have a drink with me?" Sheila looked up at him. "I know who you are Mr. Avery... and I already have a drink thank you." Avery paused and sat down. "You don't mind if I join you for a while..." Sheila looked coldly at him and said curtly, "Yes. Yes Mr. Avery... I mind. I'm sorry, but I've seen you looking after me for the past few days. I know who are. You're an American. A wealthy American. And I'm not interested. Now will you excuse me I'm waiting for someone." (Mira is imitating or rather trying to imitate the voice qualities of Avery and especially Sheila)

Avery leaned back in his chair and laughed. "Well now that we know all about each other why don't we try being friends to each other." "I told you Sheila said, I'm not interested... I don't like Americans... and I don't like men with money. The last American I knew was an army private who got me drunk and thought it would be uproariously funny to carry me back to the barracks and put me in his sergeant's bed. And men with money all expect too much for their investment. Thank you Mr. Avery. No thank you." (Angel begins squirming with embarrassment at the performance)

Avery leaned across the table and took Sheila's hand, "Listen we can have dinner tonight and then drive out to the Casino." Sheila brought her hand away quickly. "Will you please go or shall I call someone. I scream at the drop of a hat... I'd hate to embarrass you". Avery rose, about to go but turned to say "You and your game with your French pretty boys don't fool me, Miss Mills... sooner or later some one important sees you, sooner or later they come over and talk to you, and sooner or later you're able to afford the expensive clothes you wear, the expensive places you stay at,...
Well, Miss Mills, I’ll be back . . .” Sheila brought her hand up to slap him, but Avery caught it in time, and holding her by the wrist he said “I wouldn’t do that . . .” Sheila’s whole body tensed, she snapped her hand away violently and screamed full volume . . . “Bastard!” (The sight of Mira saying this line is needless to say, ludicrous and Angel finally stops her . . .)

Angel: Miss Whyte . . . It’s fine . . . It’s fine . . .

Mira: (still reading) Avery turned and crossed the lounge, leaving Sheila standing at the table, angry and still cursing under her breath, despite the murmuring of the others in the lounge . . .

Angel: Miss Whyte . . . Mira . . .

Mira: What Dear . . . what did you think? Did you like the way I read Sheila? She was one of Charles’ favorite characters you know. What did you think . . . precious? Isn’t this what you wanted? Something dramatic . . . something alive . . .

Angel: Miss . . .

Mira: Mira angel . . . You call me Mira . . .

Angel: Mira, it was . . .

Mira: It makes me feel much closer when you call me that.

Angel: It was . . .

Mira: So much closer.

Angel: I think . . .

Mira: Yes precious . . .

Angel: I think it’s . . . better . . . Mira . . . They’ll like this . . . they’ll like this . . . It’s a happy combination of you and Charles . . . It’s charming dear . . . Charming . . .

Mira: Oh, Angel, you do say all the right things. All the right things. That’s what kept me so close to Charles. Everytime I thought I’d have to give up, that I could no longer keep up with him . . . that I could not spend another day another hour with a man whom I loved so much, but could not be wife too. He would always say the right thing . . . to convince me that I cared so much that marriage didn’t matter. He was a magician, Angel. He could even make living in sin so right . . . soo so . . . right . . . that I could only believe that it was meant to be that way. That Charles was meant to be free enough to be able to run when he wanted, to fly off to jungles and mountains when he wanted . . . without a wife who might care too much. And yet, finally . . . finally after eight years, Angel . . . Eight years of living, and laughing and loving and caring . . . caring, caring, caring. After eight years he finally realized that I worried, I cried. I cared more than a wife ever could . . . and that marriage would only be good. (She stands next to Angel, ironically as bride and
groom at the altar) And we were married after eight years of knowing each other soul to soul. We were married. I've told you about the wedding, haven't I Angel... Angel do you remember?

Angel: I do.

Mira: I do... till death do us part. (she begins to weep) Six months only six months... It couldn't be... only six months and he is dead. He... asked me... he asked me to go with him on the trip. He said I'm flying to LA tomorrow... I'm flying over the Rockies. Wouldn't you like to see the Rockies and I said, I would love it. But I couldn't go. I had... I can't go, Charles... I... I... have a benefit performance tonight... I have a benefit performance tonight... And I can't miss it... But you can go and write me a beautiful letter and tell me how it is... You can go Charles... And... and...

Angel: Miss Whyte... Mira... Please control yourself...

Mira: I'm fine. I'm all right. It's just that... I always did hate to get phone calls late at night. I don't like phone calls late at night. And I knew what it was. I knew Charles had crashed in the mountains. And I would never get his beautiful letter... I won't get his letter... But they will find him... They will find him...

Angel: Miss Whyte... sit down please... It's all right...

Mira: I know they've found him... I know... yes... Bring the body back to New York. His friends will want to see him once more... and I will want the ring... I will want to keep the ring... (she fingers a ring on a chain that she has been wearing around her neck)

Angel: (realizing she has gone too far for him to do much more than listen it out) Yes, you do... You want to keep it...

Mira: Yes... it's a very special ring... I bought it for Charles after I got the movie contract to repeat my role in "Willow Run"... I got an advance of five thousand dollars. Five thousand dollars, Charles... and I'm going to spend it all on you... on something you'll never forget... I...

Angel: It was a wonderful gesture...

Mira: It's a wonderful ring. It's beautiful, sir. I've never spent this much money before, but it's so simple... And I've always wanted to give a diamond. Diamonds are the hardest material known to man. And Charles must have the hardest, strongest most beautiful thing there is... Charles must have this diamond in a ring...

And...

Angel: Yes Mira... It's beautiful...

Mira: Thank you... I knew you would love it...

Angel: It's lovely...

Mira: And please sir... It's a very special ring. It's not important that
it's valuable. It's not important that it's worth so much, but... It was my husband's. I want it put on a silver chain. An unbreakable silver chain so that I will never lose it... it will never break and come off. Yes, I prefer silver. Charles prefers silver. Oh Angel, precious, strong one, you do like silver don't you... You told me you loved to watch the sun reflect off the silver wings of your airplane. You told me that you could not wait until your hair was all silver and people would say that I looked like your grandchild... and you could tell them that I was your wife... and they would giggle and we would laugh... and play the trick again... And when you squeeze my hand the ring hurts so... and I squeal because you are so strong. It's very strong, an unbreakable silver chain for your ring... Charles... Angel look at it... It was my only present. My one and only beautiful present. Angel... Angel... here... here... my one and only beautiful present... (she reaches back of her and unsnaps the chain... she holds it up and lets it and the ring down in Angel's hand, which she now holds) For you... for you Angel... The strongest hardest material known to man... For you always say the right things... and you will love forever and I will see you... Oh, precious, you have done so much for me... so much... take it... take it...

Angel: Mira... Mira... You don't know what you're doing... I can't take this... I can't take this thing.

Mira: Angel dear... You have given me volumes of words. Every novel... Every story has been my story... my novel. This is so small... so small. You must take it.

Angel: But... (he looks at the sparkling ring) I... Thank you Mira... You are lovely... as lovely as this...

Mira: Thank you... just say thank you and it is right... No matter what you say it is right... and strong... and... (she embraces him in a sudden uncomfortable moment) (moves back) I'm going to get your Brandy and celebrate. We will celebrate. We will celebrate your new present. We will celebrate and I am going to put the candles in your silver holders... and I'm going to light them... and we'll drink the brandy... and wave the candles... and sing like the people in your books... like the people in your books... In a moment... in a moment... (exits left)

Angel: (watches her go... looks down at the ring) She said Angel... she said angel. She's always called me that... It's mine... now it's mine... (he puts the ring in his pocket and turns to see Obbie coming)

Obbie: Where does she want dese books, Mista Macy?
Angel: Just . . . just over here . . . put them down . . . It’s quite all right . . .
Obbie: Suh . . . Shuah is alot of cartons in dat basement . . . I didn’t realize . . . (starts out)
Angel: Obbie . . .
Obbie: Yes suh . . .
Angel: Obbie . . . listen. I’ve got to run . . . down to the . . . ah . . . office. I have a conference . . . I . . . Miss Whyte is in fixing up the bedroom . . . she’s . . . I don’t want to disturb her . . . Could you give her a message so that I can run along . . . I’m late . . . late for the meeting . . .
Obbie: You wants me to give a message to Miz Whyte . . .
Angel: Yes Obbie . . . Can you do that?
Obbie: Well what iz it you wants to tell her. I suppose I can tell her . . .
Angel: Now . . . it’s just this . . . listen carefully . . . You tell her that I’m going to the office . . . I’m going to the office but I won’t be . . . No . . . no, no . . . Just tell her I’ve had to leave . . . leave New York . . . I’ve been called away on business. That I won’t be back . . . Tell her that the agency decided, this is important . . . the agency decided that we think it best not to open the show in New York. The tour was enough. We’re not going to have any reading in New York. She should devote all her time to . . . the museum. The . . . the agency felt that, the public isn’t ready for this type of thing . . . It needs too much work. Maybe a play someday . . . maybe something else . . . But not now . . . And you can tell her that the agency and I . . . well that doesn’t matter . . . You just tell her what I said. Ok Obbie?
Obbie: You wants me to tell Miz Whyte that you gone out . . . and you gone to de office . . . and you gone away from here . . . and you gone and you not goin’ to have de show and de agency dey not going to do de show but maybe someday dey do it . . . And when you say you comin’ back?
Angel: No . . . no Obbie . . . I’m not coming back . . . Just tell her . . . We can’t do the show . . . That’s all . . . plans have changed . . . I’ve been called away . . . we can’t do it . . .
Obbie: You has changed de plans for Miss Whyte . . . And you wants me to tell her you haz changed de plans.
Angel: Look . . . here . . . here . . . I’ll write it out . . . just give her this . . . give her this note. (he takes a piece of paper from Mira’s folder and writes. From offstage we hear Mira starting to sing:)
Mira: (off) Oh my darlin’. Oh my darlin’. Oh my darlin’ Clementine. You are lost and gone forever. Dreadful sorry Clementine. In a Caveria. In a Canyon. Excavating for a mine. Dwelt a miner forty niner and his daughter Clementine.
Oh my darlin’. Oh my darlin’. Oh my darlin’ Clementine . . .
You are lost and gone forever . . . (she continues singing as
Angel gives note to Obbie)
Angel: Here . . . here now . . . you just give her that note. All right
Obbie. You give that to her.
Obbie: Yes suh . . . I will. If dat’s what you want . . .
Angel: That’s what I want . . . Thank you Obbie . . . Thank you . . .
(he exits hurriedly. Obbie stands alone while Mira continues sing-
ing . . . until Mira enters holding two lighted candles in the silver
candle holders . . . She is singing)
Mira: Oh my darlin’ Oh my darlin’ Oh my darlin’ Clementine. You are
Obbie. I couldn’t find the brandy anywhere . . . but I have the
candles . . .
Obbie: I got de books for you Miz Whyte . . . And I got somethin else
for you . . .
Mira: Something for me . . . Oh . . . Where’s my angel? I have candles
for him . . .
Obbie: He gave me this note to give to you . . .
Mira: A note . . . (having put down candles she takes note) . . . Oh,
it’s one of Charles’ stories . . . and a note on the back . . . he wrote
a note on the back of his story . . . and it says . . . Dear Mira . . . I
must be brief and tell you that the Agency has decided that we
cannot open the show in New York. It would be impossible. The
tour has shown us that Charles’ readings would never succeed in
New York and only cause you embarrassment. I am sorry that I
cannot stay on to help you but I must go away to other places . . .
other work . . . I know you will build a fine museum for Charles
Mira: (slowly raises her head and looks up at Obbie . . . she just stares
at him . . . looks at the letter . . . Obbie . . .) Charles is dead isn’t he?
Obbie: Yes miz . . . Charles is dead.
Mira: Obbie, Charles died twelve years ago. Forever, didn’t he Obbie?
Obbie: Yes miz Mira . . .
Mira: We were married six months and he died . . . in his silver plane
. . . forever . . .
Obbie: (noticing she is wavering) Can I do somethin’ for you ma’m?
Can I help you?
Mira: Just let me sit . . . Just let me sit . . . I’m tired . . . I’ve worked
too hard . . . I’m tired . . . (Obbie helps her sit in one of the chairs)
Obbie: Can I get you somethin’, miz? Can I get you some tea?
Mira: No thank you Obbie . . .
Obbie: Can I do somethin', Miz Whyte?
Mira: Just sit here, Obbie . . . just sit . . . (Obbie sits in the other chair . . . which is facing out, practically next to hers)
Mira: You might do me a favor, Obbie. Did you bring Charles' books up from the basement . . .
Obbie: Yes sum . . . dere in dat box dere by your feet. Most of de books in dat box is his . . . Most is Mr. Mellon's.
Mira: Thank you, Obbie . . . Would you do me a favor . . . I'm very tired . . . and I'd like a favor . . . (she picks up one of the books) Would you read a little to me . . . One of Charles' chapters . . . and I'll just sit and rest awhile before we go on unpacking.
Obbie: Yes sum . . . (taking book from her, he looks at it strangely . . .) You . . . you wants me to read from this one . . .
Mira: Yes Obbie . . . just read softly . . . any chapter . . . Just read something of Charles' and I will rest.
Obbie: You wants me to read from dis?
Mira: Yes Obbie . . .
Obbie: I . . . Miz . . .
Mira: Go ahead Obbie . . . Go ahead . . . It's all right . . . You can read . . . You can read quite well.
Obbie: (opens book and begins reading)

(Mira is smiling as he reads, fingering her imaginary ring on the chain, her eyes half closed in contentment and rest)
(The lights fade as he reads . . . and out. . . .)
Bless de Lawd, O my soul
And all dat is within me, bless His holy name.
Bless de Lawd, O my soul
And forget not all His benefits;
Who forgiveth thine iniquity;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from de pit;
Who encompasseth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thine old age with good things;
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle. . . .

Lee H. Kalcheim

* psalm 103
The Witnesses in Grandmother's Room

During the moment when her handkerchief
Obeyed not her hand but a whim of gravity;
During its insignificant descent, the
Interval between her cheek and the pillow,
Even the clock kept silence:

Regret and remembrance were released,
Enclosed in that dwarfed arc of a gesture;
Made not even the softest plop on the pillow.
Expressing what they could by saying nothing,
Manners, naturellement, were continuously proper;

Bored by nothing they could name,
Earnest in their grief, mouthing cinnamon
Rolls, a mourning spoon clinks in a saucer;
Moment balanced with
Eternity.

Peter Hollenbeck
"Of Spindrift Seed"

Your forget-me-not?
No, and likewise not mine;
Whoever it'd been claimed by
Had handed their rights to the tide.
On the splintered ledge's spine
It's drifted there outside
The reach of anything else
Than the next tide.
And what's this flower,
Other than who it's been named by,
That it should be no less ours?
I'll fetch it for us,
You stay on the beach.
And hesitate to think
If it held any significance before us . . .
The name, that is.
It means wading at the slippery brink
On moss, moist kelp,
And if in stumbling to the brackish rock,
The eelgrass does me meagre help.
But as for risk, there's none I'd take
For any sweeter sake.

Peter Hollenbeck
Pathos

Wandering through the mortal range
The All, a bucket of ashes,
Always seems to settle
Beside the glory of crown — crushed.

All that is made to function
Is freezing
In the wintry shade
Of subterranean pathos.

And
With the splendor of summer’s hope,
A heaven-bound poplar trunk,
Driven by Boreas to a lonely grave —

Through the grey valley
(How dark and cold!)
I journey naked
And diminish
Alone.

Ilhi Synn
frozen dream

the close quiet
need no more than the sun
and her smile
to feed a hungry soul
the water and her close mouth
to damp the earth
and charge my soul

a storm of our oneness takes my heart
thunder rips sound from silence
lightning in the night of the soul
tears in the meaning of what we might not be
the harsh perhaps
the burning perhaps
the cold lack of ever knowing
the night of every man’s frozen dream

Paul Scott
Frogs

The bag bumped against his shoulder with the big frogs.

They were bigger today than last time when Mommy had opened the oven door before Peter could look in and said, "Oh, my, they've shrunk again. Look how they've shrunk!" And Peter had looked in and seen them and they had shrunk. Bigger today than that.

Much bigger. So that Mommy would nod and say, "We can all eat them today, can't we, Peter" like she did the time he got the two big bulls with Richard in the other pond; so that Mr. Grayson when Peter brought them out of the bag would blow a few quick puffs from his pipe and say, "Congrats, Congrats, my friend. Very nice indeed!" like he did the time with the two big bulls in the other pond.

The bag bumped quicker against his shoulder with the big frogs because he had begun to think of Grayson's store.

The old people were always in front of the store, smoking, talking, laughing, smoking, talking, laughing. They were always there on Saturday and Sunday too Peter knew because he saw them when he ran in to get the paper at Phil's Rexall on Sunday morning. They were never dressed up so that meant they never went to church and anyway it would have seemed funny to see Mr. Grayson in church and especially the man with no chin and the big man who was a football player once for the Bears everybody said.

They were always there because Mr. Grayson had a girl to run the store and hardly ever went in on Saturday but just sat in front smoking his pipe and relighting it so that afterwards a big pile of matches would be under his chair. Mr. Grayson had the same chair all the time with the pillow in it but the other men sat anywhere except Mr. Rolf with no chin who looked to be the oldest and always rocked in the rocking chair beside Mr. Grayson and even when Peter was there with his frogs never stopped rocking and even sped up some when his shoulders shook and his face screwed up in a noiseless laugh.

They were always there on Saturday waiting for him. Because they always knew he was coming and would always show the frogs no matter what time it was because he wasn't just hanging around and Mommy liked Mr. Grayson. She was always nice on Saturday evening anyway about dinner and one time Peter ate alone after they ate in the TV room watching the football game and drank coke instead of milk and snuck out and got a second bottle to drink after he finished eating.
They were there now, just around the corner on Peach Street talking and laughing softly and waiting for him.

Peter was in the colored district. He didn’t mind it at all, passing through the nigger section because he was in a tee shirt and dungarees now and the only time he ever minded niggers was once when he was in his church clothes getting the Sunday paper at Phil’s and two black guys his age said from the corner, “Don’ he look cute, now! Sho’ lahkes dose clothes!” and laughed even after he came out of the store and ran back up the street. And the other time was coming home from school and two big boys leaning against the building said, “Wan’ jelly roll, man? Bet dat man would lahke some nice plump jelly roll, wou’nt yuh, boy?”

And anyway, Josie, the A&P Negro, lived in the colored district, and Peter even knew his house and sometimes would see Josie on the front porch with some other colored people and would say hi while the other colored people just sat and watched him pass and Josie said hi back.

There were no niggers today. The street was silent and the sky Saturday color red which colored the streets Saturday color too.

Sometimes on Saturday a couple of little kids in the street would want to see in the bag.

“Woo-eee! Look at dem! Wish ah had some o’ dem!”

The bag bumped against his shoulder quickly now as he walked towards the corner of Peach and Pearl. Mommy would be nice tonight and the old men would look because the frogs were bigger and the bag bumped faster.

He turned the corner that had Whelan’s on it. Whelan’s and then extending down the street all the stores that Peter knew. Grayson’s and Handley’s Garage and the barber shop where Mr. Thompson had worked for 26 years and the A&P.

He didn’t know much about the others. The boy in the First National smoked cigarettes and one day buying gum or something Peter had seen the yellow fingers handing change back to him, and Mommy said he couldn’t add. The lady at Woolworth’s always chewed her pencil and smiled at older people who said she was nice (Mommy said she was too) but she never smiled at Peter and Michael and one day they were standing around in front of the falsies (Howard had told them about it and how to do it) and she glared and walked towards them and they went towards the door laughing really loud and Peter hadn’t been in there since then. And the guy at the hardware store had a crewcut and even though he knew all about the games and how to work them they didn’t like him either because one day they were sitting on the bike in front of the store and he came out and said it was too expensive for them to worry about and to get the hell off. They got him Halloween good and
wax doesn't come off easy either but when they passed the store the next day the young boy was washing the windows and they saw the crewcut guy sitting inside reading a newspaper.

He turned the corner that had Whelan's on it and looked down towards Grayson's store. Looked down and stopped. Six chairs were there and all empty. Peter looked at the chairs and then the street and today there were no people and no people with packages or loud talking or horns of cars but all silence. All silence and the bag bumped against his shoulder and rolled on his back and stopped. All silence for a minute while he stood there looking down the street with no people with packages or talking or old men in front of Grayson's store. Only the woman from Woolworth's standing in the door there.

Peter began to walk and just then there was no more silence and the Woolworth lady was running towards the corner.

It was like at night when it woke Peter up but it was only 6:00 on Whelan's clock and the siren was getting higher and higher and louder and louder just like at night. And Peter was running after the Woolworth lady faster and faster towards the corner and faster and faster and then he saw all the people and the packages but no talking on the corner and stopped just behind the Woolworth lady and the crowd.

Soon the siren stopped and the ambulance, the big white car that he had seen parked before and carrying the big noise that he had heard at night before, stopped too, in front of the crowd.

Mr. Rolf was there and Mr. Grayson was up front in the street but Peter could only see the top of his head.

"Peter! What are you doing here! Go on home now!"

And he turned and saw Mr. Rolf beside him with no pipe in his mouth but he turned quickly again and walked towards the edge of the crowd with the frogs bumping against his shoulder in the bag.

It all came very quickly, when the ambulance men in white and very young too stooped over and Peter ran to the front to see. Mr. Grayson's back was bent too but didn't hide anything as a blanket fell down on the man lying there. And then it all came very quickly, Peter stepping backwards quickly but not fast enough so that he didn't see the stain begin on the blanket.

"Christ! Look at 'at! Christ Jesus!"

Stepping backwards quickly and bumping people and then turning and the frogs bumped heavily and quickly against his back. And faster and faster the frogs bumped until he had to stop.

There was no place to go. Nowhere to go as there had always been a place to go and no Mommy now to wake up out of a sleep and no hall light to show the way to the bathroom. So he just bent over as the siren
began loudly again and a little got on his shoes and when he stood up got on his shirt. With the siren pounding and the sack pounding he stopped again and bent way over so it wouldn’t stain his shoes and a little dripped off his chin again onto his shirt.

It was a long run but he finally grabbed the doorknob and stained that too because he had put his hand to his mouth and stained that.

“Peter! Peter, is that you?”

Leaning against the wall and breathing hard.

Leaning against the wall he stained his cheeks but that comes off okay and doesn’t leave a bad taste either.

“Did you get any today, dear?”

He wiped his mouth and eyes and walked into the kitchen.

Jack Chatfield

Finger Watchers

The platinum moon hangs frozen
One perfect piece of mosaic
In an eternal piece of glass
Its light, pure bright, stills
The saintly stars and
There is no need for repentant candles
No need to distort the perfect image
That gazes down upon the earth

But the night has descended upon men’s minds
And bodies washed by machine-made soap
Try to feel close
To the hound that howls across this mirror lake
Close to the finger that points to an unobserved moon.

Malcolm Lloyd
A Cape Cod Pine

An old scrub pine stood aloof
At points end
A lighthouse now without
Its light
It held its Baroque back
To the row of painted houses
Its tired arms followed
The wind without regard
Worn feet gripped
An unsympathetic soil
Alone it watched soft clouds
Turn hard

Malcolm Lloyd

Functional Housing Plan

Mass boom of concrete boxes
Set in a Euclidean line
Extending to the dawn
To meet the mass
And intercept the sun

Dwight Holbrook
Audience

A couple in the flush at eight fifteen from Sardi's time their way along the walk to enter either during the first scene or as the curtain rises on them. Talk of fashion — not inspired by the painted but shabby girl who droops outside a bar alone and offers with a feinted seductiveness supplicating smiles — far beyond the lighted lane in which they move echoes into the shadows, where the whore draws back, embarrassed, as if to prove it false she does not care any more. Inside the theatre, they feel the lull of liquor mounting them, as usual, but what the hell? The play turns out, as usual, to be dull — a dreadful thing of how a nice girl fell. They fall to contemplating future dates. The passion of the play is rendered dumb, does not communicate, but hopes and waits until tomorrow night the whore will come.

David Curry
I cannot concentrate. The unreal sounds of the choir and the organ, no matter how they soar, escape me. And the strange, pure shafts of brightly colored light coming from the windows overhead escape me. I am remembering, and I can concentrate only on what I remember. The choir, the organ, the light — these are here, but they are distant.

I remember looking at the thing on the hospital bed, the wasting, smelling thing that was Mrs. Richards’ husband. And even then I was remembering — that always, for as long as I had known her, Mrs. Richards had been the grand old lady on our block. I remembered that no one could ever dislike her and that I had always thought this meant no harm, not the slightest sadness could ever come to her. But now she was here in this room with me, and this thing, her husband, which she had loved even more than our block, was decaying, and I knew that she was decaying with it. I had come to console her, to say something. But I could say nothing. I could only look. I looked at this thing on the bed and at Mrs. Richards, and neither was a relief from the sight of the other. About her husband’s mouth and on his forehead were the permanent marks left by all the expressions that had come to his face during these past weeks — large, deep lines that had not been there before, lines formed when, again and again, he had twisted his face in pain. The sheets on his bed were loose and wrinkled from his writhing, and, even now, although he was asleep, his thin yellow fingers grasped the sheets with a frozen savagery. And on Mrs. Richards face there were also lines, that might or might not go away. And her eyes, deep in her face, too empty to call forth tears, stared at her husband and grew more and more distant.

I still could think of nothing to say, and when my mouth finally opened, the single word that came out was “Why?” Then Mrs. Richards turned to me, and her eyes at last became alive. And when I saw the alarm and horror in them, I knew that what I had said had not been right and that I was no help, no consolation to her. And, mumbling something, hoping she would understand, I left and went down the cold green corridor and out of the building.

Even in the car, the smells of death and medicine stayed with me, and I drove without knowing where I was going until, somehow, the car stopped in front of Carol’s house. And, going up the walk to the porch, I thought that she would understand, that I could tell her, and that we would talk until I had forgotten. Carol, good at all times, was best of all at times such as this.
No one answered when I knocked, but, seeing the door open, I went on in, knowing she would not mind. I moved rapidly through the hall, wanting to reach her and talk, hardly hearing the low sounds of laughter coming from the living room. And then, as I stood in the doorway and looked into the darkened living room, for the first time since I had left the hospital I returned to consciousness. As Carol exclaimed “Oh, my God!” and covered herself with a robe, standing to hide the boy on the sofa, I turned and walked, still rapidly, back through the hall, out of the house, across the porch, and down the walk to the car. And I don’t remember thinking at all as I drove home or at any time before I fell asleep last night.

* * *

I cannot be caught up by this music. One of the faces in the choir is Carol’s face, and I know that under her innocent blue robe there is no innocence. Her eyes, which have been alternating between looking at the hymnal and looking up to the God the music sings of, suddenly lower and meet mine. A shaft of the colored light coming down from the windows, filled with floating particles of dust, is falling on her. Her face flushes, and she attempts a smile. But I can not look at her. My eyes escape to the altar. And I see the flowers there, offered for Mr. Richards, who finally stopped suffering in the hospital last night. The music, Carol, and the flowers — they bring last night back to me again, and I want to run, to shut them all out. My eyes follow a shaft of the pure, brightly colored light up to the top of this unnatural height they have erected into an unconsoling sky. And there is my stained-glass window, the window I have stared at in wonder every Sunday morning for as long as I can remember. But I can not stare at it this morning. I see Christ curing and the Virgin and the long green corridor and the wasting face and the grieving face and the darkened living room and darkened everything and I’m running running and they’re looking at me all all looking at me and I don’t care only I wish there were somewhere to go besides out of here.

David Curry
Notes on Contributors

CHARLES EDWARD EATON is a poet from Woodbury, Connecticut, who has contributed several previous times to the Trinity Review and whose fourth volume of poetry, A Guest on Mild Evenings, will be published in 1962.

PAUL SCOTT is a new contributor who resides in the New York City area.

LEE H. KALCHEIM is a former editor-in-chief of the Trinity Review. His "Museum Piece" was written while studying at the Yale Drama School last year and he was asked to "put on" this play for actual production at the Yale University.

PETER VAN DYKE FISH is a noted Trinity thespian and also managing editor of the Trinity Review besides being a "damned good" writer of prose.

MALCOLM LLOYD also is on the editorial staff and is a senior Fine Arts major here at Trinity.

ILHI SYNN contributes for the second time to the Trinity Review with a poem hinting of an Eastern background.

A. DAVID LANDER is a Trinity College junior who writes around old themes with a new and powerful use of words. He has had some of his poems accepted by several other publications.

LEE PERRON contributes for the first time with a poem that uses classical allusions as a means of effecting the communication of his theme to a "modern" audience.

JACK CHATFIELD is a board editor of the Trinity Review who has written many short stories attempting that difficult-to-execute Hemingway "economic" technique in writing prose.

DWIGHT HOLBROOK is a Trinity College junior that contributes for the first time.

DAVE CURRY is a Trinity College sophomore.

PETER HOLLENBECK is a freshman with an unusual talent for handling his poetic themes with natural facility.