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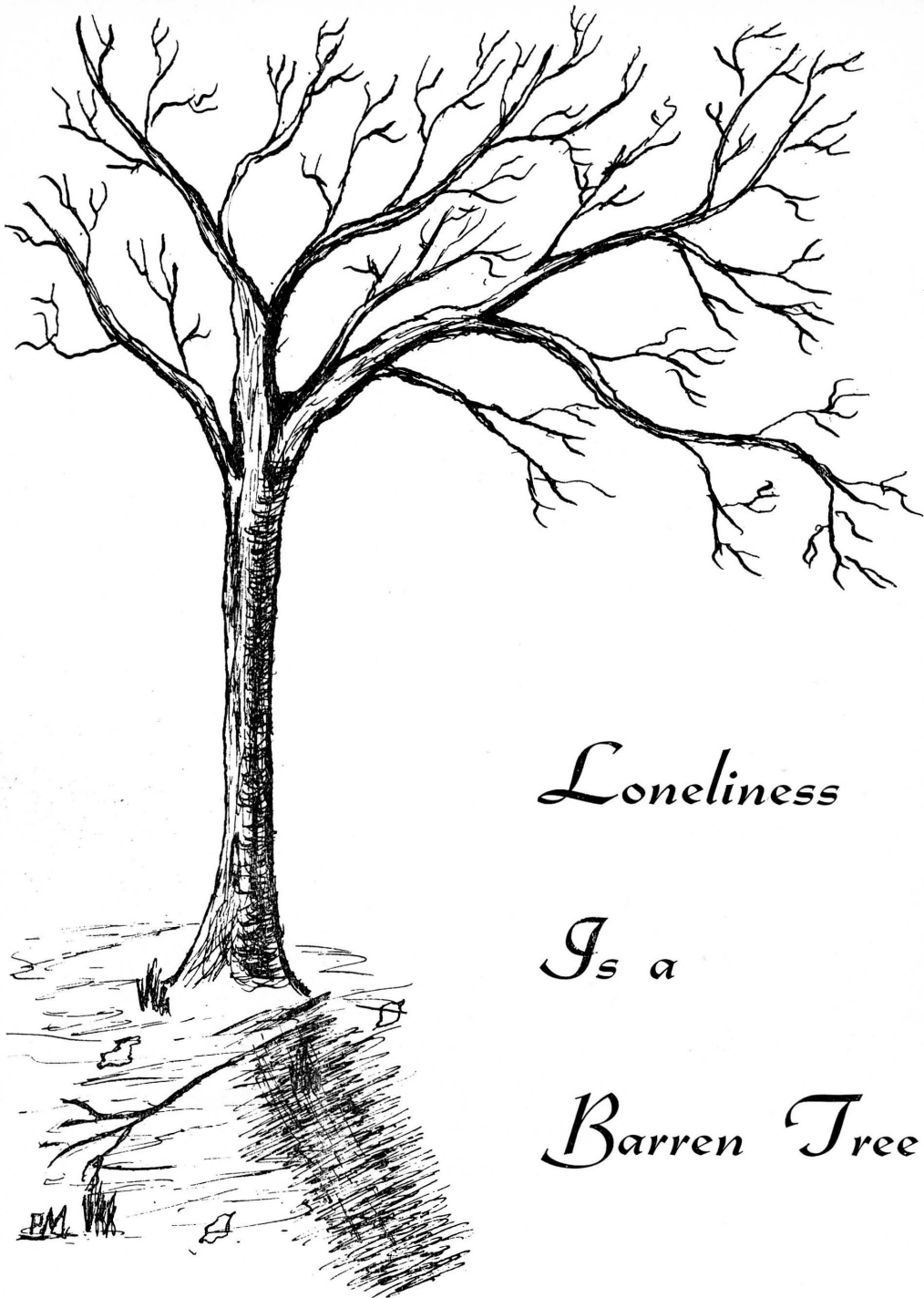
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Loneliness

Is a

Barren Tree

Loneliness is a barren tree.

Whose leaves have fallen in the path of winter.

Whose arms stretch out to the shortening hours of the sun
begging, humbly, for a few short hours of life.

A tree that cries in the bleak winter morning
for the glory of the summer day.

A memory that seems an illusion.

A hope that this bright memory will live again.

So like us.

Loneliness is a barren tree.

Who closes its heart to the knowledge
that the beauties of a warm summer will return.

Who enjoys the misery of its self-imposed suffering.

Enjoying its cold barren beauty
yet unsatisfied even with this.

Waiting for the warmth
for the happiness of summer.

Loneliness is a barren tree.

NORA FITZPATRICK, '65

Remember the r a g m a n ?
When I was a very little girl,
every alley had one. He'd
usually make his appearance
once or twice a week. He would
be driving down our alley be-
hind a broken-down nag of a
horse, which pulled one of
those rattle-trap buckboard af-
fairs with squeaking wooden
wheels. He sat up front on a
board, and the rest of the
wagon was piled with old box
springs, stoves, broken chairs,
rags, mattresses, rugs, papers,
toilet seats, and other things
unrecognizable.

I lived with my grandmother
then. She had a big, brown
house on Berwick Avenue. At
the time, I considered the house
and the garden mine because
I lived there and because I
liked it. This was, to my four-
year-old manner of thinking,
undeniable proof of ownership.
I guess at that age, the whole
world was mine.

My ragman's name was John
Moore; and he had a club foot,
a fact which I found both in-
triguing and terrifying. I could
usually hear him coming before
I could see him, for his cry
could be heard for blocks. He'd
come down the alley in his
battered wagon calling, "Any
old rags, old clothes, old iron!"

The

KAREN ANGELA COX, '66

in a sing-song way; and with
the rhythm of his horse's
hooves and the clanking of the
bedsprings, buckets, boxes, bas-
kets, and other contents of the
wagon and the creaking of its
broken wheels, a small child
could not help but feel a sense
of excitement, listening for
him until he appeared far down
at the other end of the alley. I
used to run and climb up on
the back gate to watch for him.
When he was two or three
houses away, I'd retreat to the
back steps and watch from a
safer distance. He wasn't very
clean. In fact, I was forbidden
to speak to him. He smelled of

Memory

of

John Moore

whiskey, mildew, horse manure, sweat, and kerosene. His clothes were torn, and he wore no socks even on the coldest mornings. His shoes were worn right through. He wore a ragged shirt, once white, and a pair of ragged, greasy, paint-splattered overalls, held up on the side by a large safety pin. I used to wonder what he would do if his one suspender would break. He was unshaven and his skin was swarthy and weather-beaten. I envied him. First of all, John Moore was dirty. He had no grandmother to tell him to wash his neck or clean under his fingernails. My

First Prize — Essay Division

grandmother didn't believe in children getting dirty. Secondly, John Moore chewed tobacco with his mouth open, revealing a gold tooth on the right side of his mouth. I was told that I could have a gold tooth if I kept my tongue out of the space where my first baby tooth came out. It never worked.

The horse could have belonged to no one else. It was a sway-backed nag, ageless as John himself. It was brown with a white streak on its forehead and very ill-groomed. Its eyes were blood-shot just like John's. I guessed it was a "girl horse," because it wore a lady's hat exactly like one my grandmother had once had. John had cut holes in it for the horse's ears and it fitted perfectly. John's hat was grey and nondescript. He and the horse wore their hats all year 'round, even in the summer.

I thought John Moore and his horse were two of the most fascinating things in my small world. On Tuesdays and Fridays no one could induce me to leave the vicinity of the back yard until John and his horse had passed. He never spoke to me, but when I waved (on rare occasions when I was sure my grandmother wasn't watching) he'd sometimes look at me with

a rather blank stare and something that resembled a smile through yellow teeth, plus the gold one mentioned earlier. Sometimes he even spit a stream of tobacco juice as he went by; and one time he stopped and tied on his horse's nose bag, but these occasions were rare. Most of the time he just clattered and clopped by our back gate. That was the extent of our contact. It was enough. I considered John Moore my friend. He was my friend because he enchanted, delighted, and fascinated me; he was a mystery, and to a four-year-old, that made him a character very personal and very dear. Most of all, he was so much a part of my young life. I couldn't imagine a Tuesday or a Friday morning without the sound of his horse and wagon; and the cry of "Any old rags, old clothes, old iron," was as much a part of me as my playmates, the flowers in my grandmother's garden, or the house in which I lived. Like the rest of the things in my small world, John Moore was mine. In addition to being a part of my physical world, he was a part of my world of dreams and play. I used to think how wonderful it would be to sit up high on the board of the battered wagon and do nothing

all day but ride behind the horse and sing in the streets. I never questioned where John came from or where he went after his voice and the sound of the wagon faded somewhere at the other end of the alley, but I was sure it was interesting and longed to be part of it. Of course, I knew that my wish would never be realized, since any association with him was forbidden. This made the whole idea more fascinating, together with the fact that I was deathly afraid of him. Sound unreasonable? Perhaps; but when we are children, we see the sensibilities that lie beyond reason. When we are adults, we see only the reasonable and govern ourselves accordingly.

The fact that John Moore occupied such a position of high esteem in my young mind didn't occur to my grandmother. If it did, I never knew of it. In fact, John Moore was one of the many parts of my existence from which grown-ups were entirely excluded. To my grandmother, John Moore was merely a dirty, unintelligent, alcoholic old junk man. I doubt that she ever looked at him closely enough to know what he really looked like. She only knew the obvious—smelled the obvious, and told me to

stay away from him. She was a typical adult.

One Tuesday, during the summer I was six, John didn't come. It was one of those days at the end of the summer when children are hot and restless and have run out of mischief to get into. I was sitting on the back steps waiting for John and reading. I was very proud of my reading. I liked to have people see me reading, especially third grade books. I wanted John Moore to see me reading because this was the first third grade book that I could read all the way through all by myself. I wouldn't have to explain this to John. He would just look at me and know. But he didn't come. All that day and all the following Friday I listened for the ragman's cry and the sound of the horse and wagon. He never came again. I finally heard my mother tell my grandmother that he was found dead in the street behind a tavern. I didn't cry. I made a bouquet of the violets and dandelions that grew by the back fence and put it next to the trash burner in the alley. This was the nearest thing to a real graveside visit I could manage. The only time they ever could have guessed how I felt was when I mentioned him in my

prayers at night. I thought it was only proper. This amused them immensely. They were typical adults.

Another ragman came down the alley the following Tuesday. He had no club foot, no gold tooth, and was much younger than John Moore. His cry wasn't the same as John's. I lost interest. He just didn't belong in my world. Later my world changed in other ways, many of which I didn't like. They say that the change from childhood to adolescence and into full-fledged adulthood includes the happiest years of a person's life. This isn't true. It is painful. We have to let go of so many of the things we love in order to make the transition; and somehow, the things we lose are sometimes of more value than the new stature we acquire. That is the sad part of growing up. So many things come between the eyes of maturity and the eyes of childhood. We lose the world of make-believe and are forced to enter the world of grim, sensible reality: the world of responsibility, ulcers, and insecurity. We become blind too easily to our once real child's world. We forget too easily. It must be so.

Today, the ragman no longer

makes his rounds and his cry is gone from the alley. My grandmother lives on the same street in the same house as when I was a child. She even has the same flowers in her garden. Although I visit her often, I know that the house is hers, not mine, even though I may come and go as I please. The world of the back yard and the garden has lost its magic, except in the world of memory. My imagination will never be as vivid as that of the four-year-old girl with yellow pig-tails who climbed upon the back gate. She is gone with her ragged "friend" and his horse into the past, never to return. But still, when I sit alone on a summer day in a certain place in the back yard, when the sun is warm on my face and I can smell the flowers in the garden, if I close my eyes and listen very closely, and try to remember, I can almost hear a familiar sound . . .

"Any old rags, old clothes, old iron!"

When I stop listening for this sound, I will have become a typical adult. It hasn't happened yet. I hope it never will. In a small way, John Moore is still a very important part of my life.

life

Life is a sculptor,
Love, his tool,
The heart, the stone
Whereon's inscribed:
"Fool."

Miami, Florida

I hate the crowds
I hate the lights
I hate the mob
I hate the fights
I hate the clubs
I hate the drinks
I hate the bars
I hate the minks
I wish that I were far away
Or that I'd never met you, love
I used to sleep and dream at night
And never wake and scream at love

EVELYNN LOONEY, '66

the chair

the king of her heart sat on his royal
throne upon his head he wore his cold
metal crown the imperial manacles were
fastened tightly to his strong arms his
straining veins shown forth his leather
strapped breastplate pulled tautly against
his herculean chest exposing the well knit
muscular physique of a greek god around his
sturdy calves were undecorative nylon straps
all the armor needed for battle placed over
his royal vestments of light gray jeans all
seen by a murky green light in ceiling above
a sob moved the painful silence a cry from
his grief-torn mother the sole sound in the
hallowed throne room his majestic reign
lasted two and a half minutes his stiff
corpse rules the silence.

JAMES FEHLINGER, '65

"But My Dear . . . !"

Pushed and pulled, shoved and carried,
Swept along, persuaded and cajoled,
Prodded and threatened, advised and told—
Who could balk? Who could be so bold?
Afraid and reluctant to refuse this scheme,
Love was slain in flight

"But my dear, it's the
ONLY thing to do!"

But who am I? Where am I going?
Never mind that—it's nearly time to go.
I'd like to stop and wait—but THEY say no.
Don't waste time on foolish contemplation,
You'll never get ahead in life that way.
"No, no," I cried—but they always say . . .

"But my dear, it's the
ONLY thing to do!"

They have succeeded, complete is the task,
A majority of one was just too much to ask.
Forced into the mold, too crushed to despair,
"Who am I? Who am I?" is lost in the air.

REGINA HYATT, '66



M.J. PETERNEL

The

Divine

Allegory

TOM WIDNER, '64

The world of man is a house built by a divine carpenter. This finest of worlds was fashioned from the best wood with the finest tools. The craftsmanship was perfect. No other house had ever excelled or would ever excell the magnificence of this one.

So the carpenter, after seven months of labor, sat back to admire his artistry. Every detail glorified his skill. Now all the house needed was for someone to live in it.

It was not long after the completion of the house that the carpenter rented it to a young couple just beginning life. They were very happy with their new home and the carpenter was very happy with his new tenants.

Sometime later the builder came to visit the young couple, for he had rented the house to them with the stipulation that he might occasionally visit them in order that he too might enjoy the house. It must be said that the builder was never obnoxious in this respect. He had never interrupted their lives.

He had never interfered in their private affairs. He merely wanted it made clear that this house was his and the couple was only renting it. But the young couple tired of the builder's visits and this time they pretended not to be at home.

Needless to say, this act of indifference made the builder quite angry. He became so angry, in fact, that he saw to it that the house was torn down. The couple quickly realized their injustice to the builder and they set out to rebuild the house. The builder had permitted them to retain use of the house but now they were on their own. Where before the builder had given them gifts whenever he visited them, now he made them need his help to the extent of begging for it. The house which the couple reconstructed was ugly. The couple had to try to return it to its former beauty.

Through the years that passed the couple found it increasingly difficult to manage the house properly. They had children now and the children were everywhere. So the builder decided to send his son, likewise a skilled carpenter, to help the couple set the house in order.

Unfortunately, the couple rejected the son. They were much too proud to admit that they needed help. In no way did the son insult the couple when he offered his aid. The couple did not realize that this was the son even though the builder had told them that he would send someone to help them. Though he kept insisting on giving help, the son was thrown from the house and kicked in the head a few times by the couple and their children.

The wrath of the builder was great indeed. But this time he decided that rather than punish the couple he would continue to attempt to give them aid. So this time the builder sent a governess, for the couple had died and their children were all alone.

In the beginning the governess was a most wise person. She brought the children great happiness because they realized from the first that she was there to help them. But it was not long before the governess forgot herself and took her position much too lightly. In time the children became her slaves. She became very strict with them and very loose in her own affairs.

It was not long before the children became aware of the laxity of the governess. When she neglected the care of the children, some of them left. Realizing what was happening the governess forgot that her own faults were the cause and accused the children of their guilt. It was many years before she began to realize her own guilt in the loss of the children.

When the governess realized her own faults, she began to recall that the builder would again be coming to visit. It would not do for him to find some of the children lost, for the builder was really the father of the children. He had built the house. He had given it to the couple. The governess began to clean her house—the house which was given to her to protect.



II

The soul of man is a very large room house with elegant furniture. There are no doors and no windows. But when the soul is filled with sanctifying grace, it is inundated with a bright light which floods the room and occupies every corner throughout. When the soul is filled with sin, the room is a

void—a paradox perhaps—but the room becomes an empty space which seems colorless to the eye because there is no light emitted from within it. It is blackness.

The room is actually a house which has but one room. This room is the only room in the house. This room is the house.

Inside the room a man lies on a bed wrestling with the body of a woman. Though the room is in view of the entire universe, it cannot be seen by anyone for it lies immersed within the blackness of night,

of death, of sin. But the two bodies remain unaware of the blackness and are conscious only of each other. With the union of their bodies and the pleasure experienced therefrom, the room is filled with a red light which flows from their flesh. Their pleasure is illegal. And every object in the room is dyed scarlet as the color glows more intensely.

The pleasure passes. The man on the bed is alone. Slowly he becomes aware of the mingling of the scarlet with the black. The light seems to glow an inky red. It shoots through the man's body and brings pain to the very organs which had brought him pleasure. His entire body is wracked with pain. And the soul suffers from the burden of the struggle.

The pain is unbearable. The light increases in its intensity and tortures every part of the man's body. From his pores ooze thick beads of pale yellow sweat. He screams in agony.

The soul is aware of its damnation and the sound of the man's screams create chaos in the house. Old and worn, the house cracks in a few more places. Earlier cracks, produced by the pleasure and the pain of other times, are intensified and expand. The walls vibrate with the blows of the man pounding for help and forgiveness. But his strength wanes. A continual abuse of his body diminishes the intensity of his plea. The pounding becomes faint.

Yet once more the white light floods the room. Once more its freshness brings relief to the man. Once more he continues to go his way. And once more he forgets his debt. But forgiveness without retribution has come once too often. The walls of the room suddenly collapse and the house crumbles around the man whose agonizing screams reach a pitch far above the range of the human ear—and they never cease.

Yesterday

and

Tomorrow

Like a stretching monster long confined
The mushroom cloud rose up to its full height
To shake a defiant fist in the face of God.

Love was slain in flight
The hearts from which it sprang reduced to ash.

Hope died with innocence that day
On speechless tongues perfecting praise.

Laughter had no time to become hysteria
Nor sin repentance in the rush of souls to eternity.

Flames of despair came to lick the flayed city
While far off in groves of structural steel
Jezabel bowed low before green paper idols.

EDWARD DHONDT, '65

Lost

and Found

Under rocks and over rainbows,
Where the winding, bubbling brook flows,
I searched.

First Prize — Poetry Division

Inside books and outside windows,
In the trees where winter's wind blows,
I searched.

In wind song,
dove song,
sing song,
love song;
moon beam,
trout stream,
day dream,
water's gleam,
I searched.

In sunrise,
In babies' cries,
In stormy skies,
In lovers' sighs;
Then one day
In your eyes
I found . . . me.

JUDY SWAN, '66

WALKING

through

PARADISE

DONNA TATROE, '64

"Walking through paradise isn't so great. It's probably full of big muddy swamps. Well, now there is an intelligent thought," mused Stan. He had been sitting for hours, his eyes

fixed on a spider who was busily constructing a web outside his window. He wheeled himself around quickly, disgusted with the disconnected thoughts which had been running through his mind.

"Well done, ole boy," he thought. "You handle that wheelchair like a pro. Like a pro?" Stan laughed out loud. "But then there really isn't anything you can't do when you set your mind to it. Sure thing. Big Stan the football man." That had become a permanent title since some overzealous sports writer had done a feature on him for the school paper. "Big man all right—president of the class, honor student, athlete—People sure used to envy you, didn't they, ole boy?"

Tiring of self-pity, Stan laughed at himself again and wheeled his chair out into the corridor. The white walls and antiseptic odor did not permit him for a minute to forget where he was.

"Hi, Stan." "How are ya, kid?" Orderlies and nurses nodded greetings as he navigated himself toward the sun deck. He was known and liked by everyone in the hospital. "Boy, what a master of diplo-

macy am I," he thought. "Good natured ole Stan. Ha! I could fool the world."

"Hi ya, Kid," a loud salutation greeted him as he turned onto the sun deck.

"Hello, Mr. Billington, nice day isn't it?" Stan offered.

Billington was a rather corpulent old man who was completely content to spend half of each year in the hospital with diseases so rare that the doctors could sometimes not diagnose them. He seemed pleased with his latest siege of gastrointestinal Epicureanism, which one of the nurses had told Stan was gas pains, and prided himself on describing quite vividly all his symptoms.

"When do you get the results of the operation?" asked Billington looking for a lead into one of his hypochondrial discourses.

"This afternoon," replied Stan. "My mother and the doctor will be here soon."

"Speaking of doctors—," began Billington. "Sorry, Sir," interrupted Stan, "but it's about time for my appointment."

Stan wheeled himself from the glass room relieved that he had been spared another afternoon of hospital conversation

and returned to the corridor where he smiled and spoke just as congenially as before.

When he entered his room Stan found his mother waiting for him. "Hello, baby," she gushed and kissed him hurriedly on the forehead. "Hello, mom," Stan said. "Have you seen Doctor Graflin?" "Yes, dear," she replied. "I passed him in the hall and he's on his way to see you."

Stan examined his mother's face and found that she was wearing her "Thy Will Be Done" expression. She had become quite philosophical and religious toward him since the accident and Stan found this rather disgusting.

A short balding white clad figure entered the room and moved toward them. "Hello, doctor," his mother said straining her scrobiculate face into a half smile.

Stan studied Doctor Graflin. "This is going to be short and to the point," Stan thought. "Doc looks like he wrote the Hippocratic oath—he's not one to mince words."

"Well, my boy, you're looking well today," the doctor said as he slid into a chair beside Stan.

"Thanks, Doc, but I guess you know what I'm waiting to hear," said Stan wishing to be

spared any preliminary chit-chat.

"Stan," the doctor began, "we did a complete exploratory operation on the lumbar plexus and found that your spinal cord has been severely damaged."

"Can it be fixed?" questioned Stan.

"Well, Stan," the doctor continued, "the nervous system is a very delicate part of the body. When tissues are destroyed it is highly unlikely that they will regenerate sufficiently to restore complete function."

"You mean I'll never walk again," said Stan and then he cynically mused that his statement had sounded like a lead into a popular song.

The doctor nodded slowly.

Stan heard his mother choke back a sob and he heard the tinkle as she clutched at the jewelry around her neck. "O God," Stan thought, "any minute she's going to fall on her knees and start beating her breast."

She crossed the room slowly and cradled his head in her arms. "Don't worry, my baby," she said, "some day you will walk through paradise."

"Walking through paradise isn't so great," Stan replied. "it's probably full of big muddy swamps."

portrait

of a

LOVE

Footprints
Sunk
Into the dust,
All alone
And still,
Trace a path
Of hope
To a Cross
Upon a Hill,
And they
Portray
A slip,
A fall,
And Blood and Love and Will.

CINDY STEPHENSON, S.N.

INDECISIONS

The foghorn's low plaintive voice
calls to me from out the fog, and
I yearn to answer it, to flee
from my prison and fly for
places unknown.

A sharp wind swirls the leaves
at my feet and sets them sailing
far out over the waves, and
again I long to follow them into
the misty land of my dreams.

Wedges of Canada geese beckon
me with their wings and cry as
they pass, Come away,
don't delay ,
fly today—

And I reach out to them, and
would stay them with my hand,
but something holds me back
something that hints of ties,
of fetters, of uncertainty
and uneasiness, and my own
perverse will.

THERESA MEYER, '64

I saw God's valley

SHELDON G. HOUSTON, '65

The panoramic view before me was magnificent. The oblique valley walls were enveloped in color. Beech, poplar, spruce, maple, and pine had united their manifold autumn hues into a spectacular natural mural. Millions of leaves, victims of frost-bite, manifested the wondrous works of God. I could almost see an invisible brush splotching red and purple here—dabbing yellow and brown there; and, as an afterthought, dripping mandarin dye over the surface of the entire canvas to lend a fiery brilliance to nature's masterpiece.

In the valley bottom, a lazy little stream flowed under a covered bridge, past an old gristmill, now inoperative, through a field of corn stubble, and disappeared into a forest of knotty pine. A few houses, nearly shacks, against a backdrop of dilapidated out-buildings and log fences, reminded me of the frustration and love—the absurdity and beauty of life. Except for the intermittent chirping of birds, all was still. Nature had done a masterful job.

God? I didn't see Him; but I *know* He was there.

The Father of My Brothers

He built them a home of happiness and trimmed it
in shades of love.
He raised them in the dignity of man and the glory
of work well done.
He fed them laughter and knowledge of scarlet sunsets.

He taught them to listen to whispering winds and to
face a moody nature's tantrums.
He taught them that ebony nights possess stars, that mud
cannot suppress the spring, that power in the hands
of love does no harm.
He taught them to fear only what would destroy love,
for life without love is hell.

He made them heirs to the noble forest and all that is
goodness and strength.
And he did no less for me.

MIRIAM KAESER, '66



THE CAMEO

BECKY BRUNSON, '66

Belinda peered at the motionless campus. Her elbows rested on the cool marble window sill. She solemnly surveyed the awakening landscape. The lake, nestled between the budding maple and oak groves, caught the slivers of reddish sunlight. Why was it so calm, so haunting and still?

A shy slice of sun stole through the partially-opened blind. It caressed the minutely-sculptured profile, accenting the rose stone of the background. The attached golden band awoke, setting free a sparkle of multi-colored threads. Belinda Mallory gazed fondly at the cameo. It was so much a part of her hand, so integral, that she felt herself awaken as the delicate features glistened.

That nap, she realized, had taken her far into the afternoon. The sun was slipping into the clustered trees adjoining Shamrock's campus. The Baby Ben on the desk told her she must move. It was almost six, which explained the staid atmosphere. Everyone was in the cafeteria eating supper, or waiting impatiently for the weekly allotment of chicken.

"So what," she muttered. "It's really not worth the effort, this waiting, eating, wait-

ing cycle." Belinda didn't really dislike food, but she detested waiting. The endless cafeteria line annoyed her, and seldom-prompt dates antagonized her. "If time would just move. Things go so slowly. I spend my life waiting. I wait in line for buses, food and bank deposits. Why can't things be, now?"

Her mind raced its patterned track of discontent. She knew that her psychology book labelled it, "emotional immaturity." Realizing the fallacy, she constantly fought it, bracing herself to face the life that somehow wouldn't come.

Pulling the plastic cap over her strawberry hair, she flipped the pony tail over her head. She grabbed a towel from the closet shelf. Lindy smiled thoughtfully as she clutched the half-drained bottle of bath oil. "Mark likes the smell of this stuff," she mused, "and his opinion somehow counts."

Lindy was dressed on time, but Mark was overdue as usual. She fussed impatiently with her shoulder-length bob, and meticulously secured the strand wisping over her forehead. Inspecting her make-up, she frowned to note that her eyes appeared too gray when

she wore this navy blue suit. The pale cheeks and delicately up-turned nose twitched impatiently. She picked up the novel she had been trying to finish all week, but her mind reviewed the letter Mark had written from State U. a few days ago. It was his reply to the summer plans she had described so jubilantly.

She recalled her amazement to learn he disapproved of her fantastic plans to work and study that summer and the next three semesters at Colorado State. Mark knew how long Lindy had dreamt of working on a paper. He had been the sports editor of the high school weekly when she was editor-in-chief. Why didn't he share her joy at the offer to become an apprentice, with a guarantee of training and long-range employment? Lindy stood up and adjusted the red scarf at her neck with determination. Here was her chance to strike out into life, she reasoned, and nothing, not even Mark Hanson's objection, would alter the decision.

* * *

Later that evening after leaving the theater, Mark and Lindy strolled across the tree-lined mall. Lindy caught her-

self wondering again. Mark nudged her elbow gently. "Hey there, Lindy, it's just a movie. Tony isn't really dead. You know, I read MGM's already cast him in another film, a sequel to this one."

Lindy grinned up at him, and tugged at a lilac bush that drooped over the path, heavy with its fragrant burden. She pulled off a sprig of half-opened blossoms. "It's not the show, Mark. I liked it, even the sobby ending. I'm just thinking."

"I figured as much. What's on your mind?"

"Can't tell you yet, Mark. It's too confusing. I wish I were like this lilac, then I'd know when to bloom and wouldn't mind waiting to come alive." Lindy giggled abruptly, fixing the lilac behind her ear. "Tell me, Mark, wouldn't I make a lovely lilac bush?"

"Cut it out, you silly. You worry me, with your strange ideas and your deep, pondering moods. You're so impatient for life as you see it to come, that you don't live today."

Mark's getting perturbed, I'd better cut it off, thought Lindy.

"Where'd we park the car? I forget. Is that it across the

street?" Lindy chatted on gaily as they crossed the street and climbed into the red Buick. She kept up the chatter even after they reached the drive-in, pausing only to sip her root beer. "Just think, Mark, next week is Easter vacation, and I'm going to the farm. Then there's only five weeks of school before summer vacation!"

"What about that apprenticeship? Are you still thinking about it?" Mark inquired.

"Yes, I've decided to go ahead and accept, then I'll be set for the job when it counts."

"Lindy," Mark began, "that means you won't be home this summer. You won't even be near the farm. Things won't be the same this year."

"No, Mark, things already aren't the same. I'm getting old enough to be on my own, and this is the opportunity I've worked and waited for all these months. This is my chance at life."

"You and your ideas about life bounding up to you in one giant step. I won't push the issue, though." They had reached the dorm. "I'll see you Friday night? I'm pitching a baseball game that afternoon at St. John's. I'll drive home from there." Mark kissed her

gently at the door and was off.

Lindy went promptly to bed, but not to sleep. As she gazed at the last quarter of the moon that almost slipped completely behind the tall spruce beside her window, her mind scanned the years she and Mark had been friends. The successive summers they had passed on their farms had enkindled a rich friendship. It was based on experiences and understanding, a relationship Lindy had grown to appreciate more after her mother had died when she was fourteen. Contentment enveloped her as she dozed, drifted and dreamt.

Lindy's father didn't expect her to go home for the spring break from classes. She always retreated to Medford and her grandfather Jensen's farm for the vacations. Since her father's business detained him in Chicago, the girl always sought the companionship of her grandfather. Mr. Jensen remarked repeatedly to Lindy's father how much his granddaughter was like his wife who had died when Lindy's mother was born. Lin's cameo had been Mr. Jensen's engagement pledge to his beloved, and her image lived in the stone. It was Lindy's profile, too, on the

stone, and her own mother's death had shifted it unquestionably to her finger.

Easter vacation finally came and true to his word, Mark called Friday night. Eager to learn of their news, Grandfather Jensen pressed continuous queries at the couple as they lounged on the screened porch. He questioned Mark, anxious for his young friend to air his views on Lin's summer plans. Having detected Mark's displeasure, Mr. Jensen mildly commented, "Mark, you and I must remember that it is Lindy's life and efforts. Neither of us may relish this plan of hers, but both of us realize how much immediate action and fruits mean to her restless spirit."

Turning to Lindy, he puffed heartily on the pipe forbidden by his heart doctor and said quietly, "Lin, your grandmother regarded life as you do. It took a long summer of toil and a winter of hardship on that farm for her to acquire patience. But she was a remarkable woman with a vivacious spirit. Someday you'll . . . yes, someday that farm will do the same for you."

That night it stormed, as it always did on Good Friday,

and Saturday dawned warm and sunny. Lindy and Grandfather rode out to the farm and found the calf, born Thursday night, chilling with pneumonia. All morning they nursed it. Mr. Jensen carried it gingerly to the barn and bedded it down after injecting a dose of penicillin into its squirming flank. "It'll pull through okay, Lindy. That little fella will outlive me, you know."

They devoured the picnic lunch under the elm in the bottom field that was drained off enough for sowing that afternoon. "Lindy," Grandfather began, "this tree will fall soon. See, the heartwood is all rotted out, a sign that it's aging. It's old, like me. My dad sent me to it for switches when I misbehaved, and I buried my first pony under it. The night I had that attack last winter half of it fell in a blizzard. Yes, our lives have run parallel for sixty years now."

"Gramps, you're thinking too much lately. You're working too hard, too. I'm here for a week to see that you slow down. Now lean against your elm and rest while I get the planting started." Lindy jumped to her feet and guided the

ancient tractor down the field before he could protest.

Later that evening in town a warning roll of thunder sounded as they finished the evening meal. Lindy's mind raced to the calf. Another chill would kill it. Her grandfather's sigh took her to his side. He was sprawled on the sofa, eyes closed. "Lindy, that was a good meal, but I ate too much. I should go to that calf and . . ."

Lindy cut him off, "You'll do nothing of the kind. I'll check the calf if you promise not to move from here. We don't need two of you with pneumonia." She kissed his closed eyes. "Please stay here, Gramps." She pulled on her boots and slicker. As she steered the truck along the bumpy county road to the farm a light drizzle fell.

Lindy checked the calf and threw more straw into the stall. She covered the tiny sleeping form with the ragged poncho that hung in the barn for such cases, and slid the door closed. She had to see something else before returning to town. The truck bounced along the lane leading to the bottom field they had sown that day.

The damp fields smelt warm,

alive. Lindy sensed the abundant life. The union of the earthworm's trail and the decomposing cornstalks released a contented vapor as they welcomed the moisture. The planted seed awaited the spring rain. The walnut grove along the creek blackened sharply as the horizon grew bright and then dimmed. The roar that followed sounded a toll for the ancient elm as it dropped massively across the field. As Lindy leaped into the chilled dryness of the truck, a second bolt of light revealed the knowing and somber face on the cameo.

Lindy steered the resisting truck back up the hill and across the rutted pasture. She spotted the familiar red Buick parked near the barn. In the dim light she detected Mark as he bolted out and swung the wide gate open. Having twisted the wires that secured it, he climbed into the truck cab.

"Lindy . . ." he began.

"I know, Mark," she finished quietly, "the elm just fell too."

Three days later it stormed again, stopping only minutes before the funeral. Leaving the casket in the charge of the caretakers at the little hill-top cemetery, Lindy declined the return ride to town. "No," she

insisted to her father. "I want to stay and check the cattle and give that calf another shot. I'll drive the truck in before supper."

If he thought it unwise to leave her there alone, he held his tongue. Mr. Mallory shook his head mutely as Lindy kicked off her heels and stepped into the boots she pulled out of the car trunk. Her trembling fingers jerked the unyielding zipper on the left foot. The rusty picket gate creaked as Lindy slipped through and crossed the road.

Mark frowned as he noted the girl's destination. His sister caught his sleeve as he started after her. "Take us home and then come back, Mark. She needs a few moments to herself right now."

After the short trip into town Mark left the car at the edge of the maple grove bordering the cornfield. It had been a good rain, he reasoned as his shoes became weighted with mud. The road leading from the barn had a few new ruts, but he noted the soil in the bottom fields was well saturated. He visualized the corn sprouts that would probably be peeking through by the time they returned to school.

He spotted Lindy standing on the gate leading into the field. He realized how delicate she was. Her hair ruffled as a gust of wind became entangled in it. The same current swayed the pleated navy blue skirt against her legs. Nothing else moved. She looked like a mannequin in a junior high shop.

Lindy turned and stepped down, aware of the slosh of Mark's muddy feet behind her. "Hi," she smiled weakly. "I was just trying to decide on the best time to drag off that elm. Now would mean resowing part of the field and later would leave a hole in the crop this year. I stand to lose either way."

"What do you mean by later? Lindy, this farm isn't your worry." Mark half scolded, half questioned her.

"Later is this summer, Mark, while I'm down here working. Then it will be my worry."

"But what about summer school, co-oping . . . and your job? You can't let that job go on a spur-of-the-moment decision, Lindy." Mark looked confused.

"That job, . . ." he began again.

". . . will wait," finished Lindy. "It'll have to."