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# THE FLAMINGO

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## THE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

**O**UT of the marsh a red-winged blackbird flew,  
The gay redeemer of a somber spot,  
And through my heart that had been dark  
erewhile  
A sudden gladness shot.

But he fared on unwitting that his wings,  
So brave and keen of hue,  
Out of the marsh-land of my discontent  
Had borne me with him too.

JESSIE B. RITTENHOUSE

*Contributed to The Flamingo*

# THE FLAMINGO

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GREEN

KENNETH CURRY

**T**HE afternoon has woven threads  
Of green the way a spider weaves  
A web between the dusty reaches  
Of the eaves.  
See, in the web the world is held  
From high hilltop to valley deep,  
As though it had been caught and bound  
While fast asleep.

## STUDY FROM LIFE

YULA POWERS

**I**T was hot that afternoon. The scent of the one great magnolia blossom made the heat seem more oppressive. I plodded wearily up the steps and across the sun-baked porch. The dark hall was cooler, but it smelled of greasy food and cockroach exterminator. I fumbled with my key. How could people go on living in such places for years and years and years—Just then the door at the end of the hall opened, and Mrs. Coursey called, "Hey, there! Come in and talk a minute, won't you?"

I followed her and sat down upon the bed, where my hostess already reclined against the pillows. "Any luck today?" she asked. I gave my wide-brimmed hat a toss that sent it to the opposite side of our couch before I shook my head. Mrs. Coursey started up, a hu-



man exclamation point. "Say, don't you know it's bad luck to throw your hat on a bed? Maybe that's why you can't get work." I retrieved the offending hat and balanced it on my knee. Her mind at rest, Mrs. Coursey went on. "Did you ever try prayin' for a job?" Here she stopped to light a fresh cigarette. "Wanta smoke?" The packet was extended to me, but I declined. "You're right not to smoke. Don't ever get started. Now, me, I've got the habit, and I've got to smoke all the time. Don't you start it, and don't you begin to drink, neither. You're young, and you hadn't ought to." She puffed in silence a moment. Then, "I'll bet that you'd get a job right away if you'd pray for it. Whenever we strike a new place, I pray for Tom, and he always gets work right away. Why, when we come to Jacksonville, Tom told me, 'Sis, pray for me tonight,' and he went out next day and got a job. Tom always gets me to pray for him. He says it don't do no good for him to pray."

There was another short silence. I wished that it would rain. I wished that women didn't talk about their husbands. Mrs. Coursey resumed her monologue. "He's some sweet boy, Tom is. And he thinks there's nobody in the world like me. He sure is handsome, too. Oh, I don't suppose you think so, but you've never seen him fixed up. He used to have swell clothes, but he just don't care about dressin' up any more. Why, when he used to put on a good-lookin' suit, the women just went crazy about him. I can't keep a girl friend, 'cause every one of them tries to take him away from me."

"When we lived in New York, I used to have a girl friend named Hazel. We was regular buddies. Went everywhere together. She wasn't very pretty,

and Tom never noticed her much. I did a lot of things for that girl, too. Helped her sew. Loaned her money when she was broke. One night we had a party in our flat, and Hazel was there. Everything was goin' fine. The crowd was laughin' and cuttin' the fool. Then we ran out of drinks. Tom said he'd go after some more, and Hazel said she'd go with him. I didn't think nothin' about it then, but they were gone so long that I got suspicious. When they did get back, I looked at them close, and I seen Hazel's hair was all mussed up. I knew right then they'd been havin' a pettin' party somewheres. So I went up to Hazel, and I grabbed her by the shoulders, and I said to her 'Ain't you a fine friend to take my husband out and get him to hug and kiss you. You get out!' And I shook her and shoved her so hard she fell against the table. Then I went into the bedroom and laid down on the bed. Hazel came in and kneeled down beside me. She cried and asked my forgiveness, but I just told her to get out or I'd get out. Then Tom came in and said Hazel was cryin' and wouldn't I forgive her. I just jumped up and began to take my dresses out of the closet. 'All right,' I said, 'you just stay here with Hazel. I'm goin'.' So Tom went and told Hazel she'd better go. After that he came back and begged me not to leave. Why, I'm tellin' you he got down on his knees and cried like a baby. I let him go on for 'bout an hour, and then I said I'd stay."

"It just goes to show that a married woman can't have girl friends."

I looked at my watch. "Oh, Mrs. Coursey, I'll have to go. It's nearly dinner time. And, by the way, I might as well say good-bye now. I'm moving to another house tomorrow."



## FUTILITY

WENZEL L. BROWN

**T**HE night is living  
And the low moon creeps into her place.  
The waves beat into the shore  
And the land cries out.

There is a dull echo!

My son has lost his soul,  
And the fear of my son has killed me.  
A leaf has dropped into the night;  
It has been withered.

My hand is cold!

The earth has joined the sea,  
And the waters are noiseless.  
A wave sweeps over my face;  
I have loved the moon.

But my son is dead!

## INDIAN SUMMER

KENNETH CURRY

**L**EAVES fall past the window,  
Folding earth in red;  
All the trees are flying  
Banners overhead.  
Through the vivid autumn  
Swallows seek the south  
As lean does search for water  
After weeks of drouth.

## PEACE PACT, FORWARD

MARGARET CUMMINGS

**I**T was nearly three o'clock on the afternoon of August 26, 1926, and the representatives of many nations were convening for the signing of the Briand-Kellogg Peace Pact. The weather was expressing encouragement, and the very air in Paris seemed auspicious—clear, warm, exhilarating.

The Chamber of Deputies was surrounded for blocks by pressing crowds, with flags waving above the heads of the people, creating streamers of color in the mob; and the building itself was gaily attired for the occasion, with the colors of a score of nations flying in the bright assemblage. Across the river was the Madeleine, barely visible through the trees and blowing banners in the Rue Royale, but over the water the church sent a benediction to her twin building, about to become the scene of so sacred and indicative an agreement.

All along the length of the Seine the mercantile, frivolous Right Bank reflected the magnificent undertaking of the intellectual, diplomantic Left Bank, and the colors of all nations were on exhibition. The red, white, and blue of France, Great Britain, and the United States were predominant, but with encouraging frequency one saw the red, yellow, and Black of Germany. Frenchmen walked the streets with a light tread and ready smile; they were proud of this achievement; it was theirs; it was of Paris. If they remembered darker skies of a decade ago, if the tragedy had bereft them then, they put such memories behind them; for the Frenchman is fundamentally spiritual, courageous, gay, and those who in 1918 looked back, in 1926 looked forward.



The sky was remarkably blue, and the air had a Parisian vivacity that is paralleled in no other city, a vivacity that is irresistible. Children in the crowd cheered, boys sang, women cried, and all were moved, impatient, exalted. From time to time a fashionable town car would emerge from the chaotic whirl that is the Place de la Concorde, cross the bridge, and cut slowly through the crowd. During the pause, while the officials at the tall gates examined the credentials, the people surveyed the individuals attired in white spats and topplers, and cheers sometimes arose as an outlet for suspended emotion.

Suddenly a surprising hush fell over the gathering, a hush that is controlled by a mysterious sweeping force and is not conceived by any individual, yet is unquestionably obeyed by the entire mass. A stranger could not have analyzed the cause of the silence; yet he would have been as completely bound by it as any other. For its short duration it was stronger than reason.

It was almost three. Every delegate but one had appeared, and the suspense was increasing with each second. Finally a car came into view, moving slowly through the compressed crowd, moving with dignity through the throng. The silence was intensified—yet without communication everyone was aware simultaneously—Stresemann had come. The German delegate sat in the corner of the automobile, shoulders bent, head forward. Someone near the machine removed his hat, and in that moment all hats were removed. Not a breath was heard anywhere; even the breezes seemed held by a leash. The long white hair of the old minister lay against his head, his hands relaxed in his lap. A countenance that mingled strength, wis-

dom, and humility looked forth on the people, and the serenity and poise of his manner suddenly touched the electrified crowd. A wild burst of applause, that echoed along the Seine, rent the air and set Paris ablaze in an ardor of international good feeling.

From each individual was momentarily eradicated all thought of self; the overwhelming change from doubt to confidence had evolved one single spirit from the crowd; and the cheer that followed was the expression of one principle, one conception, one sentiment.

As Stresemann disappeared within the Chamber of Deputies, the crowd started to disperse. That rare moment, wherein a totality had been born from the sudden, spontaneous harmony of clashing temperaments had passed, but the crowd that had so shared such an emotional experience went its way with an added human sympathy.

## HARVEST

KENNETH CURRY

**H**is fields are laughing in the sun,  
And earth grows rich with grain.  
His orchards smile with ripening fruit;  
The branches bend with strain.  
Now he remembers days of cold,  
Of hunger, and of thirst.  
Not all his yield will soothe that hurt—  
Though grain his barn has burst.



## POETRY SECTION

CHARLIE MILLS

## VILLAGE FEAR

**S**HE always shirks a housewife's work," they said,  
 "Sweeps light her broom, and leaves her bed  
 unmade."

And it was seldom that she ever stayed  
 At home to do the homely things. Instead  
 She passed from house to house—and bought her  
 bread—

And spent her life in colorful parade  
 Of petty village gossip. She displayed  
 To each the blood of others while they bled.  
 Now they, while fearing her, could never quite  
 Refuse her at their gates, for she'd supply  
 The rhymes they liked to sweep their strong  
 brooms by.

And so they brushed and kept their firesides bright  
 And made their beds and kept their linens white  
 But never rightly knew the reason why.

## CHANT

**D**E moon mof's cotched in de spidah's string.  
*Lay low, widow woman, lay low.*  
 De po'ch chair's rockin'; dey's blood in de  
 spring.

*Lay low, widow woman, lay low.*  
 De corpse be a stuh rin' en a tuh nin' he haid,  
 Yo jined-Holy him be sermoned en laid.  
 Fo' shame, widow woman, fo' raisin' de daid.  
*Lay low, widow woman, lay low.*

## LINES AGAINST ORDER

**E**VERYTHING should have some plan  
 Conceived, arranged, approved by man.  
 Bright butterflies, quick winds, and elves  
 Should all be pressed and placed on shelves.  
 Let Autumn leaves be picked, then piled  
 In little heaps, and carefully filed.  
 The clouds should all be made in squares  
 And taught to march in even pairs.  
 And stars should form a long straight line  
 Or have some definite design.  
 Let rivers run in long canals  
 And run at ordained intervals.  
 The hills, the mountains, and the knolls  
 Should be torn down to fill up holes.  
 Yes, everything should have some plan  
 Conceived, arranged, approved by man."  
 Conceits like these began to run  
 From cave man father to his son.  
 These are the words that have no end;  
 There always shall be things to mend.  
 Man may make the cosmos sane,  
 But time will laugh it mad again.

## A LITTLE SLEEP, IF YOU PLEASE

**T**ONIGHT I shall cut the cord from the moon.  
 It's caught to the earth somewhere.  
 It's a long purple cord from a golden balloon  
 Just over the hills out there.  
 I shall grab the end before it slips  
 Too far for one great leap;  
 I shall tie it tight to my strong new belt  
 And swing myself to sleep.



## CARSTARPHEN

CARSTARPHEN is the quietest man," they said,  
 And theirs was not a noisy neighborhood.  
 So seldom did he speak; sometimes he would  
 Pass old friends by and only nod his head.  
 He was the only man accredited  
 With being wholly good. He stood  
 For all the unnamed things a fine man should;  
 Revering him, they marked the life he led.  
 Carstarphen was the chef at some hotel,  
 And there among his steaming things he played  
 Apostate, turncoat, rebel, renegade.  
 He'd sieze a poker-sword and yell  
 And beat hot coals until they fell  
 Flashing scarlet blood. Every muffin that he  
     made  
 Turned out a bomb or hand grenade.  
 He liked his bloody part and played it well.  
 And so by day Carstarphen's bent  
 For viciousness was fully spent.  
 But always, when he held a knife,  
 He knew he played at half his life.  
 That's how he came to use a key  
 To lock in him he knew was he.  
 Carstarphen, cut-throat, conqueror,  
 Mimicked the man the neighbor's waited for.

## "TO MICHELENA"

PHYRNE SQUIER

MARIO shifted the hod of brick from one hand to the other and paused to rest. The day was hot and the ladder long. Eighteen times he had climbed it and eighteen times returned to earth again. It was not strange that he seized this opportunity to straighten his back and for a brief moment rest.

Above him, in strong relief against the blue sky back-ground towered the walls of a half-finished apartment house, square and uninteresting in outline, built of bald red brick, startlingly different from the rich, weathered tones of the pre-war brick buildings that neighbored it, a manufactured composition cleanly blocked by bold white lines.

Pre-war was not the term which Mario would have used in describing the more aged dwellings, for back of the great war which he remembered as an occurrence of nightmarish horror in his childhood existence, and in which his father and two brothers had been killed while fighting for their own beautiful country, Mario had no knowledge that any war had ever touched the United States. However, Mario was not thinking of war just now nor whether the building was graceful or ugly.

"Madre Santa!" He groaned, wiping the back of one grimy hand across his sweating brow and leaving it streaked with black. "Tempo e caldare, a'right, a'right. The man w'at leev in dees house don't goin' know w'at ben like to walk to top weeth dees-a stoof." He wiped his brow again, this time with the bandana handkerchief that dangled halfway out of his back pocket. The movement pushed his shapeless black



felt hat still further toward the back of his head. His crisp, lightish brown hair, smoothly brushed that morning to a sleek pompadour, found opportunity to split its glossy precision and, dividing, tumble down to ring either side of his forehead like circling ram's horns.

At this moment Mario perceived his boss, one Mike Gilligan by name, thrust his head from one of the sashless window holes in the front of the structure as though looking for someone. The sight spurred Mario to a display of energy. He began to ascend the ladder.

"Hey, you Dago," bawled Gilligan, "get a wiggle on, will you? Whadda you think this is?—your birthday?"

The dago addressed smiled sweetly up at him, showing a glitter of white teeth.

"How you know dees my birthday?" he inquired in delighted surprise, but the boss had withdrawn his head and did not hear.

Mario mounted the ladder briskly. "Era nu mese primme de Natale . . .," he warbled; then, because he had forgotten just what it was that had happened about a month before Christmas, he changed to a whistle instead. Mario could whistle as shrilly and sweetly as a bird. His mind suddenly became occupied with pleasant thoughts. First of all, he was twenty-one today, the age when in this great America one became a man. Not that Mario had failed for the past half dozen years to fill the position of a full grown and competent day laborer, but there is a difference between being a thing and having it legally recognized. This distinction meant the more because of Michelena, his cousin, Uncle Pietro's daughter, and his, Mario's heart's intended.

Pietro Romano owned a fruit stand over the river

in New York, also a tenement house of which he rented all but the upper floor. Uncle Pietro was fast becoming a wealthy man though he had started much farther down the ladder than had Mario himself. First he had run a peanut stand. With increasing success a push-cart was possible; now there were, in his estimation, no further heights toward which to climb, professionally speaking. And all this with a wife and four bambini. While he, Mario, had not even a wife—not yet, at least. He grinned happily at the thought, and surely the present position of hod-carrier at wages which would make the folks back home gasp with astonishment, if they knew, would assure prosperity much sooner than the meagre savings that Uncle Pietro's peanut stand had netted him in those early encumbered days. As it happened, Mario was going to take care that the folks back home should not know the amount of his present wages. Not that he was unwilling to share his amount of the family burdens; quite to the contrary. He had, since his arrival alone in this new country six years before, been sending home every dollar beyond his barest necessities of living. His mother had, with Mario's pittance, reared the two girls Lucia and Antonetta, the eldest of whom was already betrothed, and with what was left over from their living had bought much land. Not the best quality of land, it is true; nor did Mario know what she might be intending to do with her acquired acreage. He was satisfied that they were satisfied and having smooth sailing. The family craft had not, in Mario's Neapolitan existence, ever known placid waters.

Every day or, if not quite every day, as often as Mario remembered to do so he offered up a little



prayer of thanksgiving to his patron saint who by special arrangement had made such prosperity possible.

The reason why he was not going to tell his people of his latest good fortune, the increase of two dollars a day that this job had brought him, was for the aforesaid reason that he was so soon to become a man, and, as all Americans became when they reached that age, an independent, or so he fancied. The next step was to become an American citizen. No, not the next step, for, if everything came out as he intended and hoped it would, the next step would be marriage. Tonight . . . , but it was too fearfully wonderful to try to formulate any material picture of what the evening might bring, though great bliss it was to dream . . . and dream.

When the noon whistles blew and the other workmen left for their homes, Mario went around to the north side of the structure and, sitting down with his back against the good support of masonry, unwrapped from a blue handkerchief his dinner. It was not, if an epicure were to consider it, a really delectable meal. A round loaf of bread, mixed and baked to a degree of firmness that would have been trying to teeth less sharp than were Mario's and marked on the top with a cross where the baker had slashed it before giving it to the oven. From the pocket of his coat, hanging in the shade, Mario produced a bottle of milk. He would have much preferred a bottle of the sour beer with which he had in other days been wont to wash down his coarse fare, but something in his knowledge, slight though it was, of the laws of this, his adopted land warned him that it was no longer good to do so. Mario wished always, when it did not incur too much personal inconvenience, to obey whatever laws were

customary to the dwellers of the land in which he lived.

Now he spied, nearly covered by the litter of construction, several dandelion plants, spreading rosettes of long, toothed leaves. These would add a pleasant savor to his meal. He rose and, cutting them close to their roots, whipped them once or twice across the leg of his trousers to dislodge the clinging particles of masonry that whitened their surface and made himself a bulky sandwich.

His dinner finished, Mario wrapped the uneaten portion of his loaf in the handkerchief, stored it and the emptied milk bottle away in the coat again, and began an odd process of mathematical calculation. Odd, that is, to a more finished scholar than was Mario whose struggle with the rigors of night school had taught him a sparse knowledge of written English and but little else beside. It was perfectly clear to his own brain.

He arranged before him broken bits of twigs and small pebbles in lots of six. These represented the days of the week, and in each of the piles were enough units to correspond with the number of dollars earned each day. Mario by this rather complicated process was endeavoring to foretell the exact amount that the probable length of time which his present job had been estimated by the boss to last would net him. Dividing this, he could tell how much, after his board and the money for home had been deducted, would be his. Enough, . . . enough . . . He drew his breath between his teeth with a whistling sound.

"Eil!" he said (the letter H as sounded in our language was unpronounceable to his tongue.) "Eil! I'm a reech man a'ready."



The afternoon lengthened with the lengthening shadows until to Mario it seemed that five o'clock would never come. When that hour did arrive, he was first aboard the truck on which several of the workmen were given a ride to their respective homes. At the corner of the street where Mario lived he swung himself down before the machine had come to a stop and was half a block away before he remembered to fling back his customary "Goo'-by." Then it was too late. Mario regretted this error. He wished always to be polite.

Three little American-born daughters of his landlady ran to meet him, their dark faces lighted with welcome. He greeted them most heartily as was his wont but did not pause for the usual friendly scuffle. They looked plainly puzzled at the omission. A fourth, the baby of the flock, sprawled half-clad at the foot of the steps, blissfully engaged in consuming a tomato. Mario tickled her fat hands playfully and kissed her neck where the hair, dampened by perspiration, curled in tight rings.

"How much you love me dees night?" he demanded of her.

"Fi' bushel," she gurgled.

It was part of their nightly catechism, cut short this once because of the haste that urged him on. He had but half an hour in which to dress and reach the ferry for New York and Michelena. Three weeks had gone by since he had last viewed her. Three weeks as long as the distance from New York to the stars. Mario was nothing if not poetic in his similes. At this moment in his trousers' pocket upstairs reposed a poem, or such he thought it was, which he had laboriously composed and more laboriously written out during

these weeks when he had been separated from his Michelena. He did not realize the presumption of claiming her as his special property even though for various reasons the bargain had not yet been struck. The poem he would take to her tonight. It told in written words what he had hitherto been too bashful to speak and ran like this;

"to michelena.  
the day I see you  
i was different men  
non moor happy time  
non moor sing non moor music for me.  
ded my heart blind the yeyes  
non moor frend for mi  
i love i love you  
i cand love other  
you take my heart  
pleas give yous  
love love mi my dear  
se you love mi make you happy.  
let me lookh in you eyes  
for mi lookh like two stars  
the you hair lookh gem  
the nos diamonde the mouth boquet  
say squeues mi hand  
give to mi little life  
say love me se dont you kill mi."

Mario's landlady was preparing supper as he paused to wash hastily at the kitchen sink. From the stove arose a delicious aroma of cooking chicken that was like incense to his nostrils. It was savory with garlic and tomato and whatever spicy condiments the Italian housewife uses to embellish this particular barnyard fowl. Mario was hungry. He sniffed apprecia-



tively as he passed the stove. The woman smiled at him.

"Stay and eat with us this meal," she invited; "the chicken is much and will feed many and more." But he refused.

"I gotta come to Nuova York," he said and raced up the stairs to his room. Supper was a little thing to sacrifice when such an errand was afoot.

A pair of white flannel trousers, his one great extravagance, many times washed and consequently lessened in girth, were drawn from their abiding place beneath the mattress. A white shirt, pounded to immaculate whiteness on the river rocks the day before, came next, and lastly, his latest purchase, bought Saturday night after he had been taken on by Gilligan, a pair of white sneakers. He laced them hurriedly, twisted the tops of his blue socks into a sort of knot to keep them from sagging too far down over his ankles, combed the crinkles of his pompadour to the proper degree of tidiness, and set forth. On the little entrance porch he paused a second and looked inquiringly about him. Suddenly he knew what it was that he sought, a flower. There was none in that neighborhood of ash-pile and verdureless ground except . . . He wondered if he dared take the one cluster of geranium blooming in a tomato can upon the top step. Abruptly he snapped it from the parent stalk and thrust it in the band of his green felt hat.

He managed to reach the ferry just as the gates were about to close against its leaving the dock. There were several workmen aboard, dinner pails in hand, a few cars; Mario sized up the occupants as business men and tourists as the boat moved slowly out across the intervening strip of water dividing them from the

other shore. Two fellow countrymen with flute and accordian played and passed their hats for coin and played again. "There's a rainbow 'round my shoulder." The thought struck Mario that he was wearing an identical form of decoration. He whistled the air in accompaniment to the instruments. In all that boatload of workmen and pleasure seekers there was none so happy as he.

Two Sundays in succession he had crossed the river to his Michelena, and both times he had failed to see her. The first time she had gone with a party of friends on an all-day picnic to some amusement park; the second she was ill; so her mother said, "No, nothing serious; some pork that made myself feel sick, even. We eated it raw."

Tonight she could not fail to be awaiting him since he had, with almost as great trial as the composition of the poem had cost him, written and subsequently mailed an epistle telling her that he would come this week on Monday night and hinting at what the poem and his words to follow after such a graceful opening had been made would tell her. He knew, or thought he knew, what he wanted to write her. To put his thoughts on paper was another matter. If only he could write it in the language which he knew, but Michelena was no Italian. American through and through she could barely speak her people's tongue. He thought now of the letter. He had never written her one before. He felt a trifle uneasy as to how it might impress one who had graduated from the ninth grade in grammar school the year before. But, he reflected, if she loved him the way he did her, there could be nothing to fear. On the whole, it was a pretty good letter after all, he thought. He had begun it in Italian;



"mia bella michelena," he had written, "i sorry you don't feel well i hoppe this time you feel well i feel well in n j it nice weader only i lonsom i thingh of you and n y al time i remember the happy time i pas in the you good compani. i like you michelena for coos you the best good galle what i find gwendywhere. i like you and hoppe you like mi al time same as i like you. i like see you i like be you best heart frend. i come monday night i hoppe whenne i see you i make you happy this my twentyone day i don't see you and you dont understand watt i feelig. i hope you nice good fortun for the fhuchure. give the my recards to you mothre you phather you sis the children i to them same as one brother. you ricive my bes i dont write no more i so busi. good luck good wish

you for al frende  
you sincer frende

Mario Romano."

When Mario reached the house of Romano, Michelena had not yet returned from the fruit store where she was helping pop, his young cousin told him. He might wait for her there or go down to meet her. He decided on the latter course. Aunt Menina was also absent. Only young Pete and baby Gleonica were there to talk with him. Carmelita, the elder sister, smiled at him. She could do no more by way of responding to his greeting since she was dumb. She could not even give him her hand because both of them were smeared with flour to the wrist from the mass of dough lying on the table before her. From it, with expert dabs of her knife she was separating bits uniform in size. These, when moulded with a dexterous twist over the end of her thumb, became hat-shaped pieces of macaroni.

Carmelita was beautiful. Mario recognized that, but beautiful in the way the women of his native country were beautiful, with great velvet-brown eyes and unbobbed hair coiled in an enormous knot behind and so smoothly brushed that it shone like a black-bird's wing. Hoops of gold dangled from either ear. There was nothing American about Carmelita. Even American clothing, when donned by her, took on a foreign aspect. Her skin was dark, too. Much darker than was that of Michelena who always kept her own complexion so beautifully rosy. It mattered not to Mario that it was hand-made rosiness or that the scarlet of her lips came off occasionally and had to be re-touched with the slender shining thing from the silver case she always kept at hand. Carmelita's eye-brows were black and heavy, nearly meeting above her straight nose. Michelena's were carefully plucked to precise and slender crescents. Michelena was an *uccelli cantori*; a singing bird; quick motioned, *allegretto*. Carmelita, *un colomba*, a dove. Because Mario's heart was more than usually compassionate and tender, he sighed deeply as he turned away from Carmelita sitting there so contentedly at her macaroni-making. Poor girl! She was, being dumb, set aside from the joyful things of life.

Pausing on the sidewalk before the fruit store, Mario gazed through the big window at Michelena. There was fine opportunity to feast his eyes before entering, for she was weighing grapes for a customer, evidently an American gentleman, who seemed to be an acquaintance of Michelena's from the easy familiarity of his pose as he leaned upon the counter and smiled up at her. When he playfully caught hold of her hand together with the bag as she handed it to him, she,



with mock anger, threatened him with an uplifted finger shaken under his nose. Just then she glanced toward the window and saw Mario, who, finding himself discovered, bounded joyfully inside the door. He bowed low to the stranger, who was departing, and then, with his snowy teeth revealed in a wide smile, greeted his lady.

"How you do, Michelena?"

"Lo, Mario."

As she spoke, something warned Mario that she was not as glad to welcome him as he was to greet her. He was convinced that this was true when she added:

"You know better than to call me Michelena before my friends! Wop name, Guinea name! My name's Lena now, an' you know it."

Mario's face lengthened, "I forchet," he murmured; then—"Who your frien,' Lena?" he inquired, motioning toward the door.

"Him? Oh, I don't know. He comes in here lotta times to buy stuff." She bit her words off with quick snips, like cutting thread. This was a new and strange Michelena. Mario was dumbfounded at such a reception.

"You little ug' tonight," he ventured playfully.

"I guess you'd be ugly if you'd worked in this hot store all afternoon like I have. My Gosh! I guess you would." She twitched at the pearl beads about her throat, and, clicking across the floor on the spike heels of her red slippers, she stood, back to Mario, in the open doorway, fanning herself with her handkerchief.

At once Mario became contrite. Doubtless the poor girl was nearly dead with the heat. He crossed over to her and caught her hand in his hot, moist grasp.

"Poor Mich—poor Lena. How mooch longer you gotta stay?"

"Till pop comes, pretty soon now."

"A' right." Mario was inwardly delighted that for a few minutes he might have her to himself.

"Michelena, I got something to tell you. Some good forch w'at I got."

She suffered him to lead her to where some boxes stood near the back wall of the store, and the two sat down. He did not know she acquiesced because she did not want people to pass and see her being pawed by a dago.

"You better hurry up if you want to tell me anything." She pulled at the flounces of her blue and gold silk dress in an uneasy manner. "I got a date at eight o'clock, an' I gotta get home and eat my supper first and dress."

Mario's eyebrows lifted. "Date!" he repeated; "You aint got no date *tonight!* Don't you got my letter, Michelena?"

"I got a letter; I didn't know what it was about,—much of it. Why didn't you keep on goin' to night school?"

The words gashed him like stiletto points. His fingers tightened on the poem that burned in his pocket. He strove valiantly to steady his senses. Maybe she was just giving him advice from kindness of heart, but Mario, though he burned with shame to admit even to himself that the queen could do wrong, suspected that she was lying and for some incomprehensible reason wanted to hurt his feelings beside. He made another effort to get at the root of things.

"Who you got a date weeth, Michelena?"

"Tommy Brackett; the new Casino is openin' up tonight. It's goin' to be swell."

"Tommy Brackett?" Mario pondered the name. "I don't know dees Tommy. He Americano feller?"



"Sure, you know who Tommy is. He used to be Tony Bracci. His old man's M. Bracci, the contractor."

Mario drew a long breath of relief. The pangs of jealousy subsided. Michelena could not possibly feel any serious interest in him.

"I know who you mean, a kinda fat complexioned feller weeth a nose like a goat w'at eat grass."

Instantly Michelena flared in defense.

"I'll thank you not to speak of my gentleman friend that way," she warned him; "Tommy's a swell fella."

"Wat friend?" He repeated blankly; then, as the force of the situation overcame him—"Michelena, you like—you like dees Tommy better as me? I s'pose," his voice broke in a squeak, "I s'pose I been you first heart fren' ever sens you dees beeg." He measured a height with his hand. "Ain' I been comin' to see you ev' Sunday, all day, an' fore I go leev Jersey ev' Satta day and sometime Wennessday? Dees night I come ask you papa to make marritch weeth you. I don't ask you 'fore, Michelena, for cause I don't got no mon' to spik weeth. Now I got dees good forch' I come fast. I got—I got—" He flapped his hands up and down with a passionate, appealing gesture. Michelena checked him from further volubility by gripping his arm tightly with tense, sharply-nailed fingers. She put her face close to his.

"I guess I got fortune, too," she shrilled at him; "Ain't Tommy's father got the most money of any fella in his set? Ain't Tommy got a swell new car all his own, and didn't he graduate from business school? That fella's got education, he has; I ain't got to be ashamed of Tommy *anywhere*. I'm going to keep a maid after we're—after we're married."

"Marrit!" Mario groaned, a deep full-throated groan, verging closely on a bellow. Tears began dripping down his cheeks.

"Married? yes! The way you talk you act like a girl aint got a right to marry anybody but you. S'pose you did come around two-three times a week, can't a girl speak to more'n one fella at once? Gee whiz! I ain't goin' to stick around this joint all my young life sellin' bananas. Nix on the fruit game. And I aint goin' to marry no man that'll make a scrub woman outer me, either. Don't kid yourself. I want made for a poor man's wife to have always to be stick-in' around the house scrub, scrub, scrub!" She paused for lack of breath and looked defiantly at Mario. The genuine distress in his face softened her somewhat. She liked Mario for all his uncouth "dago" ways, which seemed the more conspicuous now that she had Tommy for comparison, and she was sorry to cause him unnecessary pain.

"Gee," she said, "Don't be a baby, Mario. There's lots of swell girls you c'n get, probably. There's no use bawlin' over it. Girls like Carmelita, only not dumb, of course, who're satisfied to be always work-in'."

Mario was not to be comforted. He could hear her voice going on and on in a meaningless jangle, but he knew now that all his dreams had come to an end. The rainbow that had been around his shoulder all day had evaporated in thin air. He was not Mario Romano, near-American, who had that day rejoiced because he was now a man with money which his new job had brought him, money wherewith to establish for himself a home and—and—. The Mario who had been impatient for night to come, night that had brought him *this*.



So that was the way that Michelena had thought of him all along. "Ashamed!" "No need to be ashamed of *him*," she had said, speaking of Tommy. He had never doubted that she was as fond of him as he was of her; he had expected that she understood everything, and, when he spoke, she would accept his all with joy. "*Pazzo*," he murmured sadly, referring to his own mental state. "*Pazzo per amo*."

He was conscious that she had ceased to talk at last and was moving across the floor away from him; that the light of the doorway was momentarily darkened by her passing through it and re-darkened by the entering of a man. Uncle Pietro it was, who saluted him cordially in English. Even Uncle Pietro seldom lapsed into his native tongue any more so Americanized he had become.

"Hello, Mario, how's you?"

Mario choked back a lump fully as big as an onion. "Not very good but pretty good," he answered.

He was conscious that Uncle Pietro was staring at him curiously. He felt it his duty to make some sort of explanation. Accordingly he jerked his head in the general direction of Michelena's departure.

"She mad about me," he told him and headed for the doorway but stopped to shake the astonished man's hand solemnly. "All good hearts can't been happy," he informed him and was gone.

At first Mario thought of the river and made his way three blocks in that direction. It would be a quick ending of his miserable existence. Then, suddenly the idea occurred to him it would be no more than proper that Michelena should share, if only by observation, his tragic finish. Perhaps he had better go back to the Romano tenement and there on the

doorstep, where her feet must pass in and out each day over the gory stains, cut his throat the while he called her name. He took out his knife and rubbed his thumb experimentally along the edge of the blade. It was not very sharp. He replaced it in his pocket.

At length he decided what he must do and began to retrace his steps. He would climb to the very top of Braggiotti's fire-escape directly across the street and after waiting until Michelena came forth to ride away with the despicable Tony hurl himself downward at their very feet. That would indeed be the ideal dramatic climax to his career.

When he was within a block of her home, he met the pair riding away together. Though he swung his hat and shouted, they did not see him. He stood for a moment perplexed, then sauntered onward until he stood across the street and looked up at the windows of the Romano home. He wondered what excuse Michelena had given because he had not returned with her and if Carmelita and the children would like Tony as well for their brother as they would like him.

Mario turned sadly away. It would better be the river after all but not quite yet. It was still only faintly dusk. He would walk about a little first, walk until the night deepened and the number of people abroad had lessened, for he did not wish to plunge into his chosen grave before an audience and be fished ingloriously out only half drowned. Even when night had closed down and Mario had returned to the river bank, he walked up and down for some time. The water was inky-looking save where reflected lights laced it with fiery ripples. Mario removed his hat and hung it on a convenient post. He felt in the pocket of his trousers for the poem, brought it forth, and, searching



up and down the side of the post for a nail which he felt sure would be there, found one and thrust the sheet of paper upon it. That would be enough. The hat, still with its red geranium blossom, and the poem inscribed "To Michelena" would tell the story when the police came next morning. He tightened his belt another hole and sat down on the ground to gloat on the tragedy of it; Michelena would tear her pretty hair and scream, and his uncle and aunt would have to look after all his business affairs. As for Carmelita—he thought again of Carmelita so like the women back home but whose lips were always sealed in silence. He sighed deeply. "Poor Carmelita, poor girl! Still," he reflected, "after all there is something in being a *muta*," a wife—a woman, that is, who is such could never grow into a scold; never meet him at the door when he came in at night dog-tired and hungry with something of which to complain upon her lips. He suddenly remembered his lack of supper. Perhaps that awful feeling gnawing at his stomach might not come from his aching heart altogether. His thoughts turned again Carmelita-ward; Carmelita at her macaroni making, Carmelita who was satisfied to be always working.

Something fluttered close at hand. Startled from his meditations, he turned his head. It was the paper on which his poem was written, moving in the river breeze. He rose to his feet and removed it. Striking a match, he read his composition over. It seemed a rather nice poem after all, much too nice to waste. He smoothed it carefully where the rusty nail head had punctured it but could not repair the damage to its facial appearance. Anyway, it would have to be recopied if he used it again—recopied and the name changed. He folded it carefully and put it in his pocket.

## RUINS

FRANK DOGGETT

THREE centuries went breathing through this grass,  
 Three grasping races stumbled here and fell,  
 And what their fingers hold the roots can tell.  
 Palmettoes broke Toledo blades like glass,  
 And Spanish stones forgot the latin mass.  
 The wind has blown away the villanelle.  
 The bitter rain has healed an English well,  
 And stars have melted down the years of brass.

And those who came in mail to glitter there,  
 They have no hearth, they have no gothic eaves.  
 For restless priests, for instruments of peace,  
 The wind and grass will say a sudden prayer.  
 A wooden cross that crumbled into leaves,  
 This earth has dreamed into a green release.

## FEAR

WENZEL L. BROWN

I AM trying to find myself in a city of lost men,  
 Searching each face,  
 Hoping that it may be my own,  
 Wandering, wandering, looking for a song,  
 And finding it  
 On every man's lips—  
 Except my own.



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## THE FLAMINGO

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### EDITORIAL NOTES

*Frank Doggett, a senior at Rollins, has recently published a book under the title Dipped in Sky. This book was published by Longmans, Green & Co., and is a critical study of Percy MacKaye's Kentucky Mountain works.*

*Christy MacKaye, a former Rollins student, has had accepted, for publication, by Harper & Brothers, a book of poems to be brought out next April. The introduction of this book is by Edwin Arlington Robinson, which is a unique distinction as no other living author has been so favored by Mr. Robinson.*

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