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Flamingo

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PREFACE

Quicquid agunt homines . . . nostri farrago libelli

Juv., Sat. I, 85, 86

Whate'er men do, or say, or think, or dream,

Our motley paper seizes for its theme.

Pope

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*The Many Phases
of
Angela Thirkell*



TO BE PRESENTED IN APRIL:
THE ANGELA THIRKELL
LITERARY AWARD



PROSE

THE CRIMINAL

I

I lived in the city, and the city's confusion and desolation lived in me. The city seemed to have been constructed solely for my chastisement. I was lost in it, as though in a labyrinth, without an Ariadne, and all the faces with eyes askew which swirled around me knowing only their own directions seemed to me alien, almost hostile and mocking. Such creatures, I thought, surely have thoughts much different from mine. It seemed impossible that there was anywhere for me to go, and equally impossible to remain. So I kept moving within my confinement. I had to keep moving or die. Always I traversed the same streets, searched the same corridors, looking for a magic door, or at least a nepenthe or soma, or a word of beauty, or simply a person so wonderful that wonder would give me meaning. I was trapped in a place that was wrong for me, and suspected that no place was right. So I was like a moth, frantically rushing against windows, no, against opaque walls where windows ought to be which did not even reveal a glimpse of an outside world, in a vain attempt to shatter the utter impassivity of stone. I was abandoned. I had seemed to have relinquished my future, and was engaged in a frenzy which recognized no tomorrows. I was one of the dispossessed. There were times, as I walked the confused streets, that the city seemed to metamorphosize into a sort of terrifying, chaotic circus, a three-ring nightmare filled with faces warped into leers and unreal, as if the faces of evil clowns, or as if one person were superimposed over another. The entire panorama took on the character of the huge glass windows, in which I could see the mixing of two worlds, the outer shown in transparent reflections floating in the inner dimension of solid objects—the absurdity of men in mid-air—the character of an elaborate mechanical toy gone wild, or an impossible construction composed on a purely atonal aesthetic. It was a strange metropolis of stark aridity, cruelly indifferent buildings, and people too preoccupied with their own demons to notice the hugeness looming over them.

The stale tastelessness of my days was lived through in two dismal tenebrous rooms behind whose grey facades lurked loathsome creatures of darkness, in streets sprinkled and bespattered with litter, in a maze of humanity, and in depressing corners of the teeming, moldering city. I suffered under the burden of the present; carrying its heavy weight like an iron sphere I progressed one step at a time, and like Atlas could not put it down. One need not worry about Atlas; if he attempts to set the world down, he will be crushed beneath it.

Upon awakening in the morning I would realize how superfluous, how accidental I was.

The merciless indifference of Time was a circumstance which impelled me towards desperate actions.

II

Such was my state of mind when I planned my first crime. It was not so much the need for money which turned me towards such an act as my fascination with the act itself. My mind was haunted by the ghosts of possible crimes. I was obsessed. I wanted to make a definite and conclusive step in my struggle with the world, to adopt an unequivocal stance toward my torment.

It was to be an act of revenge on the world which would supply me with something to replace what the world had denied me. I revelled in the idea of becoming a creature of darkness: let the world cast me out, I said to myself, I shall not then obey its commands.

I wanted to perform some simple crime first, to test my own feelings; one which would not involve much profit, but which would likewise involve little risk. Seeing around me how little care people take as to their own protection, I quickly found such a circumstance as I desired.

There is a park on the Henry River called Plaza Park; here late at night would lovers come, to be alone with one another and enjoy the coolness and beauty of the place. It was totally neglected at night except by those mostly adolescent pairs of romantics who would stroll and kiss beside the river. If I were to come upon two of them alone, and I were to be armed, they would be completely at my mercy; nor would pursuit be feasible in that area. I would simply disappear into darkness, and soon be at my nearby rooms. I could never be caught; for who was to suspect me and bring me to attention among hundreds of thousands of people?

To this place, then, I went on the night I had appointed for myself. In the center of the park was a statue, a powerful angel arising out of a turbulent globe seemingly supported above the fountain not by its stone base but by the broad, strong wings of this somehow human creature envisioned from the divine spheres. I had been to this place in the winter, when the unbroken whiteness and stillness of snow had made it holy; now a different, almost foreboding, but no less pervasive holiness had permeated the green archways and the grey disintegrating mists through which the lights diffused into hovering ghosts, and spread over the brooding river which formed the extremity of the park. I was not insensitive to the statue's mysterious, inanimate but somehow sentient beauty which dominated the entire area, as though by the aura of stone. Perhaps there was a soul imprisoned inside, forever straining in motionlessness.

I leaned above the water on an ornate barrier with miniature cement Corinthian columns. The river was the color of stone, a tossing reflection of the dismal, near sky in which not a star shone. Into these disturbed waters I threw my thoughts, and awaited my opportunity.

As the number of people in the park quickly dwindled, a great warmth seemed to grow in my chest. The act was preparing itself. I would feel excited, then suddenly become incredibly calm. Over and over I created imaginary thefts, thousands of variations with an entire future attached to each of them. My invisible crowd of victims huddled in terror, suspended above the tongues of the river.

At last there were only four people left; I had only to wait until one couple left. Fate would choose my victims. Imagine my surprise when one couple joined the other and they all left together! A chance happening had caused all my imagining in all its intricate detail to crumble; when reality had shown the smallest part of my dream false, all of it began to fall away. And then and there I might, on account of this slight chance, have given up the idea of crime altogether had not fate again intervened.

I was crushed. I stood there totally discomposed by the mishap. This hesitation was to prove fraught with consequences. I became angry, there

was an unknown malfunction, a disturbance in the mechanism of my soul. A thousand outrages returned to taunt the suffering and cheated heart; every ignominious act, every pain inflicted in the night, every unkind word or glance, every slight from those who pass in the street, was compounded; all of my small pains gathered themselves within me into one tiny solid ball heavier than the earth. I was on the point of rushing away in a frenzy, toward drunkenness and forgetfulness, or perhaps some act of violence inflicted on myself.

Just at that moment, however, I caught sight of two more people entering the park. For what seemed a long time I was still, without thought, without volition, watching them as they stood tenderly together overlooking the cold grey river.

Then I was filled with aether; at last I could see what would happen, and so was drawn irresistibly towards it. I imagined an event which I therefore thought was inevitable. I felt light, uplifted, almost floating.

I began to walk towards them, as if strolling in the breeze. Inside my coat I felt the large knife, a bayonet, a formidable weapon. I seemed apart, watching my own action and almost powerless to influence it, as though an unknown part of me had seized control of my body.

There could be no problem. He was thin and did not look strong; and with their attention so engaged by the spectacle of the bright lights across the water, the surprise would be complete. I walked up behind them, and putting the point of my weapon against his back, said "Don't move."

They did not start, or even become rigid with surprise. They were very relaxed. They really didn't seem to realize anything was happening.

"Can I turn around?" he asked.

"No!" I said cruelly, giving myself more courage.

I took his wallet from his back pocket with my left hand while keeping the knife at his back. I took out the green bills. There were only three dollars. I stuffed them in my pocket. In the meantime I had taken the knife off his back. They turned around. He had one of those faces which cannot be looked at directly. I dropped the wallet at his feet.

"Haven't you got any more?"

He reached in his pocket and pulled out a few coins. I took them from his hand. His smile was almost ironic. There were thirty-three cents.

"You haven't been a thief very long, have you?"

"Shut up."

There was nothing else to be done, so I walked away. I felt as though I were neglecting something, leaving out part of the ritual, that something more should be done. I felt completely out of place. It had not at all been as I had imagined it. My victim had known of my inexperience just by looking at me. He had known that if challenged I would not have been able to use my weapon; but he was too scornful of me even to bother with resisting. Somehow I felt as if he were the victor, and I the victim. I was especially irritated at the thought of my knife; for I knew now that its use was a theatrical gesture only, a ridiculous dramatization, and that for such purposes as these it was not really efficient. No real thief would have used it. I looked back. He picked up his wallet, put it back in his pocket, and then those two together turned back towards the river, seemingly undisturbed. They did not even leave. I brooded.

I walked for an interminable time, since in the rhythm of movement all time but the present became extinct. There was only my presence, unthinking, receiving impressions without interest, dimly imagining incredible futures, within the dull despair of my insignificance, sorrow, and disorder. Traversing angry streets, tempting the gods of automobiles to strike me down, through the dizzy confusion of nightlights and tall swaying buildings I wound the thread of my wanderings to Val's Place, the wild bar on Tompkins Street. Then my indifference to my surroundings ceased. As I approached, I was pulled out of the silence and into the maddening, frenzied rhythm of the midnight revels. Despite myself, I responded; my footsteps fell into time. I entered, pushing through the gyrating crowd. Near the back I saw Sheldon Carter, tall, lean, and tough Sheldon, who had just sat down at a table. I joined him, and we began to swallow beers as the crowd agitated itself around us in rhythm with the great, reverberating, unifying blare of the bright juke box; sad and sudden chords, pathetic tears of sound noticed only by me, mingled with the heavy and quick rhythms of drum or guitar, horn or voice or strings, jerking through the tight and smoke-laden air.

“you can't hold the world up all alone . . .
you can't hold the world up all alone . . .”

refrained the song.

I had seemed to have forgotten what had happened. It had hidden itself deep inside me, where I did not know what was being prepared. I lost myself in the sound and the sights so changed by alcohol.

Rocco Vanzetti was there too, wild Rocco, the thin and bearded ascetic-looking head with his large, lively idiot eyes, who even as he danced shouted at us over the tumult of the chaotic crowd and the machine's organized destruction of silence.

After a while I noticed how high I was becoming, dizzy and excited; Sheldon's words became almost detached objects. All my tension released itself; I became quite silly, talking too much and doing silly things. Sheldon must have noticed how agitated I was, for he asked me if anything was the matter. “Were you drinking before you came here?” he asked, for he knew I had not drank enough beer to put me in the condition in which I seemed.

“Why are drunk people always very happy or very sad?” said Rocco as the crowd pulled him away, drunk Rocco who wasn't even listening to us but had been babbling incoherently to himself under the misconception that we were listening.

I became suddenly quite grave. After an ominous silence, melodramatically and with an impressive, desolate air I brought the huge knife out of my coat.

“What the hell is that?” said Sheldon.

“An instrument of degradation,” I replied.

“Die pie—morrow sorrow—if wif,” threw in Rocco as the crowd playfully pulled him away on another circumnavigation of the room. He flipped a cigarette into the air, and with the luck of drunkenness caught it in his lips, lit it, and vanished from sight.

I began to feel a little silly for trying to be so solemn, dramatic, and profound while surrounded by such an ecstatic and undulating crowd. I felt suddenly cheap and phony. I conceived of the total lack of justification for me, for my very being.

All of the shame of the pettiness of my crime returned to me. Once again I heard my victim's taunt, repeated, magnified. I felt misused. All that had been accumulating within me gathered together. An incomprehensible storm broke within me. "I'm a thief! A thief!" I shouted suddenly, unexpected even to myself, pulling the tainted, hateful money from my pocket and hurling it into the crowd.

A few people stared at me. Others picked up the money. But almost everyone did not notice the disturbance.

Sheldon looked at me with large stunned eyes and wonder on his face.

"Hey, Rocco," shouted someone, "why do people talk about sad things?"

"Maybe they're afraid of being happy," shouted back an invisible Rocco.

"Thief! Thief! Thief! How does it feel to sit by a thief!" I shouted.

"Calm down, be quiet, you're making a fool of yourself," said Sheldon. "Why the hell are you so bothered?"

I began to beat the handle of the knife on the table. My entire aspect was agitated; I must have appeared to be in some physical pain.

"Hey, do you want some coffee?" Sheldon paused. "Do you want to go home?" He paused again. I did not answer. "You just drank too much, that's all."

A huge bellow came from Rocco at the other end of the room, as he emerged from a mound of people, then sank back into it and perhaps onto the floor accompanied by great applause.

"They're all a bunch of bastards," I moaned, "all a bunch of goddam bastards, no good bastards, they take everything away the bastards they step on you and don't even care."

Sheldon must have seen something menacing in my visage, for he took the knife from my hand. "Come on now, it's all right," he said. "Rocco and I will take you home. We'll fix you up."

Now my anger turned on Sheldon. "Damn it, leave me alone! I'm not drunk. Don't you see? You're just like everybody else. You don't understand, you don't understand nothing."

Then I somehow peered beneath my drunkenness, through the dizziness and artificial excitement. There was something deep in my consciousness lucid and calm which I had seemed to have forgotten, betrayed, and covered with the actor's mask. I saw how I was debasing myself even further. I was ashamed of my false self, and sank into a deep depression. I seemed shallow to myself. I was devastated, silent, motionless, burning inside my own turmoiled soul. I was unable to speak, or even move, from all that was passing through my mind. Then my mind was blank, only possessed by a demonic urge and a black pain. I suddenly knew that I had to go away, to get out of there at once. Sheldon was too confused to move. I stood up, turned around, and began to sob as I pushed and stumbled ridiculously through the mannikin-like crowd. Someone asked me if anything was the matter, and several people were staring at me, but Rocco, roaring drunk, left off his babbling to come over and clear a way for me, saying, "It's alright, he's m'friend, he's just a little drunk, let him through."

Then I rushed out into the pulsating city, where the confused lights and jeering faces spun around me, whirled suddenly, and with anguished eyes confronted my own ghost confined in a prison of glass, attempting to reach me through the pitiless barrier of the window."

DONALD R. JAMES

The house attracted my attention partly because it was painted luminous orange, and partly because of the sign that sat on the roof. It ran the full length of the house, and was about five feet high. It said: OPENED HOUSE.

I parked my car and waded through the moat to get a closer look. I walked around to the back of the house, or where the back was supposed to be, and stopped. I looked all around, only to find myself in an empty lot. No house, no moat, even my car was gone. When I reached the front of the house again, everything reappeared. I repeated this walking back and forth several times before I decided to give up in case of utter confusion.

I stood at the front door and knocked sixty-nine times, as I was instructed to do by the vibrating sign. Then I opened the door and was immediately engulfed in the party. There were all kinds of people there, and they all had one black eye and were smoking Tareytons. All except for one fellow. He had two black eyes, a broken and bleeding nose, and a tattered sign that said he didn't smoke.

I followed the arrows on the floor to a doorway on my left. It was a large door, but I managed to stretch myself enough to fit through it.

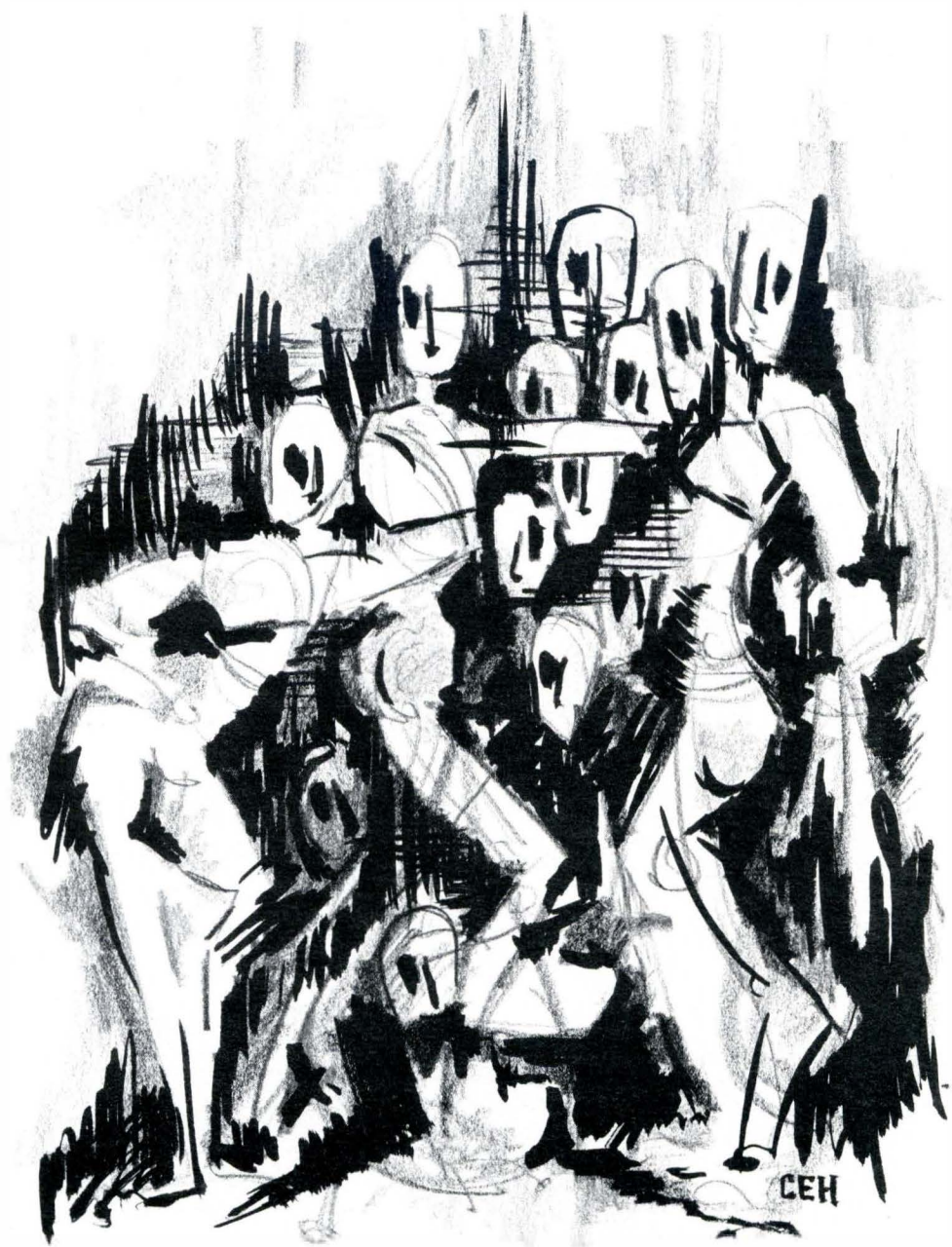
I closed the door and stood there, the waves lapping at my feet, and watched the swimmer come in. She was finishing the last leg of her cross-Atlantic swim. I helped her to her feet as she came up on shore. She said she was Warra Monger from Blevue, New Jersey. I tried to kiss her, but when she opened her mouth, a cannon came out and shot off my left ear lobe. I turned and opened the door and ran back into the party; I thought.

There was a little room with a man sitting on a toilet and turning the light on and off. I asked him why he was doing it, and he said it was for his mother out in Blevue. She was a swimmer. He said she was under a new training program, and soon she would be as explosive as an atomic bomb. When I told him that I was very anxious to leave, he unscrewed the light bulb and inserted it in his mouth. There was a blinding flash that sent me staggering back through the doorway.

Fred Lorenzen pulled into the pit in his Ford G.T. and told me he needed gas and a new right front tire. I changed the tire as fast as I could (I found a spare in my back pocket) and started to fill the gas tank. He said I was too slow. He took a few swallows of gas and climbed back into the car. He was sitting backwards when he lit a match near his mouth. As the flames came shooting out, the car slowly roared out of the pit. Once again, I staggered through the doorway.

She was beautiful, standing there in the bright pink bedroom. Beautiful from her chin down. Her exposed body was something that most men dream about. When I finally lifted my eyes up to her face, there was nothing to see; no eyes, no mouth, no nose — just a perfectly blank face. Her voice came from . . . from somewhere on herself, and asked if I was there for my thrill. I wondered why she asked. She said that is what Mr. Everyman wanted. I asked what happened to her face. She said it served no purpose in her business. I pushed a silver dollar into her navel, and she went over and lay on the bed. I ran out, not bothering to open the door.

I was instantly shoved to the back of the elevator, and I landed full-force against the window. Actually, the whole elevator was made of glass. I looked all around, but saw no building. There was just this elevator in the middle of an open field.



The operator announced the nineteenth floor, and several Stones went rolling out. They went a few feet and then disappeared. I waited for two more floors to go by, and then got out so I could buy a new ear lobe (anything can be bought for a price). I didn't disappear. I fell.

I was tumbling head over heels, and my life was going through my mind in the same fashion. I took out a cigarette and temporarily died of lung cancer.

I did a back flip with three full twists, waved to the crowd, and then landed in the kiddie-pool. I got out on the grass, said a prayer, and completely drip-dried in three minutes.

My car was across the street, but it was slowly being transformed into a tank. The orange house had burned to the ground. All that was left was part of the sign that had been sitting on the roof. The word OPENED was flickering on and off in a display of brilliant colors. The firemen were out in the street laughing and spraying each other with their hoses.

I walked to the corner, pushed the WALK button for good luck, and took a red, white and blue bus to mother's house and some good apple pie.

N. DIENER



ON VACATION

The snow helped Marian sweep herself into the busy marble first floor of the department store. It was teeming with bright coats and lights and faces and the dripping feet of everybody returning Christmas gifts. She took a crowded elevator to the third floor and went to the back of the furniture section. There she walked towards a young man who was standing alone and watching her, shuffling from foot to foot and waiting to offer his aid.

"Can I help you?" he said as she came up to him.

"Yes," she said, putting her purse on a table and unbuttoning her big coat and putting her hands into its big side pockets. "I was in here around Thanksgiving and was looking at a big French lampshade. I said I wasn't sure —"

"I know the one," he said, raising his finger and moving backwards. "Right here."

Her eyes brightened as she scanned over to where he was pointing. "Yes, that's it, that's the one I want. How much was it?"

He had back-pedalled to the table the lamp and shade were on, and was reading the shade's ticket. "A lot," he smiled. "What sort of lamp was it for?"

She warmed to his protective inquest. "Oh I'm sure it's what I want. I don't remember if it was you I talked to —"

"I don't remember —"

“— but, you see I live in this furnished apartment and I’ve *finally* decided to get something really nice and permanent to — you know, decorate the place with.”

“I guess you can always take it with you — I mean, if you get an unfurnished apartment — if you’re starting to think in these terms.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, I mean, if you’re getting permanent stuff you’ll soon want it all permanent — I mean a — well, I guess this is for you, and it *is* expensive, and, you know, if you’re getting married or anything, you know — I don’t know if a guy would like this, well, this *French* kind of pattern.”

She withstood his prying consideration with magnanimity and then patiently said, feeling with her thumb the naked, unbanded finger of her pocketed left hand, “Well, let’s just say I’m sure this is what I want. Please wrap it and charge it. Here.” She bent over and withdrew her hand and took her wallet out of her purse. Straightening, she withdrew her charge plate and handed it to him.

“O. K.,” he said, “I’ll get one out of stock. I think we only have those two. You don’t want Christmas paper, do you?”

“No.”

Soon he returned and smiled, handing her her charge plate and a big box, wrapped in gay paper on which were little sections which said, “A Fine Lamp in Your Window Keeps Strangers Out and Invites Your Friends In — Mandell’s Lamp and Shade Department.”

As Marian walked into her apartment and put down the package and her purse and took off her coat she was thinking about the salesman and about her future and her decision to spend so much money on a piece of furniture. She had never done so before, through school or in the ten years since. She straightened some books and sat down and started to unwrap the package.

And yet that eager salesman had forced himself into the mechanism operating on a year’s momentum and at the key moment had — well, like now, had caused her to reflect, to reconsider.

Oh for God’s sake the fool had given her the wrong one — a green and red striped one no less. Damn, she had been so ready for relief in the excitement of seeing her beautiful shade and toying with it and putting it on. Oh damn, hell, damn. She gently laid the shade aside and looked at the bare-bulbed lamp from which she had taken the hopelessly inadequate shade which had come with the apartment.

It was vacation. She was tired of reading, and she knew that television’s emptiness at this hour would swing even wider the door opening once again on her inadequacy and frustration.

She sat with her hands in her lap, looking around the room. She shook her head very slowly back and forth and then squeezed her eyes shut to make the welling tears fall. Then she wiped them away and tried to snifle, drew her mouth into a disdainful scowl, and shook her head again, faster, but it started to bob up and down, slowly at first, then evenly and profoundly, measuring out the three-note phrase she had lately wept when she thought.

“Never had a lover,” she stopped and whispered. She shook her head ‘no’ slowly. Then she slowly bobbed it ‘yes,’ enunciating the idea incredibly over and over, bobbing twice, then three times, “*Never* had a *lover*. *Never had* a *lover* . . .”

She sniffed but her nose was too jammed. She exhaled completely. Forget this, she thought. This is silly. Everything works out. What's to work out? She sighed and chortled and stood up, glancing at her bookshelf. My interests. New Year's Eve. She put her hands on her opposite shoulders and shrunk in, straining, relieving her tension as if by stretching. She wished she were tired.

My interests are not a damn nough, she nodded, welling up. Enough. Oh damn! Darn! Damn! Oh shit! shit! shit! she wept, turning her head back and forth.

She stopped crying very soon and remained standing in the middle of her room. Just as she was realizing the silence the phone burst in and out of it. She reached out and answered.

"What?" she said wonderingly. "Yes, yes, of course." She hung up and was glad it was too late to reconsider.

The bell rang and she hastened to the door and then paused. She swung it in and there he was, package under one arm, bottle in the other hand; he was beaming. "Happy New Year's!" he caroled. She smiled and stood aside and bid him in. He put the Mandell's box down and set the bottle on the table next to the door.

"I know what this looks like, but — a — let's not think about it. Enjoy, enjoy, I say (as I must say I *have* enjoyed one or two on the hhhhway over here."

"I want to thank you for bringing the shade over," she said smiling directly at him. He turned his back to her and started taking off his overcoat. She helped him.

"Yes, yes, yes," he said, turning around and cutely tipping his head side to side like an electric Santa Claus, guiding his hand out to her, index finger pointed, and pressing it straight into the center of her left breast. As if his target had been an ignition button she spun around and lurched across the room, and bent and glared through him horrified and unbelieving. He closed his eyes blankly and continued to bob.

"One false move . . ." he mumbled to himself with an abandoned snort. Then he lifted his hands to waist height and dropped them. He waited for her scream or her rushing to him. She debated.

Finally he sighed and dropped into a chair. "Let me tell you how I worked this shade deal," he said with desperate good humor and earnestness. She crouched, gripping his coat.

"Pretty slick, yep! Told Mr. Peters I wanted to see if this one (he tapped the box he'd brought in) went with my room. Sure. So I go out with this box, and come back with that one. Peters is sharp (he's our floor manager) but he's not *that* sharp." She eased up a little and felt foolish. "Here, let me set it up —"

"Don't touch that you baboon," she snarled, lowering again. His hand froze over it, and then he withdrew.

She sighed, and rose and walked over opposite him and laid the coat down and sat. "What happened with the plan then?" she said tiredly.

"That was it," he said.

They sat for a long time looking down. She was tired after all. She got up and got the box and opened it and put her shade on the lamp by the far window and then sat down.

He stood up and picked up his coat and looked for a moment at her. "Well, I guess that's your investment in the future," he said, trying at last to be friendly.

"Oh shut up," she said dully.

He stood for a moment, and then chortled once and started for the door.

"Get *out*." She rolled the words off with a twist of her head.

"I am," he smiled maliciously.

"You can — you can bet I'll never be at your store again."

"*My* store?" he laughed. He laughed again and walked out. The door closed all the way, paused, and then slammed violently shut.

Marian sighed, and got up and took his bottle into the kitchen and put it away. She'd have to take the green and red shade back day after tomorrow, or keep it. It was almost midnight. She turned on the television and waited for it to warm up. On ABC Guy Lombardo offered to wait with her. NBC had a re-run of last New Year's Johnny Carson show, and CBS had a panel discussion on the events of the dying year. She turned off the TV and cleared her throat in the quiet room.

JOHN STEIN



HIS MASTER'S GARDEN

Sarah James was bored. Frau Braun had gone to Neustadt for the day and the children were not yet home from school. She thought of going to the kitchen where Frau Leidner busied herself in the afternoon with her tempting pastries. Sarah would lean against the door, light a cigarette and watch the fat cook work, while telling her of big cars, the hunt club, boats on Cape Cod, and homes with blue refrigerators and ovens built into the walls. It amused her to watch Frau Leidner's sad red face, as the simple woman oh'ed and ah'ed, her eyes large at these tales of America. Perhaps if she remembered, Sarah would send her a picture postcard when she returned home, so the poor creature would have something to brag about in the village.

Sarah had been tired of her games with the servants on that particular day, however, and she wandered out through the veranda to the rose garden. It was lush and fragrant with rose-covered trellis arching over the path, extending down to the rich brown soil that was carefully raked and watered each day. She had observed the garden many times from her window, high under the

eaves of the red stone mansion, and had silently verbalized how she would describe it all to her family when she returned to the United States in September. At first she had thought often of home, and of school and her friends, but now, as the language barrier grew smaller everyday, she was enjoying her new position of importance. Sarah had never impressed anyone in her life before she came here; not by her appearance and least of all by anything she had ever had to say. In the small German community of Lambrecht, however, she was always the center of attention. Women would exclaim over the colors she wore which were bright and daring in contrast to the drab greens and browns which they themselves lived in. Nearly every man in the town of Lambrecht worked in Herr Braun's paper factory, and the town was small enough that word of the family visitor had spread. There had never before been an American there and old women would nod and children stared as she passed. She was talked about and envied. It was new to her but she felt surprisingly at home.

She left the roses and ambled across the vast lawn to where the vegetable garden emerged from the shadows below the big house. Christoff Lorenz saw her coming and continued with his work. He wiped the loose soil from the carrots he had just pulled and felt his love for this land which he worked every day. Yes, he loved land. Once he had had a place of his own, before he came here from East Germany with his wife and two daughters, then just babies, twelve years before. He had had land and a good farm, and then one day they had come to him and said it was his no longer. Christoff had been born on that land, and his children after him. His father had worked the soil, as he did also. They had told him that his farm belonged to the State, and he had fled.

He watched the American again. She was at the other end of the garden by the stream, walking absently along, and she would pause occasionally to look or touch the fruit and vegetables on either side of the path. Christoff knew that land was the answer to all. It was because of land ownership that Herr Braun could live in the big house, while Christoff's family must live in the gardener's cottage. He knew a great deal about Sarah James already. Many times he had heard the maids or Herr Heckman, Frau Braun's driver, speak of her. Land meant money and prestige, and it was because of this that the American was a friend of the Braun's and not of Christoff. He wished to God that she were a friend of his. Had he not been a land owner too?

She was still quite a distance from him, but Christoff could see that she was on his path now, walking toward him and the house with small leisurely steps. Just watching her made Christoff feel closer to that country where everyone was rich and there was land for those who wanted it. Sarah was nearer now. She had been aware of him since she turned onto his path, and she had decided that she would nod slightly as she walked past him and perhaps smile; not a big smile, but enough to show him how friendly she was, even to peasants.

Christoff stood up very straight. "Good day, Fraulein James."

Sarah stumbled slightly at the sound of her name but recovered quickly with an awkward smile, while she regarded the man who had spoken to her.

Christoff wet his lips and averted his eyes under the gaze of the American. He wished that he had not been so bold. She looked at him a moment longer and then laughed.

“What is your name?”

Christoff started. He had often imagined how she would sound, but he’d forgotten about the accent. “Herr Lorenz. I am the gardener.”

Sarah wondered that this funny man who stood so erect, and who was dark and weathered, had known her name. But then — of course — they all knew; the whole village knew who she was. There was a silence while she imagined how important this humble man would become when he let it be known that he had spoken to her. The image pleased her and she decided to be nice to him.

She came to the garden several times during the remainder of the summer. Once it was to get vegetables for Frau Braun, but the other times she came to walk. Two or three times she let Christoff follow along and he would listen to stories of a world where every man lived in a big house and had money for race horses and European cruises. Once, when she had been silent for a while, he spoke of his days on the place in East Germany, but she appeared not to have heard him and he was quiet. Sarah was amused by the humility in this man, who always greeted her in such a husky voice, pronouncing James like yams with a long a. She liked the way he watched her when she spoke, clutching his work-gnarled hands together, throating exclamations. She laughed at his dirt-crusted body and the shorts he always wore.

The summer passed and with the end of August came the apple season, and Christoff was busy in the orchards. It was a hot time of the year and he worked in his undershirt. The apples were big this year. He had pampered them with lime and a spray that Herr Braun had purchased in Frankfurt, and they were firm, with few spots. From his perch on the ladder he could see the house and watched as a large Mercedes pulled into the horseshoe drive and stopped in front of the wide staircase. The driver helped them out and Herr Braun and the American entered the massive wooden door.

Christoff tried to imagine himself in their place, but could not. If they had not taken his farm away, if he had worked it all these years, perhaps he too would have had a big car. He turned back to his apple picking. Once he had had apple trees of his own.

Sarah James had a new camera. Herr Braun had accompanied her to Neustadt to make sure that the shopkeeper would not take advantage of his American guest. Sarah had not intended to spend very much. They had seen her camera shortly after entering the shop. Herr Braun had admired it but upon hearing that it was four hundred marks, he had asked the men to bring something less expensive. Now, back at the house, Sarah examined the camera. Yes, she had had to buy it. One hundred dollars was a lot to spend for one who knew as little as she did about photography, but hadn’t the man stressed the features of automatic filters and adjustments? He had said that anyone could operate it. She had already been to the kitchen to show Frau Leidner.

The simple woman was duly impressed and Sarah was satisfied with her new toy. Holding the camera in one hand and the instruction booklet in the other, she headed for the garden. From there she would get the best view of the house.

When she reached the garden, Sarah carefully read the instructions and took several of what she considered to be dramatic pictures of the mansion, with its gables and turrets silhouetted against the blue sky. She noticed Christoff at the end of the garden, emptying one of his bushels of apples into a wheel barrow. As she watched him it occurred to her how quaint it would be if she took a picture of him back to the States. How her friends would laugh at the sight of this shorts-clad funny man with his apples, and she could make up something about him so that he would sound exciting. She was smiling as she approached him but she refrained from laughing aloud. Christoff had seen her and stood by his ladder.

Sarah wanted the picture to be good. She moved closer to him and gave him her best smile. "Herr Lorenz, have come all the way out here to take your picture." In her amusement at his appearance she felt generous. "I could not leave Germany without a picture of my good friend, could I?"

Christoff Lorenz listened and he smiled, and he could feel the sun-worn skin tighten across his brown face. He was proud, and he could say nothing. He carefully selected a big apple and stepped back under the tree to pose for his picture. She was his friend; she had understood. He reached out and put his hand against the trunk of the tree, the tree that he had fed and watched grow; the tree that he had made strong.

* * *

When he entered the small house his wife was at the stove and its warmth and the smell of cooking meat filled the large room. One of the girls worked at the stone sink but she stood aside for her father to wash his hands and his face. The other busied herself spreading one of the immaculate, carefully ironed dark cloths they used in the evening, over the knife-scarred wooden table. Christoff walked across the room and stood by the window. None of them had noticed the new sureness of his steps, the pride in his carriage, and he was glad. He would tell them what had happened when they were all sitting together and all eyes were on him. He sat down. It was the only cloth-covered chair in the room and this was where Frau Braun would sit on those seldom visits when she came to give instructions or bring a soup when one of them was sick. He knew that he would get it dirty, that he should not sit there in his shorts covered with the dust and dirt from the garden, but on this night he would not mind his wife's scoldings.

RUTH A. LOESSEL





PLAYMATES

Two little boys sit side by side on a curb and dam the mighty gutter river with their sneakers. Two dirty faces resting on four dirty hands, propped up by the elbows on threadbare jeans.

"Hey, Herby."

"Yeah, whatcha want, Gerald?"

"Nice day, ain't it?"

"Aah."

"Well, I think it's a nice day, anyway."

"Yeah, I guess it's a nice day."

"Hey, Herby."

"Yeah, Gerald."

"What're we gonna do today?"

"How come I always gotta be the one that figures out what we're gonna do, huh?"

"'Cause."

"'Cause why?"

"Jus' 'cause."

"'Cause *why*?"

"Awright, 'cause I'm stoopid."

Two legs whistle by, bound firmly by supportive hose.

"Hey, Herby."

"Yeah?"

"How come that lady's so fat?"

"Lotsa people're fat."

"Yeah, but not funny fat, like her."

"I think it's maybe 'cause she's gonna have a kid."

"How come ladies get so fat when they're gonna have kids, Herby?"

"'Cause they eat alot, stoopid."

"Oh."

"Boy, you don't know *anything*, do ya?"

"Guess not."

A silver streak roars across the sky.

"Hey, Herby, wouldn't ya like to be a airplane when ya grow up?"

"Oh, boy, Gerald, that's about the dummiest thing ya ever said in ya whole life!"

"How come?"

"'Cause ya can't grow up t' be a airplane, ya gotto grow up t' be a grown-up."

"Oh . . . Hey, Herby, how come yaw so smart alla time?"

"I tol' ya a millyun times, Gerald, it's 'cause my Pop works down at the school."

"What's he do at the school, Herby?"

"I think he sweeps it or sumpin'."

"Oh, yeah? Well, *my* Pop's a famous television star."

"Oh, yeah? How come yesterday you tol' me he was the Prezenunt?"

"'Cause he is. One of 'em's jus' a hobby."

"Which one?"

"I dunno. Prezenunt, I guess."

"Hey, Gerald, how come I ain't never seen ya Pop?"

"'Cause he's busy alla time."

"Gerald, you ever seen ya Pop?"

"I seen pitchers of 'im."

"Yeah, but you ever seen 'im in real life?"

"Uh uh."

"How come, Gerald?"

"'Cause, like I jus' tol' ya, Mom sez he's busy alla time."

"Hey, Gerald, I bet you ain't even got a Pop."

"Do too."

"Do not."

"Do too!"

"Do not!"

"Liar!"

"I ain't not a liar!"

"Are too."

"Ain't not, ain't not!"

"Are too, are too! An' I ain't gonna play wif ya no more 'cause yer a dirty liar an' yer stoopid too. Gerald iiis stooooopid, Gerald iiis stooooopid, Gerald iiis stooooopid!"

Only one boy sits on the curb now. Little white trails run down the dirty face and lightly salt the great gutter river.

BILL McNULTY

POETRY

hands in the water
shadows white and bended
in the green recurrent flood
veins twisted
pulsing under the wetness
laid on wetness, heat's descent
to rock sparkle rising
from the gurgle
of the emerald seas
embracing the breast
of sand damp and gleaming
pierced by flecked waves
burning bright beneath a lightning
sky; and two hands
pale shadows in the winding
arms of the sea

Out of the dusk the slosh of sinews beating
the water and the gasp of dying breath,
the rattle of the slackened lines ascend
the twilight tunnel of the slumbering gods.
The old man comes stumbling, lantern shaking,
seeking a voice out of the sucking waves:
— Captain, Captain, my body is broken and bleeding,
and life flees away into the brine.
Help me over the gunwale of your long ship. —
— Son, your hand out of the moaning dark,
but no captain I, and this no ship
but a two-masted schooner, a pleasure-boat only,
cut-away and rotting in vagrant seas,
a two-masted schooner adrift and rocking.

Out of the lapping gulf he pulls the stranger,
robbed of youth, the liquid passion lost
in the sighing waters of the darkened sea.
And this one stains the somber deck with blood
and words beneath the silence of heaven:
— We danced, she and I, upon the rocks
that glistened black and brown under the sun.
We joined our hands and waltzed among the waves
dappled and rolling round the stones of yonder
promontory, now thrusting black and puzzling
in the spilt-down coils of writhing night.
But evil came upon us from the gulf,
shuddering and bottle-green, a monster
snaking out of the deep, seething and panting —
— Indeed, he's left you bloody and torn. —
And the old man averts his eyes and whispers,
— And the girl, was the girl devoured? —
— Through bloody eyes I saw her flee, breathless,
in a silent scream onto the glittering beach.
Yet for me she is no more —

And the old man lifts the dreadful corpse
and carries it with aged strength to the stern.
The three-cornered canvas droops as a shroud
in a stillness of distant, weeping stars.

as the girl is dreaming
a memory facedown
in a murky pool, cast-off
vestige of the ebbing tide

hands in the water
settling twisted in the bottom
sand, two hands
in a dream of adoration
whispering within the heavy
hanging silence
where once among the moments
sunlight locked
two hands in flashing wonder
of the water

ROBERT YOUNG



TATOOED WALLS OF SINGING

A short and full tree
With curving and soft branches
That support a mattress of leaves
It is surrounded by high grass
Green and yellow-tipped
Brittle and stiff
Along a fence of two wires
Thick and rusted
Covered by honeysuckle
That divide the tree and field

From the lot of old yellow school buses
And engine-less cars
With windows cracked and destroyed
Two boys climb the fence
And bend the honeysuckle
Sneakers, tight trousers, and sweater
The other is in corduroys
Red shirt and bare feet
The grass around the tree
Toppled by their steps
The one in mourning lights a cigarette
He says that he mourns the world
With "fuck the world" colored on his chest
Done in ball point pen
The red shirted boy is in the tree
A foot resting on a branch
Pushing it to divide the mattress
He takes the cigarette from the other
So that he may climb
They alter the tree's lone serenity
They try to peer over the walls
To see the people
To hear the music
To become a part
They fail
They will not succeed
They jump and again topple the grass
They walk to the widen path
A path made in the field
Many others have trampled this grass
And avoided the tree
The boys walk toward the light
People guard the walls
People lie in the field
Wrapped in blankets and towels
Talk talk or listen
The boys dissolve over the hill
A small hill formed by bushes
The tree is alone with its grass
Away from the people
The widened path and the field
The walls and guards
The lights and music
The honeysuckled wires
The cracked windows and cars
And the rusted yellow school buses

ED WOODYARD

Judgment of Purgatory

He's in a hotel room
Talking with the girl
Who judges boys by their fingernails
And lies on a yellow terry cloth bedspread
Until he joins her
As they will melt into one
To shrink into a glittered poof

They reappear floating down the Nile
On their flesh covered spine
To pass Cleopatra and Marc Anthony
On a silk draped barge

The jungle opens up
To show a blue flagstone walk
They as one
Search and see
The one runs
Through and faster
Naked to the deep green
And to the shallow green

The golden city is on the treed peak
And she runs, runs, runs
For she will never get to her Oz

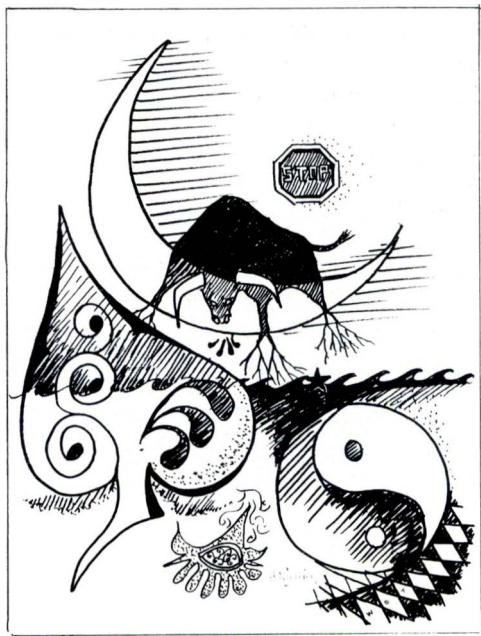
It poofed into a fingernail

ED WOODYARD



let the gypsy man
be your coming in
the wind.
for Icarus watched
the wheeling gulls
with indifferent eyes,
or at most,
with pity.

MARK TUMARKIN



DARLING, *je vous aime beaucoup*

I lie beside you in the wet grass
Of thrush feathers and the brass beat
Of the bass drum turns to silver
In the cool air of the night.

The two-horned bright moon rocks
Across the purple sky among the flocks
Of stars and in the sudden drops
Of stillness I clutch your hand,

And the silence has all the delicacy
Of the winsome spider's web
Strung with dewdrop lights from branch
To morning glory vine at dawn.

Then one thousand heavy-flanked horses
Splinter the shadows foaming and snorting,
Rumbling towards the pale face of day,
And your hand slips away

Quietly, as a tiny, furry animal
Held and fondled, yet still unheeding
Of the human cries, light-foots off
Through the stiff, wet grass into the reeds

Rising frailly at the water's edge,
Then turns in the pointed darkness
And watches unblinking the trembling fingers
Of the tame master of one fragile moment.

ROBERT YOUNG

Mine is a world of resurrected stars,
Where sometime
Is the now of tomorrow
And yesterday
Is the someone of sorrow.
My tears wear smiles,
And all my despair a laughing face.
Emptiness sleeps where joy was born
And the everywhere earth is not enough.
. . . But still I hang the stars each night
And sadly take them down at dawn . . .
Somewhere in this somehow world
There is a Morning Star.
But that's the silent secret . . .
Why does it shine
In your sometime eyes?

PEGGY VAN DYKE

Time was . . .
Some magic spun two lives to one.
Wondering woman's hands
Cradled that bit of gossamer,
And in their woman's way
Tried to shield it from the storm,
To warm it in the sun.

But one day tomorrow comes
And gossamer is tears and mud.

Futile woman's hands,
Plucking at what never was . . .
Scraping up bits of gossamer
To hang like tinsel
On the stars.

PEGGY VAN DYKE

Splendour in the sky . . .
A swallow dips and glides
Unwary.
. . . Wings flung against the glass . . .
Tiny bones and blood . . .
A heap of still-warm feathers . . .
Nothing more.

The answer to your questioning eyes
lies weeping in my heart,
But all the words that I can find
fall like broken sparrows
in the dust.

PEGGY VAN DYKE

Valediction

i

And now, since our interval of love
Has faded out of relative time
Into an endless moment, the blood
Has faltered, grown sullen and restive.
And darker are the shadows beneath
The lotus leaves; the speckled spider
Draws nearer my limp, entangled wings.
The web of dreams no longer brittle
Shatters not on mornings of thick dew.

ii

Dona Jimena, beneath the blue
That arched above Castile, watched her love
Depart, watched him ride into exile.
He placed her person and the daughters
Of their love beneath the cathedral,
Beneath the stone church of cool shadows;
And, on the hot days of heavy dust,
Jimena went unto the altar
In a blue gown, and she was blessed.

iii

Our love was warm and supple like vines
Among the heavy melons. Spring rains
Fell and our passions flowed like water,
Bubbling and muddy on the hill side.
In the hot, hazy spell of summer
And the yellow yearning of autumn
Our flesh remembered flesh, but winter
Blew harder than our sighs at parting,
And our kiss, too, died under the moon.

ROBERT YOUNG



