

# Annual Literary Issue

## The Glenville Mercury

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### Jealous Fruits

By KATHY SMITH

Jo stood looking out the screen door across the wide dandelion-yellow lawn to the barn. Her eyes glittered and she muttered to no one at all, "He's out again—in the barn. He's always in the barn. He said he had to get the milking done, had to ride the hay, had to clean the barn, strain the milk. . . but I don't believe him. He lies. There are women out there, women all over this farm. I see them, see them every day and they'll get him they will; they'll take him away from me. Hussies, whores, I hate them."

She stealthily pushed the door open, pausing to pull the cut screen wider leaving an ugly gap in its rusty grid; she shoved it gently to prevent the usual squeak and then gleefully let it bang behind her. The dog jumped at the unexpected noise, growled at her, and slunk away on its belly, avoiding one of the kicks which it had come to expect from its mistress.

Jo's lips curled as she looked at the brown, bristling back, the plaintive eyes of the little dog. "Bitch," she thought, "damn little bitchy dog. Expecting again." She hated the bulging stomach of the little beagle, hated it. "Kick it, Jo, kick it hard, harder than last time, Jo, harder," the little voice that ruled her mind lately muttered. Suddenly she dashed after the dog clumsy with its pregnancy and let fly with her foot into its belly. The dog whined, and laughing maliciously, her brown eyes dilating, Jo walked on toward the barn.

Slowly, carefully she reached for the entry-door, opened it only the width of her body and glided in. She removed her black Sunday high heels carefully, brushed the sand from them and flung them at the radio Bill kept on a shelf to play for the cows. Calmed their nerves he said. The plastic front of the radio cracked and satisfied she climbed barefoot up the ladder and in a moment was sneaking to the center of the hay-loft to the opening where Bill tossed hay down to feed. Clapping the side of the opening and lying on her stomach she could bend far enough over to get a clear view of the barn below.

It was a clean barn, white-washed, smelling of hay and cows and feed. The sweet overtone of the morning's milk lingered but the cows were gone. She was instantly suspicious. The hired hand had, as usual, taken the cows to pasture, but where was Bill? "He's with some woman. No, more than one. One was never enough. He's with all those women back on the hill in that shack where Mikey wants to camp. Wants to camp with all those women, twenty of them at least. Only ten his next birthday and already like his father.

But I'll wait," she jolted back to the present, "I'll catch Bill when he comes back. It'll show if he's been with them. It'll show. She crept to the front of the barn, pulled her skirt up and sat with legs dangling over the side of the opening where the men unloaded hay. She'd wait, she'd catch him, damn him, maybe catch those women too.

Bill saw the little girl and the dog as he came up the drive for lunch and when Sherry, arms wrapped around the little beagle, raised her head, he saw the tears, the shaking shoulders and he stopped the tractor. As he walked toward her he thought

"How like Jo she looks with those brown eyes, that dark hair. Jo's red cheeks too. Red cheeks. . . My God! That bruise on her cheek. How?" He began to run and kneeling beside the little five-year-old figure he felt tears in his own eyes. "What happened, baby," he said as he nestled her against him as he had when she was still quite small. His other hand automatically reached to pat the brown-backed dog.

"She kicked Lassie, Daddy," Sherry sobbed, "Right in the tummy and Lassie's been crying cause Mama hurt her puppies. Lassie's my doggie, Daddy, Daddy, WHY does she kick my doggie? Her words grew incoherent, stifled by sobs and he held her closer, rocked her, crooned to her, "Sherry, Sherry, be Daddy's big girl Sherry. Lassie's fine, Sherry. She's a tough farmer, like you, Sherry. Where's my big girl who helps Daddy feed the cows? M'm? There that's better. Lassie's puppies will be fine, sweetheart, I promise. Mommy's just cross today, Sherry and besides she doesn't like girl dogs, Sherry, but wait till the puppies come and we'll give Mommy a boy dog all her own. She'd like that, don't you think?"

The child nodded solemnly and said, "And one for Grandma. . . O.K., Daddy?" He felt the warm little lips on his cheek, the tight little arms, the sun-warmed hair, but as his day-old beard rubbed her cheek she winced and he again looked at the bruise, which in his attempt to comfort her, he had temporarily forgotten. It was hideous, a long ugly blackening strip on her left cheek; it covered the entire side of her face which had been turned away from him. His work-roughened fingers touched her chin and turned the little face toward him.

He gasped and when he spoke his voice was hard, "Sherry, what hurt you, honey, tell me?" She looked scared and didn't answer. Bill felt his heart begin the frantic rub-a-dub of fear, guessing the answer, dreading it but his tone automatically softened, became a coaxing command, "Don't be afraid, Sherry. Nothing will hurt my girl, now. Tell Daddy."

Her voice was a whisper and she looked behind her before she choked out, "It. . . it. . . after I kissed you goodbye Daddy. . . And you went to plow Mommy. . . Mommy hit me. She says I can't kiss you ever again. But she said I mustn't tell—not even. . . Her speech was broken by sobs and she ended by flinging her arms around him convulsively and covering his cheek with frantic childish kisses. Though he felt numb, he noticed their wetness and his response to her affection was automatic, based somewhere on all the wet childish kisses of three children in thirteen years of marriage. He carried the child into the house, through the cluttered living-room to the bathroom where he salved the bruise and then put Sherry, exhausted but calm, in her room.

He went out through the kitchen; he knew he had to find her but dreaded to face what he feared he'd find. His steps were the slow, automatic steps of one who is perpetually tired, who plodding through day after day of labor has forgotten how to hurry, even in great emergency, excitement or peril. He looked about the kitchen with a stranger's curiosity. Jo had cut the screen last week and now had bent it back to let in the insects. The table, loaded with the remainder of breakfast and two days accumulation of dishes was covered with

a thousand flies. The kitchen buzzed with them; Jo had left the tap running. As he looked at the once-spotless kitchen his mind whirled:

My God, couldn't she just once keep the place clean? Just once? It was different before, before he had bought the farm and started these long, tedious hours of slavery. But he loved this land; he loved making it yield. He loved the animals, their birth, their growth. How proud he had been when his children were born—first Carrie, then Mikey, Sherry and . . . No, he wouldn't say it, wouldn't think its name.

Jo had lost this last baby. She was so despondent afterwards. He had tried to make her see that though one was gone, three children remained. One to mourn but three to love. Of course, it was harder for the woman, especially since it had been a full-term baby lost at the end of a difficult birth, strangled by the umbilical cord. Then Jo's illness, the hysterectomy, hell. The jealousy began after that, the fear of his not wanting her, the terror of other women. He had even caught her trying to stab the black Holstein cow with a pitchfork because it was due to calve.

Then there had been the Sunday when she had made him walk all over the farm with her, climb every hill, look in every grove. Her energy had seemed endless that day; her eyes had glittered wildly; she had seemed to search every cranny of the farm. When they had reached home she had broken into hysterical laughter "Well, those women won't be chasing after you now. I've looked, Bill, they're all dead. Got Bangs disease like Marlowe's cows. Dead. And they'll never get you, never, you hear me? Her voice was frantic, her laughter malicious, and, at last, her tears torrential. Weak from her day's walking, she had fainted.

The doctor had said she'd get over it. "Only depression after losing the baby and after the hysterectomy. She doesn't feel wanted anymore, feels unfeminine. Let her know she's womanly," he'd said. Well, damn it, he's tried. He had picked her flowers when he worked in the fields. He had strained the budget to the breaking point to take her out occasionally. He had been attentive. Loved her, wanted her, but whenever he touched her she cringed.

She'd cling wide-eyed to her edge of the bed and say she couldn't bear for him to touch her "that" way after all those "other women." He remembered how the first time she had said that he had felt the dazed feeling that comes after a physical blow that has knocked you out, left you lying, and woke you up an hour later. Somehow the hour between was gone, but where was it? There had been no other women! Not one.

He had had opportunity before marriage and after but for as long as he could remember he had wanted only Jo. And for God's sake when was there time? The bills from her illness had forced his day to stretch to eighteen hours with a job at a plant in

town and then the farmwork. She said that while he was at work he was with other women, but she never understood where the pay-check came from. Did she think he'd take the money from women? Oh, dear God!

His reverie ended abruptly as Lassie whined at the door. She'd have the pups today probably. Jo's kicks hadn't helped her any. He sent the dog in to Sherry and went out the door, surprised at his own calmness, looking in a detached way at the clipped screen. Why in God's name did she want those flies in the house?

He walked on toward the barns, past the sheds, the crib, the milk-house, his shoulders sagging tiredly, the once-alert eyes a tired dead ice-blue. He heard her before he reached the loft, his eyes took at a glance the Sunday shoes, the cracked radio.

"Damn you, you whore, I've told you to stay away from my husband. . . I'll. . . kill. . . you!" She was panting and her voice was frenzied. As his head came above the loft-floor he saw her; her skirt was torn by nails in the old wood, and hung about her knees in shreds. Her feet were bleeding from going barefoot in the hay; her leg sported a long ugly gash, crusted with the red-brown of blood. She was oblivious to all save one patch of sunlight, dancing on the wall, shining through a broken piece of the tin roof.

She faced this sunlight as an enemy, a hay-hook poised above her head and as he watched in grim horror she leapt on a bale of hay and heaved the hook with all her strength against the sunlight on the wall. The point caught and it held quivering in the old wood. Jo collapsed laughing and he moved quietly toward her. She looked up, her eyes rolling, mocking him.

She said almost calmly, "See, Bill, I found her, found her while you were gone. Go to your lover, Bill, see her there in the hay. I killed her, Bill, killed her—killed her with the hook. Did you see it quiver when it hit her? She fell like a tree, Bill, fresh green young tree but now she'll wither. You don't want a withered woman do you Bill?" Her voice raised, became sharper, "Go to her, Bill, touch her; it won't be like before Bill. She'll be cold. You think I'm cold? Well, try her. Damn you, touch her! She was to have your baby, don't you think I know. Look at her, look at her stomach, Billy boy, its flat now, flat and empty like mine!" Suddenly her tirade stopped and she burst into helpless sobs.

He reached her, lifted her, carried her while she muttered her insane accusations. Her hands clawed at him and he tied them with baler-twine. She hit, she kicked, but he held her. He was conscious of the black high-heels, the broken radio as he passed.

Afterwards he didn't remember loading her in the truck, leaving a note for Carrie and Mikey when they came home from school, taking Sherry to his hired-man's house and, at last, turning Jo over to Doctor Simson and the ambulance attendants. They were taking her away and right now he was too numb to ask where.

He numbly bought gas, mechanically took the right road until

(Continued on Page 6)





## Another Dog

Another dog  
Died on my street this evening  
Just before eleven.  
He didn't take as long to die as did the last.  
The bumper likely hit him in the chest  
Or throat;  
His screaming was a puppy's, and his voice was broken.

Down the hollow —  
Down the long way to the river —  
An older dog was barking calmly to the night.  
And  
Across the highway —  
On the short cut to the river —  
The pumping station rumbled gently.  
Then a car went by; I went inside.

—Robert Newton Cooper

## The Soul's Destruction

By MARY HYPES

"The roaring, oh, the awful roaring, God, where am I? Why do I ask where I am when I already know? I'm where I always am—where I have always been—in the gutter."

That's how it's always been for Margie. Always waking up in the morning after a night with a man and a bottle of booze and never knowing where she is. Last night was the same as a thousand nights before. A man with a bottle asking her if she'd like to go for a ride. She hated these men with their pawing hands and their dirty minds and their stinking breath. But, it was too late now, she had to have something to moisten her dry lips and with a welfare check of twenty dollars a month she could afford very little.

A fly was buzzing above her and landed on the dried blood on her lip. Oh, my God, why can't I stop this? I don't want to live like this—I hate this life but I can't help myself."

Crawling to her feet she dragged herself up from the ditch—a fairly difficult task, but nothing compared to the effort it would take for her to drag her soul from the gutter. She looked around and recognized where she was. On one side was the highway and on the other was the Mohawk Inn with which she was so very familiar.

Now, she'd have to go home and face her father—home—how funny. A two-room shack with no electric lights—nothing but a crude bed (now she hated that bed) and two chairs and a few other pieces of old ugly furniture. Then, there was her father.

But, Margie could remember a day when life had not been so bad for her. She'd had very little happiness but she had always had dreams before. Now, even the dreams were gone. Margie's mind drifted back to the year she'd graduated from high school. Her mother had died that year, but she was going to carry out the plan her mother had helped her decide upon. Twenty years ago, God, how the time had passed—night she'd been so proud that night she'd given the salutatorian address. Her face had been so pretty, and now it was so wrinkled, brown, and ugly. Her teeth were nothing but rotten snags attached to her gums.

"Oh how damned stupid I must have been to think my father

would let me go to Virginia and work as a secretary as Momma and me had planned. He didn't want me to leave him—I didn't know why then but now I know exactly why. I know everytime I look at him and that room and that bed—I hate him—the filthy man—my father—just like all the rest of them."

As Margie dragged herself along she was getting closer and closer to the shack and the father whom she hated. She stopped for a minute in front of the shack before going in. She opened the door. There sprawled on the bed was her father. There was a bottle beside him half empty. "Where's my little girl been?" he asked reaching out to her.

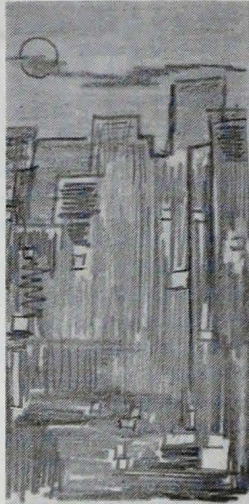
"To hell," Margie said, "that's where I've always been and that's where I'll always be. I'm no damn good just like you, daddy dear, and you've made me this way—I hate you, I hate you, I hate you!"

With these words Margie dragged herself to the front door. She walked slowly and painfully down to the small creek in front of the shack. She threw herself down on the bank. She feared she would suffocate from all the hate in her heart.

This little creek had been the only pleasant part of Margie's childhood. She remembered the evenings after her poor mother had picked berries or hoed in the garden all day. Margie gazed at the water rippling over the rocks—it was as if she could see the bent broken form of her mother. All of these years her mother had worked so hard while her father drank himself into one drunken stupor after another.

"I remember those evenings so well. We'd walk down to the creek and sit on the bank. Momma always would talk about how things would be in a few years. I'd have lots of pretty clothes and we'd have a nice home with a front porch to sit on and good books to read. She always told me to study and try hard. I did it for you, Momma. Too bad that you should have died before I graduated. You'd have been so proud of me."

Margie could feel the tears starting to trickle down her brown, wrinkled cheeks. It had been so long since she'd cried. At times she felt as if she had only one emotion left—no fear, no love, no happiness, no sad-



ness, but only the hate deep within in her heart which was slowly creeping upward.

Margie dragged her body up from the creek bank. Without realizing it she had been sitting here for hours. She could see the dark clouds beginning to move slowly across the sky. The heat was almost unbearable. Suddenly a streak of lightning flashed across the sky followed by a loud blast of thunder. She felt a drop of water on her face. It was beginning to get dark and the only light to be seen was the bright glare left by the lightning. Margie looked toward the house. There was no electricity in the house but her father had managed to light the kerosene lamp. A small flicker of light could be seen through the window.

"How I hate that shack," Margie thought. Yes, it was certainly a place to hate, not a place to love and call home. There was nothing in the house except a few crude pieces of furniture. In one corner was a coal stove—an old heater which had served both as a heater and as a stove for cooking. Margie couldn't stand the heat from the stove in the summer so usually ate nothing—her skinny and half-starved body showed this. Beside the wall near the stove was a table, small and with hardly room for the two wooden chairs which were pushed under it. A few inches from the table stood a wringer washer which must have been very old as was evident from the peeled paint and the dented sides.

Margie thought of the other room. It really wasn't a different room but there was half a wall separating it from the rest of the shack. In this room there were only three pieces of furniture. Against one wall was a dresser. It was huge, brown, and ugly. The mirror had cracked and become discolored with age. Against the opposite wall was a small cot. There were no sheets on the bed, only two quilts. This was supposed to be Margie's bed. The quilts were clean. No matter how sick Margie's soul might be, she had always tried to keep things clean as her mother had done.

Touching the other wall was the bed which she hated so. This was her father's bed where he spent most of his time in a half drunken sleep. There was a yellow sheet on the bed and above this two quilts. The edges of the quilts were frayed and cotton was beginning to fall out. Two pillows at the top of the bed were covered with the same yellow unbleached muslin the sheet was made from. Margie tried to keep the bed clean, but despite this the bed reeked with alcohol and smoke.

There was only one other thing in the house. This was her father. He was now sixty years old and

## I Overslept Again Today

I overslept again today, and  
While shaving I cut my throat.  
After bleeding all over my last clean shirt  
I spilled coffee on my brand new coat.

But now I can smile on my way to work,  
To think that I've raised such a fuss.  
An occasional bad morning plagues everyone,  
Even I, . . . Oh Hell, I'm on the wrong bus.

—Bill Lewis

## Man

his shoulders were bent. His hair was gray and his six-foot frame was very skinny and wrinkled. He had never been sick that Margie could remember. This thought made Margie laugh. No wonder he'd never been sick; her poor mother had done all of the work. Now, he imagined he had a pain in his hand. He always held his hand and begged Margie to rub it and make the pain go away. Margie hated to touch him, but anything was better than his constant moaning. He'd been drinking all day. He hadn't been outside the shack so she knew he must be drunk.

Margie walked toward the house. When she got to the front door she could hear the loud breathing of her father. She opened the door and stepped in.

"Margie, Margie, is that my little girl?"

"Yes it's me, daddy."

"My hand, my hand, it's aching. Please come and rub your poor daddy's hand."

Margie felt as if she were choking. The lightning streaked across the sky. "I will in a few minutes. Please, just shut up."

Margie sat down in the chair near the table. Suddenly her knees felt weak and she could hardly breathe. She could see the broken form of her mother. She closed her eyes hoping the horrible image would go away, but opened them again only to see the same broken form. . . . Her father had fallen asleep now. She could hear his loud even breathing. The breathing seemed to be getting louder and louder, and the form of her mother getting closer and closer. She ran into the room where her father slept. She grabbed one of the yellow pillows from the bed. "At last I'll be free." She placed the pillow over her father's face and held it for what seemed a lifetime. She raised the pillow. There was no breathing.

Suddenly she felt something against her leg. Looking down she saw the awful hand of her father, the fingers curling inward. "Stop moving, stop moving, damn you!" There was no movement in the body, no life except in the hand. She ran to the table, grabbed a butcher knife laying there, and ran back to the room. She lifted the hand, slicing it from the wrist. Blood was gushing onto the floor.

Margie pulled the lifeless body from the bed with the last energy in her body into the water. Then, she remembered the hand. As she ran back to the house the trail

Man was born in tears and pain  
To think and do and learn,  
To find the sky within himself  
And share his life; in turn,  
Woman was born in tears and

pain,  
In tears and pain she lives  
Until she finds within her love  
A willingness to give  
The strength to man to find the sky

A joy at each new dare,  
To stand upon a dangerous cliff  
And walk upon the air.

—Pat McCartney

## ROCKS ARE MADE OF STONE

Statues are made of marble,  
Men are made of clay.  
Songs are made of heaven,  
Evenings are made of day;  
Words are thoughts as spoken,  
Ideas that have grown,  
Jam is made of berries, and  
Rocks are made of stone.

—Bill Lewis

of blood could barely be seen as the rain washed it away. She ran inside the house. There was the hand, at last, still. She picked it up and ran to the creek with it throwing it into the water with the rest of her father's body.

Margie walked slowly back to the shack. She picked up the bottle of whiskey from which her father had been drinking. She took a long drink. She looked around—the broken form of her mother was gone. "Momma, he'll never hurt anyone again. He killed you and he almost destroyed me, but now at last I'm free."

Slowly she closed her eyes. She heard what sounded like a rap at the window. She opened her eyes and forced herself to look toward the window. There she again saw the broken form of her mother. The look of despair on her mother's face was even greater than before. Margie heard the words, "My poor baby." Suddenly she knew why. She wasn't free, her soul could never be free now. Her father had done what he wanted.

"I hated him so but I let him destroy me. God help me. Please help me. Please, God." The only answer was a bright flash of lightning and a loud burst of thunder.

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## Ashtrays

Ashtrays are companions of righteousness

for surely it is evil  
to corrupt the floor with your  
ashes; spit on the sidewalk,  
loiter in the post office,

Or burp in the theatre.

—Bill Lewis



# Please Try to Understand

By PAT MASTERS

He climbed into his car, slammed the door (it always had to be slammed in order to shut) and rolled down the window so he could talk to her. He stared up at the girl standing there and yawned.

He looked as if he had been on a 24-hour drunk. His beard was beginning to show, his eyes were glossy and his brown hair tumbled down over his forehead. His clothes were wrinkled and dirty. He thought to himself: I must really look like hell . . . . no sleep for two days and a beard that must make me look like a damned beatnik. He glanced into the rear-view mirror and this confirmed his suspicions. He most certainly did look like hell.

The sun popped out from behind the clouds as he squinted up at her. She couldn't read his thoughts. She never had been able to, no matter how hard she had tried to penetrate those soft grey eyes. His thoughts had always remained his own personal, private property. This fact alone fascinated her. Any other guy she had known had always been an open book to her. She had always understood them. But not Dale. He was different. In more ways than one.

It was eight o'clock on a beautiful Sunday morning in May. She stood there next to his car waiting for him to say good-bye. It had been like this so very many times before and she wondered how many more times it would happen exactly like this.

He would pull out in that old Ford of his. That old black Ford he was so proud of. She had always laughed at his concern for the scratched paint, the cracked window, the faulty thermostat, the leaky radiator. He loved that old car. He had been through a lot with it. It was his pride and joy.

Then she would get into her new car and head for "home." Home—where her father still had to be faced. A chill ran down her spine at the thought of the confrontation with her father. She immediately pushed all thoughts of it from her befuddled mind. "That's later, this now."

Dale was still squinting up at her, a puzzled look in his eyes. "Why do you keep on seeing me? I'm not worth it and you know it. What's in it for you? Why don't you just tell me to go to hell?"

"Is that really what you want me to do? You know that the decision is yours to make. If you want me to leave and never come back, I will. It's entirely up to you. You know that." He reached out for her hand and pulled her down to him.

"You know I couldn't do it. I'd only end up calling you and asking you to come back before the week's up."

"I know," she replied, "it's happened that way too many times before. But I won't hang on to you, Dale. I know that that's the worst thing I could do. If you ever do decide that you don't want to continue this affair (if that's what you could call it) all you have to do is tell me so and I'll bow out gracefully. That's one thing I've learned to do quite well."

"Let's go back." He said this with a sort of hope creeping into those elusive eyes. She just laughed. But she wasn't laughing at him, or at his suggestion. She would like nothing better than to be able to go back. She was laughing at what would happen if they were to return.

"And what would Sue have to say about that?" she questioned.

"I don't give a damn! That bitch can go to hell for all I care. I wish I'd never seen her. If we'd go back to Toledo things would be different. Frank has a job lined up for me. He told you that. Then I could get a divorce and we could get married. That's what you want, isn't it?"

She was silent. She gazed up at the clear, blue morning sky. This is a farce. Why on earth do I keep it up? There was only one answer she could give herself. I love him. Then she looked down at him and replied simply, "No. I don't want to marry you until you're sure of yourself; sure of what you want from life; sure of your feelings toward her and toward me. I don't want to be your escape from her, Dale. If we ever do get married, I want it to be because you love me, not because you're still running from her."

"OK. You win this time. We'll talk about it later." He started the car and pulled her down to him for a kiss. "I'll call you later. What time are you leaving?"

"One."

"I'll call about 12 then. Don't leave until I call, and be sure you answer the phone."

"Don't I always?"

"Yeh, you always do what you're s'posed to." They both laughed at this and the mood changed. She loved to see him laugh. He had a beautiful smile. His teeth were white and perfect and she loved his wide grin. He liked to hear her laugh. It always raised his spirits. She was usually so serious and quiet. When she laughed he felt as if things would all work out for the best in the end.

"You had better get back to your room and get some sleep. You look as if you'd been on another one of your binges." She didn't really want him to leave. She knew it would be weeks before she would see him again. But she knew he was tired and had to be at work early in the morning.

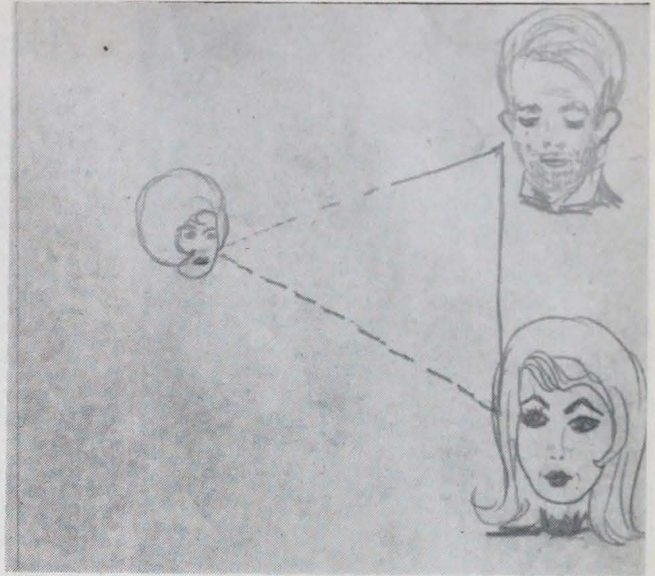
As she turned to get into her car, he reached out for her hand and pulled her back. "Next time you come in, we'll go to the club. We can dance and have a few beers. OK?" He said it because he knew it would please her. He felt that she was getting depressed again and he didn't like to see her that way.

"OK," she replied, "I'll write and let you know when I'll be in again. Call when you get a chance. Take care and behave yourself."

She got into her car and pulled out behind him. She laughed out loud to herself as he ran the red light. He was always doing stupid things like that. He gave everyone the impression that he didn't care about anything. But she knew differently.

She began the drive to her parents' house in the bright morning sun. As she drove, she began thinking over all of the events of the past 24 hours. Her mind began to relive all of the fun they had on their escapades. She and Dale had gone for a drive the afternoon before and were talking about his brother and family who lived in Toledo. All of a sudden Dale had said, "Let's go to Toledo."

Thinking that he was only joking she had said "Sure, let's go right now." So they had gone. He changed clothes while she picked up her car



and called her parents to tell them she wouldn't be there until the next morning.

She picked him up at the boarding house where he was staying and they left for Toledo. They got there after midnight and his brother had been shocked senseless. He couldn't understand why she and Dale would make a five-hour drive just to stay for a few minutes. But that was Dale all over again. She had often wished that she could be like that.

They had left Toledo at three in the morning and driven straight through. She was glad they had gone, even though she knew it wouldn't "look" right. She and Dale didn't get a chance to spend very much time together and she had been wanting to meet his brother. This was the brother he worshipped so. Frank was five years older than Dale and was married to a wonderful woman.

They had made her feel welcome and she felt a warm glow as she recalled sitting next to Dale on the sofa. They had made her feel as if she were a part of the family. She wished it could always be that way. But she knew it never would be.

Then as he neared home she began to think about the two years that she had dated Dale. These two years had been the most hectic and confused of her life. There had been many surprises, quite a few tears shed, and a lot of joy to balance the scales. They had met at a party and she had been attracted to him at once. He was handsome in a rough sort of way and he had impressed her as being the kind of man she could love.

She had dated him for almost a full year when he finally confessed that he was married. He and his wife had been separated for four years, but that didn't alter the fact that they were still married.

Her parents had never known the truth. She had known that if they ever found out they could never forgive her. She hated the idea of being the "other woman" but she was unable to put a stop to it. By the time she found out the truth it was already too late. She had grown so attached to him, she couldn't bring herself to call it quits. She was constantly asking herself "Why? There are a lot of other guys I could date." But she knew the answer. She knew that she needed him and that he desperately needed her.

So she had decided to go away. She found a good job in a town 100 miles away from home and decided that if she were away it would make everything easier for everyone concerned. She could see him every once in a while and there would be less danger of her parent's discovering the truth.

But now she was going home to her parents. She had to visit them before she went back to her apartment and she dreaded the encounter. Would they know? Could they have found out? Has SHE called them as she threatened to do? These were the only thoughts racing through her confused mind as she pulled into the driveway.

She slowly ascended the few steps to the front door and steeled herself as she walked in.

No, they don't know, she sensed as she surveyed the calm atmosphere. If they did, things wouldn't be this peaceful, and Mom would be crying.

Her mother rushed up to her and encircled her in her arms. "My it's good to have you home. Come on honey, supper's on the table. I fixed spaghetti for you . . . and a lemon pie is in the oven for later on. Is Dale coming out later?"

"No, I don't think so. I haven't seen him," she fibbed. Then she lapsed into silent thought. Oh, how I wish I could tell them. Dad would scream and raise such a fit. I could stand that. But Mom—she would be so hurt. That's what I couldn't take. That would kill me. It's funny, she meditated as they were eating.

I thought that my dating him would involve no one besides Dale and myself. But it's not true. I've involved everyone in my family. And the worst part is that it's too late to protect them now. No matter what I do now, they'll find out some day. And then I wonder what on earth will happen. They'll never trust me again, and I don't blame them. They'll think I was involved in an illicit love affair. And what else could they think? It does look that way. How could anyone else know how good Dale treats me. How he always pushed me away when our emotions got out of control? How he has begged me time after time to save myself from him before it's too late?

Late in the evening she bid farewell to her parents and sister and began the trip to her own apartment. When she arrived it was after one and she went directly to bed. This was one of the few nights she wouldn't

(Continued on page 6)





## The Journey Home

By JUDY REED

The girl stirred restlessly as a faint breeze rustled through the meadow where she lay. A particularly strong gust whipped the grass into her face and startled her from a deep sleep. She jerked to a sitting position and rubbed her eyes as a strong light momentarily blinded her.

After a moment, her eyes adjusted and she began to look wildly in every direction. As she realized that she was alone in a place which she had never seen before, she was seized by an unexplained fear. This fear passed quickly because she saw nothing which menaced her. "After all," she thought somewhat bitterly, "I've always been alone."

Alizon struggled a little unsteadily to her feet. She shook her head trying to get rid of the grass which had collected in her flowing black hair. Then she began to inspect the strange world before her. She glanced at the grass from which she had arisen, at least she thought it was grass. The uncertainty lay in the fact that it was not green, but changed from color to color as it waved in the breeze. Around the grass was an unearthly glow which disturbed her.

Alizon stiffened as she sensed a presence near her. Whirling around, she was confronted by something in the general shape of a tree. This tree-shaped thing, however, was a product not of bark and leaves, but a thousand shades and tints of light which moved in ceaseless undulation.

Although startled by the strange sight, Alizon did not feel fear. The whole of the thing exuded peace and calm. Indeed serenity seemed to pervade all of this strange land. She felt a strong attachment to this place. "It's so different from home," she thought and involuntarily her mind drifted back to a distant day when she was twelve. The tree shimmered and before her eyes arose a picture of her own living room.

She was a slender young girl excitedly telling her mother about the party for parents which was being held at Miss Gerby's School for Ladies. Her pale blue eyes shone eagerly and her still paler skin was flushed with excitement. Then she heard her mother speaking.

"Thursday? I'm sorry, Alizon. I have a Ladies' Social Society meeting and your father has to prepare for the board of direc-

tors' meeting. Please tell Miss Gerby that we regret that we cannot attend."

Alizon saw the light die in the blue eyes and saw tears begin to rise. As she remembered the pain she had felt, a lump rose in her throat. Then she heard her mother speak again. "You do understand, don't you, Alizon? We would like to attend, but we have so much to do."

Alizon heard her own small voice reply, trying to keep from quivering. "Of course, Mother. I understand perfectly. I'll tell Miss Gerby." Then the little girl turned and hurried out of the room as tears began to slide down her cheeks. Then the room dissolved into streams of color and the tree was again before her.

Now the friendly tree was bathed in the strange glow which surrounded the grass. Unable to understand this glow, she glanced around. As she did so, for the first time she noticed the source of the gleam. A black sun beamed light on this land, ultraviolet rays of light.

Incredulous that life could exist here, she looked again at the tree and a small, almost forgotten fact started to tug at her mind. Then she remembered quite distinctly a professor saying that ultraviolet rays were used as a disinfectant and to help heal wounds. It all became clear to her then. She was in a clean world, a world apart from deceit and all the malignant growths variously called fear, hate, and loneliness.

Loneliness. Again her mind receded to the past, this time the recent past. Again the tree shimmered and Alizon saw herself mirrored before her. She was a woman now, twenty-three, tall, slender, jet-black hair, creamy skin, and eyes which were somewhere between pale blue and steel grey. She was standing in a plush living room. She was talking on the phone and now her mother's voice reached her.

"Alizon, I hope you will understand. Mr. Jourdain has invited us to be his guests this weekend. You know how important he is to your father's career. This could be his chance to become president of the company. Of course, we'd like to be at your graduation, Alizon, but you do understand, don't you?"

Alizon saw her face set, her eyes cold, and heard her voice,

"My own son, and he didn't even let me know." The whispered words were spoken by the man sitting tensely at the huge oaken desk, which occupied nearly half the space in the small, lofty office. His elbows rested on the hard top of the desk, and his large, strong hands were pressed firmly against his temples. The steel-gray eyes, normally alert and penetrating, now stared blankly at the frayed edge of the colorless rug against the wall at the far end of the room.

Dawn was breaking now; her dim light crept shyly through the loosely-drawn curtains which screened the window, a tall, rectangular structure of thick, dark wood. However, the man's tired eyes had not closed at all that night. Maybe their lack of expression had something to do with the half-emptied bottle labeled "Calvert" which stood on the right side of the desk.

Occasionally, the man's eyes moved slowly from the floor to the newspaper which lay neatly folded in half between his elbows; however, they were always averted quickly to stare again at the worn rug. Somehow, that headline in bold black type, faint, but quite readable in the dim light of early morning, seemed to point a finger of accusation at him, causing a kind of throbbing pain and nervous anxiety to pull inside him. But he could picture those words vividly in his mind, and, in fact, they seemed to be fixed against the very baseboards of that dingy brown, plaster wall. He could see them clearly, "John Martin Graduated Magna Cum Laude."

"I just don't understand it. The

calm and determined. "Yes, Mother, I understand. Goodbye." This time there were no tears. Time and many similar experiences had taught her this control. Slowly the woman replaced the phone, and the room was replaced by the tree.

Alizon now felt very tired. She looked around at the serene land and at the shimmering tree. From the undulating light before her she sensed the unspoken invitation: "Stay here. Here you are accepted and will never be alone. Rest here and be happy."

Alizon reflected on the continuing loneliness and unhappiness that she had known at home and weighed it against this new world. A smile relaxed her features and she settled down in the grass. She closed her eyes and sleepily murmured, "It's good to be home." The tree stood by her side, watching and guarding her sleep.

The man and woman sat in tight-lipped silence as the man in the white coat spoke. "I'm sorry," the man said, "but I cannot give you false hope. Alizon is in a world completely her own and we have no way of reaching her. The LSD that she took has had an irreparable effect on her mind."

A silence fell over the room for a moment. Mrs. Winfield said tersely, "Why? Why did she do this to us? We've always given her everything she wanted," she added defensively, looking at the doctor.

The doctor glanced down at his feet for a long moment. Then he looked up and continued. "Of course, we can understand your feelings. It would be impossible for you to keep Alizon at home and still pursue full lives. I know it must be hard to give her up, but she will be much better off here. She'll get the attention that she needs so much. You do understand, don't you?"

## And Then There Was Nothing

By SHARON YOAK

boy didn't even send me an invitation. Graduation from a top-notch military school is a big event anyway, but to graduate with honors makes it even more important." The voice kept lowering until it was all but inaudible. "An especially big event. The kind that can be celebrated best only by those people who care the most. Special people. Like families. Parents, mothers AND fa..."

The voice stopped; the head of thick, gray hair dropped to rest upon the strong arms which had relaxed and lay folded across the newspaper. The heavy eyelids closed partially, and then lifted again as the eyes focused upon a tiny picture framed in gold which reflected the smiling faces of a young woman, a little boy and an adolescent girl.

"Certainly is an old picture, awfully small too. John and Mary Lou aren't so little now, and their mother—I suppose Margaret has aged some too since she and the kids left Greenwood. Haven't seen John for two years, but he's busy with studies and I'm busy here with the hospital. Not much time for letter writing, no time for visiting. How can even a two year absence excuse a failure to remember one's own father at graduation?" As Dr. Martin uttered these last words, images of earlier times kept flashing through his mind.

"Daddy," ten year old Mary Lou spoke softly across the dinner table, "are you going to wear your black suit to the father-daughter banquet at church tonight? You look handsomer in it than in anything else!"

Dr. Martin looked puzzled. "Honey, is it already time for that banquet? I thought it was at least another week away."

"You aren't coming, are you?" Mary Lou's eyes, gray like her father's, quickly filled with tears of bitter disappointment.

"Now wait a minute, Princess. I'd love to go with you, but Mrs. Philips at the hospital is very sick and I have to go check on her tonight. She might get worse if I'm not there to help take care of her," the kind father explained.

Mary Lou screamed in the high, shrill tone of an angry, hurt child. "I wish she'd die! She's too old anyway, and besides she's more important to you than I am." The little girl ran away from the table and up the stairs to her room.

Benjamin Martin thought briefly of his daughter as he drove to the hospital that night, and he knew that she would be her usual happy self in a short time. As he entered the room of elderly Mrs. Philips, he smiled with delight, for she was sitting up in bed combing her white hair. The wise doctor recognized her concern with her appearance as a sign that she was recovering from a recent struggle with pneumonia.

Ben Martin loved nothing more than to see a patient recuperating from some illness, for he was sincerely interested in his patients and his dedication, brilliance, and diligent pursuit of his profession had eventually made him an outstanding doctor.

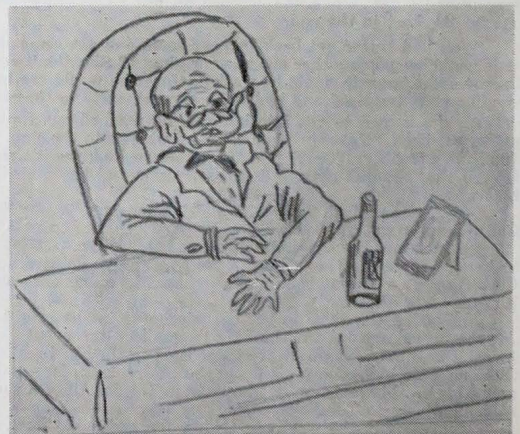
"Guess what, Dad!" The slumped figure at the desk recalled the voice of seven year old Johnnie. "Tonight all the guys in Troop 147 that get their service badges get to have their very own dads pin them in a candlelight service at the Masonic Lodge. It's special this time for some reason, but I forget why. Anyhow, they're gonna serve refreshments afterwards. Won't it be great?"

"Son, I just got an emergency phone call about a little boy, just like you, and it sounds like appendicitis. I have to go now but we'll talk about it later. Okay?" Dr. Martin hurried out of the room and just before he closed the front door, he heard little Johnnie mumble, "He didn't even hear me. I guess Billy's dad can pin me, but it won't be the same."

Later, at the hospital the large, gentle hand had moved slowly and carefully over the abdominal region and the tall, young doctor had asked in a sympathetic voice, "Does it hurt here, Son?" The finely-featured face of the small boy became a twisted contortion as he winced in pain. Having seen several cases in his five years in the medical profession in Greenwood, North Carolina, Dr. Ben Martin had readily detected a case of acute appendicitis. He immediately performed surgery and the appendectomy had been a swift, safe one.

Dr. Martin loved children and was always interested in their games, books, and toys as he stopped by the small ward in the hospital to talk with them. When they were curious about the paraphernalia in the huge, bulging pockets of the slightly wrinkled white uniform, he often gave the children plastic hypodermic syringes or some other small object of interest to them. Of course, they never failed to

(Continued on Page 5)





# In The Midst of Life...

By JANET LIPSCOMB

Never had she surmised that it would be like this. Ever since Dr. Stark had told her five months ago that she was the victim of a malignancy, Maria Scott had spent interminable hours imagining what it would be like to die.

"Oh, my God! Do I have cancer?" At first she had refused to believe him, refused because, to her, life was a most precious element, one not to be discarded so easily.

Then, as the days slipped stealthily by, she began to realize that Dr. Stark had indeed uttered words of truth, words, although she was never to know it, over which he had hesitated for three long weeks. They struck her with a colossal impact. He attempted to be gentle, but he knew only one way to tell her. "Yes, Miss Scott, the tests which we performed indicated that the growths were malignant. With your best interests in mind, I suggest surgery as quickly as possible."

His words of comfort she violently rejected. One thought pulsed irregularly through her brain. Cancer! Cancer! Cancer! It simply refused to be displaced. It grew into an obsession.

Now, lying restlessly there between the smooth coldness of the hospital sheets, Maria felt an enormous surge of the same penetrating fear. "Don't let me die! Don't let me die! My God, I'm only twenty-five!"

Not positive whether or not she had actually voiced these racing thoughts, but fearing that she had, Maria impulsively trembled. Only a child would cry out like that. The nurses would certainly consider it a sign of weakness. That she could absolutely not tolerate.

Just thinking of it brought a deep blush to her face, a blush which brightened the unusually pale cheeks. Catching sight of herself in the shining mirror, she impatiently shoved a strand of the chestnut-colored hair off her moist forehead. That her face was damp only served to disgust her further for the sterile room was cool enough to cause her to welcome the protection of the sheet.

Self-control was one quality on which she had always prided herself; the other was her attractiveness. Ever since Maria had outgrown the scrawny awkwardness of adolescence, her girlfriends had regarded her with an envious wonder. The boys, too, had regarded her.

On her first date with Ron Morris, she pinked with pride when he said to her in his soft, casual manner, "Maria, you are a very lovely girl. Has anyone ever told you that?" Her equally soft "No" was the truth then, but now, if asked, she would have to answer, "Yes, many times."

At twenty-five, her mature beauty caught the eye of men and caused matrons to shake their heads disapprovingly. Nor was her attractiveness lightly dismissed at the office—she was secretary for the vice-president of Slade and Slade Clothiers. At times, she suspected that businessmen carried on unusually long conversations with her, not at all an unpleasant assumption.

She recalled with pride the day that the younger Mr. Slade, now more familiarly known to her as Bob, remarked that her red wool dress certainly accentuated her dark beauty. It was a deserved compliment; Maria knew that. That was why she had selected that particular dress, that and the fact that it fit her so well.

The neatly-made top hugged her ample bosom, then narrowed again until it spread in soft pleats below her well-defined waist. Ma-

ria was proud of her better-than-average figure, and she had early determined that it should always be her greatest asset.

A smile of cynicism crossed her lips now as she thought of Bob Slade. "He is just like all the rest of them." It had taken a long time—she didn't really know how long—for that thought to creep into the front of her mind. She didn't wish to believe that either, just as she didn't wish to believe that her life was being cut short.

"Why, he hasn't even been in to see me for six days now." Oh, sure, he had sent her a get-well card Monday. "But why a get-well card! He knows why I'm here." It seemed to her just as ironic as attempting to cheer on to victory a runner with a broken leg.

Yesterday, in a moment of deepest dejection, she had cried out, "Why should he care? He has his life! Damn him!" And the nurse, hearing her sobs, had come in to comfort her. Maria thought that she had never suffered such humiliation. That she, Maria Scott, should have to be pampered like a small child was simply degrading. She had flounced over in her bed and refused to speak, refused to move until that white figure had returned to the nurses' lounge.

"Only seven months ago. How did it happen?" Thinking of the life that she and Bob had planned only deepened her bitterness. Now it would never be. The two gently sloping lots which they had chosen on the brow of Sunset Cliffs, seven months ago today, would never become home for them.

Her mind focused on the image. Standing there with their arms around each other, they spoke tenderly, lovingly of the four children they would raise here. Maria could never forget how he smiled at her when he said, "The two girls will be dark and lovely just like their mother," and she, eager to please him, spoke in return, "And the boys intelligent and enterprising like their father." A smile of mutual understanding passed between them. She would quit working after they were married so that she could devote full attention to raising their family. And Bob, of course, she would never neglect him.

A surge of hot anger overcame her now as she recalled the promises he had made her, promises which he would never have the opportunity to fulfill. It was surprising, surprising and depressing to realize how his love had dwindled lately. "He doesn't care at all for me." Her momentary anger had become self-pity. Maria halfway understood why, but she still didn't believe that Bob had sufficient reason to shun her. Had she only known how it pained him to see her like this, she would have understood.

It all began the day that she refused to have the operation. Dr. Stark carefully explained to her the necessity of immediate surgery, and she just as carefully pointed out to him why it was not to be. The look on his face was one of complete incredulity. That she should refuse was absolutely astounding!

Shocked, he didn't insist that day. But all the other times! Just a month ago, he became vehement with her. Still, she clung tenaciously, almost dogmatically, to her resolution.

It was as vivid as though it had all happened only yesterday. He came straight to the point. Leaning across the desk, he said almost gently, "Miss Scott, I as-

sume that you have decided to have the operation." It was more a question than a statement.

Her chilly silence checked him for only a moment, then he went on, "I have tried to help you, Miss Scott, but, I swear to God, I have never met such a stubborn young woman before!" Her obstinacy was telling on his patience. His clenched fist smashed hard on the walnut desk.

"There's no need to discuss this any further, doctor. My mind is made up." She felt no need to say more. "If that is your answer, then I can do nothing more. Maria"—it was the first time he had called her that, and it made her feel almost like a child again—"I hope you are fully aware that you are taking your life into your own hands." With her tacit affirmation, he dismissed her.

Since that day, she had not appreciably changed her mind. Of course, there had been moments of regret, but they had been only moments. Bob, her mother, no one would ever be able to comprehend her feelings. "They are all alike, all of them," the thought resurged through her tormented brain, creating a sense of bitterness in her heart.

"To them, just to live is enough. Well, it isn't enough for me, not enough at all." To have her feminine appeal destroyed would be ten times as bad as to die. "Bob wouldn't want just half a woman either. Half a woman. That's what I'd be. Just half!"

But even though she was determined, she felt a twinge of anguish at the thought. The pain had become increasingly worse since she entered Rayburn Memorial Hospital, extending into her arms and sometimes causing an ache all the way into her fingertips.

"If only there were someone here to talk to." But no one, no one, that is, except the nurses and Dr. Stark, who visited her at ten o'clock each morning. Not even her own mother, all the family that remained, had come near. It was as though they had all agreed to wash their hands of the whole matter.

How foolish, how childish she had been. She realized it all now. In one of her overly despondent moods, she had imagined that her mother—this very same mother who refused to see her now—came to her bedside as she lay dying. She begged her, pleaded with her, "Oh Maria, my baby, how will I ever live without you? Maria, precious"—the memory made her feel nauseated—"please don't be angry with me. I tried to do my best, Maria," and on, and on, and on.

Her heart touched by the rapidly graying hair, the tearstained face, the quivering hands grasping her own, Maria pulled her mother close, carefully wiping away the uncontrolled tears. Then, just like a martyr, she said, "Mother, dear, please don't worry. All is forgiven."

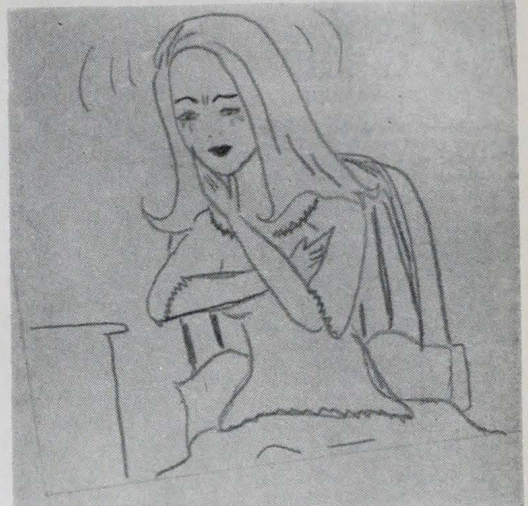
The sharp stab of pain jerked her back to the present. "Damn them all!"

## The Fool

Out there in the rain today  
The violet umbrella.  
And I've regretted ever since.  
The grass was green.  
New; but our whole mystery has ended.

We could have spoken worlds to each other.  
And so without a word.  
She crossed the grass;  
I checked my watch;  
And let the moment pass.  
And I've regretted since.

—Robert Newton Cooper



## AND THEN THERE WAS NOTHING

(Continued from page 4)

be delighted with their trophies.

In the early morning light a tiny, ancient table which was suspended on long, slender legs and which stood erect beside the only door in the office became increasingly more prominent. A molded clay bust of Hippocrates had been lovingly placed on that table many years ago—by the doctor who now sat motionless in the cumbersome leather-covered easy chair—and had remained in precisely the same spot throughout the years. Behind and above the piece of sculpture hung three impressive, framed documents, their whiteness contrasting sharply, even in the blurred light of dawn, with the drabness of the wall which surrounded them.

Now in the sparsely furnished room which appeared almost barren in the semi-darkness, the doctor's eyes moved from the pictured faces of his children to focus on his wife. Anyway she had been his wife when the picture was made. He guessed a lot of men would have removed that picture to replace it with one of only their children. But, he thought, that was how it had always been. The three of them, together, Margaret had been a good wife, he supposed.

He never did quite understand why she wanted the divorce, but had mentioned it several times before taking definite actions. And their quarrels, which were never violent but always controlled, seemed to arise from her insinuations that he was more concerned with the hospital than with his family. Even now, six years after the divorce, it was not difficult to remember one of those polite disagreements.

It had been one of those rare days when Ben Martin could make it home for a quick sandwich lunch. He had mentioned to Margaret that he would have to be back at the hospital at two o'clock.

"I suppose you plan to remain there all night," Margaret said. "Most of it probably," he responded. "I don't know why there seems to be so much sickness this late in the spring." "You know we had a family picnic planned this evening? Remember the Alrichs and their children were to go with us to the lake?"

Her husband replied, "With so much to do at the hospital I don't see how I can possibly make it." "You have nurses and they are quite capable and responsible," his wife returned.

"I'm sorry, Margaret. You will explain and apologize for me?"

He remembered that she had quietly answered, "Don't I al-

ways? I have a little speech all memorized and it serves for every occasion because the excuse is always the same!"

Sitting now in the worn chair at the familiar desk, Dr. Martin realized that she never had really understood about the hospital. It was not unusual for him to spend a twelve to fourteen hour day surrounded by those white walls, and it was true that he not infrequently spent the night at the hospital to give personal care and attention to an aged man suffering from a mild heart attack or to a child in convulsions. However, he had dedicated his life to the service of mankind through his profession and it had been in sincerity that he had taken the Hippocratic oath.

The medical profession, he thought to himself, is a noble calling, and it is my duty to give the best possible service to those people who place an unflinching faith in me. Besides, Margaret was wrong. I was concerned about my family, and they should have understood that I was needed in the hospital. Why, those images and little scenes which have been going around in my mind were just minor incidents. There had been many good times, fun times with Margaret and the children. I can think of them, remember them vividly in my mind.

Dr. Martin closed his weary eyes and determined to recall some of those happy times, for he had not failed as a husband and father. Concentrating as much as possible in his fatigued, depressed, partially intoxicated state he could surely remember—

Mary Lou crying for him to stay home to play with her; tears of disappointment in her eyes when he had broken a promise; a shrill, screaming voice which accused him, labeling him a failure as a father; Johnnie pleading with him to stay home and help construct a new toy; a childish attempt at bravery when his dad could not attend the little league game and watch him play; a flicker of hope on his son's face that died instantly when told that fulfilling plans would be impossible because there was work to be done at the hospital; numbed words of disappointment in his son's voice that tugged at the doctor's heart but which he could not help; Margaret's coolness about his failure to spend enough time with his family; her controlled insinuations that he considered the hospital of more importance than his children; her remarks about memorizing an apology for him to their friends.

Exhausted, the doctor attempted (Continued on Page 6)



## PORTRAIT OF CHARLEY REED

By KAREN HERN

The horse reared on its hind feet and rolled its eyes until only the whites were visible. The man unclenched his tan, sinewy fist only to get a firmer grip on the halter strap. He stalked slowly, almost gently, toward the big horse. When he was close enough to feel the warm, panic-stricken breath of the animal on his face, he hurled the four pronged pitchfork. The horse screamed and lashed out with his front feet as the pitchfork grazed its ribs.

"I hope it kills you," a woman yelled from the back doorway of the house. She was a tiny, mousy little woman with stringy brown hair and blue eyes which flashed hatred and something akin to courage.

"Git back in the house and shut your damned mouth!" the man yelled and loosened his hold on the horse. Once again he moved gently toward the animal which was beginning to quiet down.

"I'll teach you to strike your feet at me like that," he said through clenched teeth. "I'll learn you who's boss." He led the horse into the barn. Moments later the sound of a chain striking solid flesh and the muffled screams of the horse drifted into the shabby three room house.

The woman, her face hard and unemotional, began to peel potatoes in a dirty, stained pan which had seen enough potatoes to feed a southern army. A little girl, her dark eyes full of tears and hatred, stared silently out of the window toward the barn.

"Mommy, why does he do it? The horse don't know what he's bein' whupped for."

"He's a big coward. He don't have the nerve or guts to whup a man, but he does have the nerve to tie up an animal and whup it. He can win that way. He's just like his Dad. He done the very same thing."

"Mommy, when Daddy dies, I hope a horse kills him. That would sorta make up for all the horses he's whupped. He's comin' now."

The back door flew open and the man entered. His heavy black brows were drawn together and his face resembled a low-hung thundercloud. He sloshed his hands in a basin of water and wiped the dirt off on a grimy towel hung by the door on a nail.

"Dinner ready?" he grunted. The woman did not glance his way. "If we had a telephone, I'd call the police."

"Police. Huh. What for? What would you tell 'em?"

"I'd tell what you done to that horse that's what."

"Oh, hell! You keep your damn mouth shut. A man can't even run the outside work without you buttin' in. You run the house and I'll run the outside. I have a notion to sell everything I've got and go to Ohio for a job."

"Go ahead. You don't have nothin' anyway. We'd be better off without you."

"See. Everytime I git a little something you have to take a fit." He slammed out leaving a heavy silence behind.

Charley Reed sat down on a damp stump and kicked viciously at the little toadstools growing around the roots. He glanced through the trees at the little house where his wife still stood peeling potatoes. His head hurt and there was a lump in his throat. He felt like he wanted to cry. "Men don't cry," he thought and ground a white toadstool with his heel until it turned the color of the rich loam which mothered it. "I didn't want no fight, but my head hurt. I didn't want to whup Spotty, but he wouldn't do what I wanted. When a man wants something he has to fight for it." He stared at the house. It seemed to disappear and all he could see



Teacup has  
A little circlemouth  
Openwide,  
And its ear is pierced.  
—Robert Newton Cooper

was a little boy in ragged jeans. A man was talking to him.

"You hoe that cornfield and I'll give you five dollars. You have to do it good though."

"O.K. I'll hoe it." He rushed home, ate a quick dinner and ran back with his hoe. It was in the heat of the day and the dust in the road burned as it squirted up between his toes and made little spirals in the air. It was awful hot, but the sun would kill the weeds as he cut them and then there was that five dollars. With it he could buy a knife, maybe a pair of shoes and a plug of store-bought tobacco. Boy, would Billy and Grover be jealous. Not many times had they ever had five dollars all at once like that. He'd show 'em that even if he was younger, he could work as good as they could.

That evening Charley ran all the way home clutching a worn five dollar bill in his blistered hand. He burst through the door with his black eyes all aglow.

"Hi Dad," he panted. "Look. I hoed corn for old Theodore and he gave me this here five dollars."

"Yeah," his father answered and never looked up from the pile of wood shavings in the floor where he was whittling. Charley felt a little crushed, but he felt better when Billy and Grover came home and he saw the envious look on their faces. That evening at supper Charley's dad shifted restlessly. Charley knew he was longing for a good drink and a woman. It seemed one wasn't enough for him.

"If I had a little money, I'd run into Circleville and have old Bob's harness fixed."

"If you had money you'd get drunk," Charley's mother spat. "I don't have no money, Pap," Billy said, "and neither does Grover."

"That's alright."

"Charley's got a whole five dollars though."

"That's O.K. I'll see if I can fix the harness myself in the morning."

Charley felt a little sick. He knew he'd have to offer his Dad the five dollars. He knew that he would take it and Charley would never see it again. He raised his eyes and met the cold, triumphant stare of his older brothers. He felt a big lump rise in his throat.

"You can borrow my money, Dad, if you want to."

"No."

"I won't need it for a while. Not til Saturday anyway."

"Well, I could borrow it and fix that harness, I guess."

Charley never saw his five dollars again. He'd hoed blisters so

that his father could get drunk with some woman. If you want something, you have to fight for it.

The boy disappeared and the man stared at his house. He felt small and alone. He hadn't wanted to quarrel, but she'd made him. He knew he was unreasonable, and wrong, but he'd never let her know it. He was a man now and a man was ruler in his household.

Charley stood up and shook his pants legs down; he walked back to the house and entered silently. He knew he wore a sulky look, but he couldn't seem to wipe it off. He didn't care anyway. He was a grown man now. His wife, damn her, shot him a spiteful look and his daughter stared at him with her large dark eyes. He shifted a little uncomfortably. He decided that he would go and get drunk. Real drunk. There was a red-head up the road a little ways that all the men said was real cozy. She was married, but her old man was working tonight.

"I'm goin' up to Byrne's," he grunted.

"You're gonna git drunk."

"I'll get drunk if I want to."

"One of these days you'll git drunk and when you come back we won't be here."

"Yeah. Where would you go? Where would you live?"

"There's a way."

He knew that she'd never go to any of her relatives. He had threatened them once. They were

## Soon I'll Not Return

Somewhere always holds a place  
Sometime is always when  
Someone can never be there.  
Spring brings no hope,  
Summer holds only loneliness.

Soon I'll not return,  
Soon the pain will cease.

You can't see me.  
Words have no meaning,  
Looks only make the hurt grow

If I needed someone, . . .  
Can there be more than loneliness?

I hear it in conversation,  
I see it reflected in faces toward me.

Can I endure the emptiness  
Of lost meaning?

His eyes offer freedom.  
His voice offers understanding.

His thoughts are of love and warmth.

The joy of life moves with him,  
Who has the right to build a

fence there?  
Who may judge eternity?

—Monia Dean

## Jealous Fruits

(Continued from Page 1)

he saw his land ahead of him. His land, his children, his . . . wife. He stopped the truck and leaning on the fence he cried. A little gray lizard watched him nervously.

He went home, Carrie and Mike were back; the man had brought Sherry and the three of them huddled over a box in the corner, oblivious to the hum of the flies in the dirty kitchen. Lassie was having her puppies and the children were rapt with the joy of birth. One of the pups was born dead, probably from Jo's brutal kicks, but Lassie after giving it only a gentle nudging whine turned with a mother's joy to the other three.

## AND THEN . . .

(Continued from Page 5)

ed to sit up in his chair. "But this can't be all there ever was; it can't." He glanced down and his eyes again captured the heartbreaking headline. The tired voice weakly sounded disbelief, regret, surrender. "John didn't forget to invite me; my son didn't want me."

As the trembling ruin of a figure extended a hand and fumbled once again for the tall, square bottle and emptied its contents into a clear tumbler which accompanied it, the huge, shadowy painting on the wall of the dark, raging sea seemed to envelop the entire room and Dr. Benjamin Martin gasped for breath.

Just seeing the curtain fall into place at the window. One of them had been watching. He could feel the stare penetrating the car. He didn't care; he would go anyway. He was a man now and a good-looking one. The red-head thought so anyway. She didn't know that he was a coward like his wife did.

The clerk handed Charley a bottle in a brown paper bag and he stuck in under his arm. He gave the man a five dollar bill and stared with alarm as the fellow counted out his change.

"Something wrong, sir?"

"No. No. Nothing's wrong. I just thought I saw blisters on my hand, that all."

## Please Try to Understand

(Continued from page 3)

have any trouble getting to sleep.

The next three weeks rolled by in a hurry. She was busy at work, and her evenings were always filled with dates with guys she couldn't care any less about. She only dated them to keep up the pretense of her lies. But the young, good-looking male friends had kept her mind off of the dangerous game she was playing.

In three weeks she was on her way back again. That was all the longer she could stand to be away from him. She pulled up in front of his rooming house. He rushed out and leaped into the car.

"Let's go. I've been waiting for you for over an hour. I thought maybe you'd changed your mind and decided not to come."

"You know me better than that. I'd never do anything like that. Once I decide to come down, you know that I'll be here. You know you can trust me to keep my word. Have I ever let you down before?"

"No. And that's why I love you so much. You're so different from Sue. I can trust you. I need you. You know that."

The next thing she knew, they were sitting in "their" booth at the Russian Club. Then, as they sat there holding hands and not saying anything, his words came back to her like an explosion in her head—"I need you."

"That's it!" she yelled as she jumped up and ran for the door, leaving him behind with a stupe-

fied look on his face.

As she got in the car and headed for home, her thoughts were clearer than they ever had been in the two years she had been dating him.

Why didn't I think of that before? How on earth could I have been so utterly stupid? He needs me! And all along I thought I needed him. The only reason I needed him was because he made me feel like I was wanted. But he didn't need me for my love. He needed me to lean on; someone he could talk to; someone he could depend on.

And I thought I was helping him. I was only standing in his way. All he needs is to be able to make his own decisions; decide what is right for himself. Thank God I realized what I was doing before it was too late. Now, with me gone, maybe he can stand on his own two feet. Maybe he can make the right decision without any pushing from me. Maybe someday he'll be a man enough to accept the responsibility of having a wife. Maybe then I can love him. Love him for himself, not for me.

Two hours later she pulled up in front of her apartment and raced up the newly waxed stairs. She picked up the phone and dialed a familiar number.

"Hello, Mom, I have something to tell you. Please try to understand."