May Day came along just in time this year—for the Fine Arts Guilds, that is. If May Day had not fallen opportunely upon the first day of the Fine Arts Festival, FAG would have been hard-pressed to give the festival some kind of fresh character. That’s the trouble with FAF. Its tradition is such a boon and yet such a bane. FAG, with its lively and gaudy spring festival, burst upon the campus two years ago; it was exciting and promising. We all felt it would last. But FAF and FAG were so strong that now we are tempted to be continually backward-looking, reliant upon precedent to shape our vision. The truth is, however, that FAG today need make no apologies to the past. It’s problems are forward-looking: FAG is being challenged to clarify its relationship to the rest of the college, to its mentor, to the President, to Thespians, to the English, music, and physical education departments. FAG needs a clearer stand on artistic freedom at Calvin. And as always, a few of the guilds are faltering and need new blood. However, FAG is growing in the most important way—its roots are getting stronger; the individual guilds, notably Visual Arts, Writers, and Music, are producing, quietly and steadily, doing good for a lot of people. That seems to be making the best of the tradition.
Drama:
1st: Timothy Straayer, *A Bowl of Cherries*

Fiction:
1st: Randall VanderMey, *The Contract*
2nd: Douglas Brouwer, *Insomnia*
3rd: David Schaafsma, *The Touch*
HM: Douglas Brouwer, *Dr. Chicago*
Randall VanderMey, *Hercules the Reprobate*
Timothy Straayer, *Short Story*

Poetry:
1st: Richard Stravers, *Dear Steve*
2nd: Thomas Konyndyk, *John Kirkland's Poem*
HM: Richard Stravers, *Cotton Club, 1928*
Thomas Konyndyk, *A View from the Sixth Floor*
Dan Koerner, *michigan*

Scored Composition:
1st: Frederic W. DeVries, *Offenbach Rag*, piano

Crafts:
1st: Bob Mulder, *Pot #1*
2nd: Brenda VanHalsema, *Grisaille*

Drawing:
2nd: Lynn Muller, *Untitled*
3rd: Jane Ritzema, *Tomatoes*

Painting:
1st: Jane Ritzema, *Mirror, Mirror*
2nd: Lynn Muller, *M*
3rd: Edward Rhodes, *A Look Forward*
HM: Wendell Aukeman, *Self Portrait*

Photography:
1st: Dave Aupperlee, *Johnny On His Bicycle*
2nd: Ted Recker, *Cool It! Sonny*
3rd: Robert Eskes, *Railroad Station*
HM: Tim Bosma, *Dream 17*

Prints:
1st: Jane Ritzema, *Field Flowers*
2nd: Lynn Muller, *Watergate Who*
3rd: Marty Goldsword, *Rocking Chair*

*Art work photographed by Philip Schaafsma*
Mirror, Mirror

Jane Ritzema
Dear Steve,

Today I remembered that you liked Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and that you had one hundred copies of A Coney Island of the Mind, and that each one of them was missing the page with the jellybean poem, because, you said, that was the one the children liked to eat.

Richard Stravers

"Mom," said Katie, standing in the doorway to the bedroom. Miranda’s hands were raised to her left eyelid, performing delicate surgery with a brush and black liner on the flinching lashes. Her jaw was dropped so that her mouth made a surprised looking capital O.

"Katie," she said without turning on her stool. Her eye rotated until it spied the reflection of her daughter standing in pink jammies, no bigger than a spray can in the mirror and almost obscured by the glare of make-up lights and the reflection of her own branched arms and sagging hair.

"Mommy just put you in bed. You get back there."

"I want to know what that noise is."

"I want you sleeping by the time I leave," Miranda said. She dropped her arms and looked critically at her semi-profile, blinking twice. Then she said over her shoulder with an uplift in her voice, "What noise?" She wondered with a hint of alarm whether it might already be a car outside, pulling up with Darryl in it. If so, she thought, he would be almost to the front door by now, reaching for the bell and standing there with one hand in his key pocket jiggling and his row of perfect teeth illuminating the night.

"I don’t know," said Katie. She came forward for her mother’s hand and tried to pull her toward the window.

"Just a minute," Miranda said, half-rising. She was noticing how gruesome her hand appeared when embraced by her daughter’s fat pink one, how mottled, sinuous, and shiny. "She’ll get hers," she thought with vague discomfort. Then she thought darkly of her hand in Darryl’s, of the
new yet old, the exciting yet somehow preposterous relationship that that would represent. "Mommy will come in a minute," she said, as she shooed these thoughts away and turned sideways to the mirror to check the fit of her floor-length orange halter dress, first pulling the shoulder straps together, then spreading them apart a bit until her tan breastbone stood exposed like a stretch of sand dune, wiping all expression from her face in an uncompromising self-appraisal, and finally relaxing and giving the dress a little tailor tug at the hips.

"Okay," she said, as she seized a hairbrush in one hand and reached with the other across the dressing table to snap off the makeup lights, causing the crystal forest of vials and decanters on the table to clank like a Coca-Cola truck.

Mother and daughter moved to the window—rather, daughter pulled and mother came tagging after, working out snarls with the hairbrush, until the two of them stood hand in hand, silent and anonymous in the darkness which strained through the screen and flowed about them in rivulets, transported on the cool influence of air. There was a thin diffusion of last-light in the sky turning the horizon a hue of aquamarine against which trees and occasional houses rose like a black design. Miranda was relieved that no car had yet come by to drive back her soul as it began to escape through the screen into the exhilarating and dangerous atmosphere. She felt womanly, independent, obstinately proud, but she knew that she was coming under siege.

Katie pointed up at the air. "Someone's singing up there." She looked up at her mother, and Miranda looked down at the little upside-down face.

Miranda felt herself surge. Through her daughter's ears she now heard a lone cicada raising its high razz above all the other insects and night frogs and knew that it had been doing so all evening while she had sat unaware at the dressing table, dabbling in perfumes and elixirs. Children have that great gift of being naked to their senses, of seeing and either believing or feeling wonder more acutely than a chest pain. What do adults do, she thought, as she took a rope of her daughter's dark hair and let it comfort her hand. They catalog their pains and file them with their fit precautions. Hear sounds, see things, in categories. Lose touch with their nerve endings, wrap themselves in gauze, embalm themselves in habitual conduct.

Sifting the brush through Katie's hair, she listened to the high voice rise like a spirit and fill the air. Suddenly she felt uneasy in her skin. Her bones ached with a will to expand, to fly apart and climb like music to the tops of trees where she could be a weightless wonder, loudly praising life.

"That's a cicada," she said, as if she had invented it.

"A scada?" Katie tried.

"A ci-ca-da," Miranda corrected, but an old consciousness was already beginning to weigh her down. "Only the male cicada sings. He goes down underground for sixteen whole years before he comes up."

"Does he die down there?"

"I guess so," Miranda snorted. Then she looked hard and straight through the screen at nothing.

The word "male" had brought Bill to mind—Bill, her thrust-jawed, smoke-throated husband, who lived for the luxuries of football, money, and meat and kept her like a fourth luxury by a detestable power lodged in his fingertips, prodding her in some recoiling point in her back to fetch him cans of beer, put peanuts on his ice cream, and keep his underwear white—the word had brought him to mind coldly and flatly like a tax notice arriving in the mail. He had not given her priority over his salary for over three years; she had not appreciated his body, any of it, for at least that long. She was glad, now that he had been gone for two weeks out of three on business, that she could look at him long-distance, without her usual immediate fury, with only the resolute disgust out of which major decisions might later be made. Her lips distended with a definite class hatred, an amalgamation of all the new hates and prides and grievances and assertions she had never been allowed to harbor or express before. She had given no thought to liberation for women before the gassy days of Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, and Ms. magazine. Even now she was no activist—she kept
her breasts tethered, wore only polyester slacks, and had too round a face for Gloria Steinem goggles. She had no desire for war but lately had begun to want some kind of skirmish in the worst way. She had lately felt one degree removed from her senses. The things that used to give her comfort—the smell of lemon wax that made her want to eat her furniture, the small godlike feeling she received when she bestowed a bag lunch on someone, that high moment after she would lose herself in darkness under an endtable, one massive wriggling behind on all fours tracking wild dust, when she would sit back on her haunches in the white sunlight and strip off her red bandanna and sigh—these had lost their sensual impact and now seemed like symbols of a blanket oppression beyond which she had never breathed since she was a baby. She wanted to choke the source of it now, only she needed an object, the closest thing, anything, Bill. And now as she listened to the cicada with Katie, she heard it as a siren warning her of what? She did not know. Calling her out of herself. Or into herself. Or warning her of herself. She did not know. But it made her think of a big maroon volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica on the day when all her hates had congealed. An article on the cicada. She had heard the singing voices outside her window for the first time in so many years and had read from curiosity, read until she knew all about the singing male and his mute, egg-toting woman. And then that light quotation that had pulsed upon the page, some ancient Xenarchus, snickering:

Happy are the cicada's lives,
For they all have voiceless wives.
(Happy are the cicadas' lives, for they all have voiceless wives, voiceless WIVES, VOICELESS WIVES)

Katie began to yank on Miranda's arm and pointed to the lawn. Miranda refocused her gaze. A pair of headlights in the driveway was casting a pale frost over the lawn, turning the shrubs to cones and cylinders.

"Is that Daddy?" Datie said. She was holding Miranda's wrist with two hands.

Miranda turned from the window, lightly guiding Katie with a hand behind her head.
“Come on. You were supposed to be sleeping by now.”

“Is Daddy here?”

No. That’s a friend of Mommy’s.”

Katie was satisfied and tired. She gave no resistance when Miranda nudged her toward her bedroom down the hall.

“I know what a scada is,” she mumbled in the baby voice she always used before falling asleep. There was a double rap on the front door.

“Good for you,” whispered Miranda with the lack of inflection that only mothers can manage to use without sounding sarcastic, and she quickened her step, stopping at the mirror, flipping a loose curl, dropping the brush, sounding sarcastic, and she quickened her legs on the passenger side as Darryl made preparations to drive.

When the front door swung open, there were Darryl’s perfect teeth. He was wearing a white shirt with broken red stitching. His hair was styled. “Better than mine,” thought Miranda. He hesitated before circling to the driver’s side. Exhaling, he snurled at her, “Care to philosophize, ‘screw you.’

“Darryl,” she said as if about to drive?

“There,” she started to think, crossing her legs on the passenger side as Darryl made preparations to drive, “we’re about where we were the other night.” Her thoughts began to run to his lifted brown eyes covering her face like water. She stepped at him, turned, and pulled on the door until the night lock clicked. She was proud of that phrase.

Walking to the car, she felt quite handsome with Darryl. He was wearing blue suede shoes, a blue knit suit, and a white shirt with broken red stitching. Up from the open collar sprang a very confident and young head, graced by a nose that had never met violence. His hair was styled. “Better than mine,” thought Miranda. He hesitated before circling to the driver’s side. Extending the keys, he said, “Care to drive?”

“Darryl,” she as if about to philosophize, “screw you.”

And with perfect timing, feeling at the same time more shrewd and more tender than she had ever felt before in her life, no longer a mother but a woman, utterly perishable, she had said with full purpose, “I think I already am.” The present contract was made later in some haste, euphoria, and fear.

The scene now worried Miranda more and more. The tenderness, the water in her eyes, were gone. She felt grounded. The special language reserved for Darryl bothered her. It was not the one she used with Katie. This had a special vocabulary, a violent one, and the present deal was beginning to seem like a single word in it. She stirred. Liberation. The word was a joke. “From what to what?” “From what I was to what I am?” Pah. “When I’m liberated to a man’s level, we’ll both have to be liberated from something else,” she shouted to herself. She looked heatedly at Darryl. He seemed no more a man, no less a monster, than Bill. She pitied him. He was hands and knees in the same dirt as the rank smell of cigarettes and beer returned to her memory, the portrait of some dream process became Darryl, smiling as he had smiled all that night when they had talked over drinks about women and liberation, smiling as he was smiling now beside her in the car. No, she had talked about women and liberation; he had listened, nodding and saying “uh huh” to all her woes. He had leaned most reassuringly into the conversation as she described how it felt to be stifled and oppressed, how it felt to have your dime worth a nickel at a job, how it felt to be proprietor but not the owner of a home, how degrading it felt to be forced to use sex as a weapon. There had been a lull in the conversation when each had suddenly felt the force of the other’s thoughts. They had each looked elsewhere, and she had become aware that her eyes were red and full of water from smoke and feeling. When she had looked again at Darryl, he had been staring at her. There was an understanding in the air. Then every moment she stared back had fed a heat growing in her throat and ears.

“You know,” he had finally said, “I think you need to be seduced for once.”

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her. Handsome Darryl. She thought of
the dust on her furniture. She was
furniture. Her thoughts and mistakes
were dust. She was being buried. The
word "resurrection" came to mind,
and it led her back to the cicada, six­
ten years a grub sucking on roots in
the ground, shedding its skin, climbing
its tree, crawling out on top of its little
branch and singing! Singing! Singing!
Source of the wind. High. Feather­
light!
Her thoughts were rushing by in a
wind and mingling with the sound of
wind rushing by the windows, so it
was impossible to tell if there might
not be a cicada voice out there some­
where right now, above the car. Yes,
there it was, like a ringing in the ears.
She turned again to Darryl. He took
his eyes from the road for a moment
and lifted his eyebrows at her.
"The cicadas are back," she
shouted, trying to be heard above the
noise.
"What?" Darryl said.
"Do you hear the cicada?"
"Haven't heard it," he replied, clos­
ing his side vent.
Miranda was surprised.
"I can hear it right now," she said.
Darryl cocked his head, listening
above the wind noise, then shook it,
still not hearing.
"Stop the car," Miranda said.
"What?"
"Stop it. I want you to hear it."
Darryl gave an indulgent smirk as if
the giant were allowing one more
game.
"You're crazy," he said, as he
brought the car to a stop by the curb.
"What do you hear?"
Miranda rolled down the window,
suddenly thinking of Katie and want­
ing her ears. But leaning into the
cooler air, she heard crickets, frogs,
and other buzzers—but no cicada. She
felt betrayed. Darryl, leaning over to
hear the sound that was not there, put
his warm hand on her shoulder and
smiled.
There were no thoughts in her mind
now. Miranda drew back and looked
straight forward through the wind­
shield.
"I just know he's up there."
"Maybe he's up there listening to
you," Darryl mocked, searching out
her cold hand with his.
EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a sample drawn from the FAF prize-winning play. Space forbids us to print the 34-page play in its entirety. We apologize for any resulting inconsistencies in the script.

'Speak for yourself' said the egg woman.

'I can’t speak for anyone else,' I said, 'I don’t know the language.'

Gulley Jimson

The characters: WORLD DUPE ROTTER a girl PASTOR PSYCHOLOGIST ARTIST PHILOSOPHER the DEVIL

A Bowl of Railroad Station

Robert Eskes
Cherries
Timothy Straayer

ACT TWO

An indeterminate, black interior.
Suffused light.
WORLD DUPE on the floor in his toppled can, as before.

WORLD DUPE (Sighs, then abruptly shouts.):
HELLO!

(Pause.)
No answer.
(Shouts.)
HELLO!
(He pulls off the glasses, tosses them into the black. No sound. He opens his eyes.)
OMIGAWD! It's getting worse.
(Pause.)
The company's gone and I never said goodbye.
(Nervous giggles.)
Well, I'd better count the silverware.
(More giggles. Shouts.)
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
(Pause.)
Calm down. It's been coming for a long time the world less and less real; I've finally slipped out of it, is all.
(Pause.)
The wasteland.
(Pause.)
My mother, the crypt.
(Pause.)
I'm slipping. Faster and faster I'm slipping. Even here it's only a stage on life's way.
(Pause.)
Which means hope? Detestable word. I abhor it.
(Pause.)
Yet I would give anything for it. Oh, I would sell my soul for something real!
(A muted thump is heard. Again, and the DEVIL appears from between the swaying folds of the blackness. He is dressed in a worn suit, and carrying a briefcase.)
DEVIL (Stumbles and falls.):
Damn! Doesn't anybody shovel this stuff??
WORLD DUPE:
Another person! Oh, salvation!
DEVIL:
Shut your mouth! What I have to put up with!
WORLD DUPE:
But you'll help me?
DEVIL (Cannily.):
Could be. You the schnook who's yelling for some reality?
For some answers?
WORLD DUPE (Hesitantly.):
Yes, I--
DEVIL:
—who's willing to pay?
WORLD DUPE:
What do you mean--hey! How do you know what I've been saying? Have you been listening?
DEVIL:
Boy, are you naive! These days everybody's listening. You take it for granted.
WORLD DUPE:
What are you here for?
DEVIL:
You made a proposition and I came. You deny it?
WORLD DUPE:
You made a proposition and I came. You deny it?
WORLD DUPE:
I don't know what you're talking about.
DEVIL:
Come on, already. You said you'd sell your soul for some reality.
WORLD DUPE:
Sure, but I-- (Suddenly realizing.) You're the Devil?
DEVIL:
Who else in this godforsaken place?
WORLD DUPE (Skeptically.):
You really are the Devil?
DEVIL:
All day with this! All the way out here on my lunch hour and you waste my time. Listen, if you don't want to talk business, I've got a meter running.
WORLD DUPE:
You come by cab?
DEVIL:
I've got no time to clown.
(He moves to leave.)
WORLD DUPE:
No, wait! Let's talk. Help me up.
DEVIL (Struggles desperately to right WORLD DUPE and the can.):
Cripes, you weigh a ton!
No one laughed last year. No one told a joke. All the anecdotes I heard were reverent ones. For that matter. No new cliches were created, which disrupted a tradition, I suppose, and created a new one.

In college, where I apparently grew up, we laughed much of the time. We disrupted no traditions and, presumably, created no new ones.

For my friends college was a legitimate excuse, an excuse to avoid a significant confrontation with reality for four years. They were bored. I had no interests, either, although I had several ambitions, of course. But no interests. There is a difference, I am convinced, between interests and ambitions.

On Friday nights we searched for dingy cafés without ever knowing what it was, in particular, we were searching for. Once we found a dingy café which advertised, in pink neon, “Live Country Music—all nite long.” Inside we saw two hollow-cheeked musicians playing Creedence Clearwater on red, white, and blue electric guitars. It was crowded. There were no open tables. Women with tight, white vinyl boots, crushed velvet hot pants, and tall blond wigs giggled and slouched at the bar. We left, it was dingy, it made us sick, we laughed.

During the week we laughed at lecturers. We counted how many times they would add the letters “ly” to words which were properly adverbs anyway. We imitated their mannerisms with gross caricatures in our absurdist, street-theater comedies. We were derisive. Pseudo-intellectuals, some disgustedly labeled us. Caricatures.

But now. Apparently grown up. Away from college friends. I seem to have lost my sense of the whole. The particular has won out—temporarily, at least—over the universal. I pray in specifics. I wait for events to take a form. I do not sleep well.

I took an accounting course and tried applying accounting concepts, like accrual, to my feelings. I used to think that my hatred—or even my scorn and despair—had no consequences. Not immediate ones, anyway. But I found that they actually accrue. Other feelings too. An expanding inventory. Or perhaps a growing reserve for contingencies. But why and for what? Accounting principles, unfortunately, offer no real answers. The answers themselves demand subjective interpretation.

One professor, who usually showed more wisdom than kindness, wrote at length in the margin of my term paper: “Independence, like pregnancy, is one of the single-value terms of the language. You cannot be almost, or even a little bit, pregnant.” I did not understand.

In college. Derision. Laughter. Caricatures. Pseudo-intellectuals. All to gain autonomy, to be independent, to project our own unique identities. Some events, not all, were taking a form. Flesming out. Even accruing, little by little. Forming a pattern. Becoming understandable. Making sense. Fitting into the Judeo-Christian framework. We were not independent at all. Autonomy.

Now here. Where I have worked for the last year since graduating from college. Where no one tells jokes, laughs, communicates, which is why I am reflective, seeking universals and first principles. And, in brief, the whole point of this thing. Gosh.

I work for a modest daily evening urban newspaper. I work for a modest salary, write modest articles, and have modest ambitions. Still no interests to speak of. My memory has gradually disintegrated. My recollections have grown disjointed. Particulars are still clashing with universals. I have two unfinished novels. Beginnings and endings. But no content.

I do more writing now than I used to. More words. But I have trouble with transitions. I cannot go from one thought to another smoothly. With finesse. With authority. I am a vacillator besides. In college I started seven
beards, fifteen mustaches. After three or four days, however, I became fidgety. Impatient with my face. I finally shaved them off. I led several lives. Some bearded. Some not. I continue to lead some of them, although things have changed very much. Sometimes more than once. I write longhand.

The girl. Yes. What story would be complete without one? The girl. The heroine. The antagonist. The whole thing has unfolded now. Anyone with the least little bit of perception could have seen it coming. A chess grandmaster sees them coming. A mile down the road. A serious blunder if he doesn't. The old lonely-boy-meets-lonely-girl routine. It never changes. Things repeat themselves, I am convinced.

We, she and I, work for the same modest daily evening urban newspaper. We both write modest articles, although I know that she has more of the journalist instinct. I frequently get articles back from the editor with a note and arrow in the margin: “avoid this like the plague” or “this is bland.” I now label my news stories “Bland news story no. 1.” “Bland news story no. 2.” And so on.

I have had only two conversations with the editor since I started working here a year ago. I unsuccessfully tried to explain how hard it is to be creative in your writing when there is no dialog between staff members, when there is no mutual reinforcement. Edification. “You’ll have to remember,” he smiled, “that this is not a poetry workshop. We are all professional journalists here.”

Our conversations were short. To the point. He never offered me freeze-dried coffee. Never laughed nervously and apologized for the disorder of his office. Never encouraged me to explain my feelings on the role of journalism in a changing society. Never put me at ease. Once he found out that I had turned down an offer to work full-time writing press releases for a former National Football League running back who was seeking a Republican congressional nomination.

“You were foolish,” he said patronizingly. “Someday you’ll really regret it.” I didn’t care.

He wore double-knit suits. He smiled. He ended our conversations abruptly, walked me to the door, shook my hand, closed the door. I now think professional journalist several times a day. Professional journalist.

I hardly know anyone here, except G, who has kind eyes and a sweet name. She has been here as long as I have.

I made the first move. I smiled. And of course there was nothing unusual about this strategy. The man is the aggressor. It is virtually an immutable rule. Iron-clad. Despite the enlightenment which, they say, has come with liberation. And other uncertainties. It is par for the course.

The first move was to the restroom, however, and not to her desk, where she had been sitting that day as usual. Cross-legged. I combed my hair, parted it somewhat closer to the center, and lightly slapped my cheeks, which, as I imagined it, made my red blood surge into expanding capillaries, bringing a ruddy, outdoor glow to my pale, old-looking face. This was all supposed to make me seem so much more attractive and appealing. High school stuff.

And with all the bland courtesy and sickening agreeability I could muster, I asked her out. For a date. Bland courtesy.

I had read nearly all the news
WORLD DUPE: Watch it, watch it!
(The can is gotten upright.)
That wasn’t a very convincing show of strength.
DEVIL: What’s it to you? I haven’t had a decent night’s sleep in God knows how long.
WORLD DUPE: How do I know you’ll deliver?
DEVIL: What’s the risk? I don’t deliver, there’s the chance you don’t have to pay.
WORLD DUPE: The chance!
DEVIL: Look, buddy, ‘the rate you’re going . . .
WORLD DUPE: O.K., O.K.
(Pause. Then, curiously.)
Why deal at all?
DEVIL (Shrugs.): I like a sure thing. Besides, you don’t ask much.
WORLD DUPE: Reality?
DEVIL: Hey! Some guys want cars, women, Tahiti. You think that’s easy to deliver?
WORLD DUPE: Well . . .
DEVIL: All right, then.
(Pause.)
Now, you gonna sign?
WORLD DUPE: I suppose so. There’s not much to lose.
DEVIL: Great! I got the papers here somehwere.
(Digs through the briefcase, pulls forth a contract.)
WORLD DUPE (Apprehensively.)
Do I have to sign in blood?
DEVIL: What blood? Ballpoint’s not good enough for you?
WORLD DUPE: I had always read—
DEVIL: Sure, all those pagan Christian writers.
(He hands WORLD DUPE the contract and a pen. He turns and WORLD DUPE signs the document on his back.)
Sign all three pages. By the X’s.
WORLD DUPE: Why all the paperwork?
DEVIL: We’ve had problems in court.
WORLD DUPE (Unbelieving.):
No!
DEVIL: You wouldn’t believe it.

I am the Good Shepherd, Jn 10:11/Is 40:1

WORLD DUPE: Well, where’s my end of the bargain?
DEVIL (Returns the contract to his briefcase. With irritation.):
Just a minute. I’ll get it.
(He exits, stepping very gingerly, then returns with a gift-wrapped box.)
Here.
WORLD DUPE (Breaks the wrapping, opens the box, peers inside.):
Hey! what the—
(He holds it upside down.)
It’s empty! There’s nothing inside!
(He drops the box, holds his mouth and forehead.)
OMIGAWD!
DEVIL (Throws his head back and roars with laughter.):
Now you go to hell!
CURTAIN

ACT THREE

WORLD DUPE:
Ahh...
(Pause.)
Home again.
(Pause.)
Ah. I sleep to prepare for waking. I die to prepare for li— Hey! Something happened!
(Pause.)
The end the same, but... a messy middle. And inasmuch as that, not all the same.
(Amazed.)
I bounce!
(Pause.)
I bounce between Apollo and the Sot in this wonderland of madness and rain.

PASTOR:
Regurgitant of the Lordgodalmighty; a child of sin,

PSYCHOLOGIST:
And deprivation.

PHILOSOPHER:
A professor of the cosmic indifference; a mathematical sequence of despair.

ARTIST:
A sterile chancre twenty years out from the void.

WORLD DUPE:
Dancing from point to ridiculous point in the tempest and the mud. For the hacks.
(Pause.)
I bounce from the sevens and the fours. I bounce from the cubes and square roots.

PASTOR:
Imagine in this universe of numbers, the inability to add,

ARTIST:
Subtract,

WORLD DUPE (Forlornly.):
And multiply.

PSYCHOLOGIST:
A mindless desperation at the odds tables.

WORLD DUPE:
Juggling a cosmos, two seconds from oblivion.

PSYCHOLOGIST:
Jabs and thrusts in the morbid psychic graveyard of the id.

WORLD DUPE:
At the end of the month I'm still broke; I'm still dreaming.

ARTIST:
It's a straight line no matter how you play it. No one's going to let you get away with a thing.

WORLD DUPE:
I trip down the cesspool stream, blowing bubbles merrily, merrily. Life is but a dream.
(The lights dim in the cell.)

THE VOICE OF THE DEVIL (From above the group.):
And the dream goes on.

CURTAIN
stories and features which she had written in the last year. They were pleasant, for the most part, easy to read, even innocuous. They were often philosophically unsound as well. One of her lead sentences was, for example: "It's too early to be certain." It was a mysterious brand of epistemology, in any case, and I was interested. Genuinely. I had developed an interest.

We, she and I, went to an avant-garde, multi-media, multi-experience show which was touring the country to make money. Obviously. I couldn't imagine another reason why someone would produce such a thing. I thought it would be another one of those productions where you don't know which one of five screens to watch, where the quadrasonic sound gives everyone motion sickness, and where the rapid-fire showing of out-of-focus slides makes everyone dizzy. Out of sorts, multi-experience.

Actually it was free for us because press credentials allow journalists to see nearly anything. We had a sense of civic identity besides. G especially appreciated that aspect, I think. Journalists apparently command a certain community respect. They have a certain mystique. Aura, perhaps. They can see things that others may not: World Series games, moon shots, inauguration parades, accidents, fires, napalmed villages, assorted disasters. A privileged group. G loved it. In an innocuous way.

The doors did not open at the time which the advertisements had promised. I cynically imagined that inside the producers had discovered a malfunction in their technological triumph. I had a cynical imagination. We waited. It was cold. I felt somewhat responsible for her being cold. A new feeling—not guilt, perhaps concern. I put my arm around her. Held her. For the first time. It seemed like the thing to do, after all. People do huddle together in the cold. For body warmth. I have seen it in movies. She looked up quickly. Surprised. But kept talking. She steamed my glasses. She never mentioned it. Then or later. I imagined that she considered it a kind of paternalistic gesture. Steamed glasses.

No one got motion sickness during the show. No one near me, anyway. The show itself wasn't even as bad as I expected. Except that it was long. Terribly long. We, she and I, sat. And sat. I shifted my weight. Forward. Backward. To the side. I dangled my legs in the aisle. Propped my chin on my knees. Wished like heck that there would be an intermission so I could dash to the restroom. It was a terrible night. Worst in memory. I got my first hemorrhoid. Love comes in much the same way, I am told. No one has to explain to you what it is. You'll know when you've got the real thing, they say. I knew. It was the real thing. A hemorrhoid.

Afterwards, over coffee, I told her about some South American Catholic priests who regularly walk across glowing coals to demonstrate to the natives, among other things, the mystical quality of their God. I told her that I had just read in the paper that these priests were going through a crisis of faith one day and, consequently, blistered the heck out of their feet. It was the first funny story I had told since college. She didn't laugh. Didn't even smile.

She was not technically a Protestant, I learned later. She was not technically anything. But she had an interest. To know. To do good. Her father was an agnostic, she said. I imagined that her mother took her, when she was younger, to church and Sunday school. For the exposure. To get all sides. She claimed that she belonged to three or four different Bible study groups which met on the weekend. It was hard to believe. For one thing she openly doubted the efficacy of prayer. For another she was quite lonely.

"It's for an eclectic cross-section," she said. "I'm not a religious person, just terribly interested."

We, she and I, went on a Saturday canoe trip once with several friends. I was, of course, an expert in the essential Boy Scout skills. I knew everything from knot-tying to flag-saluting. I was excited. She was, I think, singularly unexcited about the whole trip. Our canoe was the last one in the water and the first one out. When we had paddled far ahead of the rest of the canoes, she turned and told me about a close friend who nearly died from an overdose, who came as close
to death without dying as anyone she had ever known. But her friend did not remember seeing God, she said. Did not even feel close to him. “You’d think that if God did exist, he would’ve felt something,” she concluded. She was kneeling in the front of the canoe, padding mechanically. I didn’t say anything. I didn’t know what to say. She never spoke about death again. It was October.

We went out several times. People still call it dating, although they say it now without much enthusiasm. We were quite afraid of each other, I think. There was little substance to our conversations, and I was partially to blame for that. While she talked, I watched her eyes. They seemed earnest and trusting. During the time I knew her, she changed roommates five times and changed apartments three times. A record. We never discussed the moves. I never knew the reasons for them.

“I moved in with M, the redhead,” she would say. “It’s a better arrangement.”

She changed her outlook on life, her philosophy, as often as she changed apartments. She simply announced that she viewed events in a different way. That was that. There was no discussion. There would be no discussion. She apparently never despised. Was never uncertain. Made transitions easier that I did. And she made enough of them, God knows. Incidents rarely seemed to get out of control for her. Out of hand. One time while she was working late at night, trying to meet a deadline, she telephoned me. She burst into tears, threatened to quit the newspaper business, and sobbed into the telephone. I got dressed and drove to the newspaper office where I found her composed and typing. Her eyes showed no signs of crying. That was as close as we ever came to a personal relationship. That was the first time she expressed a need that I could possibly meet. I went home. I did not sleep well.

I remember asking my grandfather, who did not sleep well himself sometimes, about insomnia. “When you can’t get to sleep,” he said, “tell yourself the story of your life.” The story of your life.

I write this story.

John Kirkland’s Poem

Semi-retarded John Kirkland
Wheels a trash cart
Filled with bottles of blood around St. Mary’s hospital
His senses aren’t dulled
He hates the rotting smells

His mother is dead
His father’s outstripped
His son’s incapacity
With a stroke

John’s head tilts to one side
Like a question
He believes in Jesus Christ

I think I see sometimes
What Jesus Christ could be
Behind that stupid smile

John’s got a bottle of Boone’s Farm wine
Stashed beneath his bed
Hiding it from no one
He boasts about it and keeps it hidden there

His immense puffed doltish face
Is filled with acne
Uncatalogued germs
Lurk beneath his pores

Thomas Konyndyk
Michigan

I

Spring comes rainy and rotting
to the land of mesikami
the land is deep with muck
clammy queasy sucking
bloated grip
of bloated body

we too are shivering in
the fiftieth futile spring
of franchise we are
infected by the land
our lodges have no tears left
deer and rabbit have fled
the holy spring is cloudy

we must die gracefully

we shall dance around our grave
in the field at last
we shall return
to the earth
we shall return

the beauty of the dance
will ease our duty
let the shaman chant no elegy
let only the last dance
our fathers taught us
slow the step let
move by rhyme and
crush the grip
of regret

II

What do you crazy redskins think you're doing?
Get off my land.
I've worked this earth for fifty years
and never asked you to feed it.
My great-grandfather took it;
it's too late to go back,
even for you.
You must die gracefully,
in a funeral parlor, perhaps.
My roots have no use for you;
their fingers will not wind
around your fingers.
It's too late for you.
Get off, I said.
Die, if you must,
but properly,
and far from here.

III

let us stop
we must rhyme this pale moment
that beats knuckles hard
to crack the rhythm

pale one
it is not too late for us
we know
only this dance is left us

we know
the roads the gray highways
are solid-state conductor nodes
buried in the black metal hand
precise efficient and each
exploding with the desert lightning
of the dance
we are here
we have seen
the gray skeletons of trees
we are there in mt pleasant
a mere hundred miles from hell
and from williamsburg gas pits
one past outburst
we hear
the dark steel whine
through the hot night
we see
the harsh tungsten torches
but not for sorrow
no prayer for sparrows and rabbits
no memorial for squirrels and deer
and only road gravel gravestones
fifty years have passed for mourning
we must die gracefully
we must dance gracefully
to die gracefully
we die gracefully

Rain falls gently on the mass grave.
Requiescat in pace.
The rich brown earth,
sprinkled with faded leaves,
lies damp and fresh in a mound.
It's a freckled, clenched fist
that opens slowly and
gathers dancers down.

vi
The snow falls with white fingers downward.
The snow rises through pale green fingers upward.
Downward—upward—
twined with the time of—
my land!

vii
the hand the depths stir
the hand is the womb
and our land lives
this will be our moment to remember
the hand uncurls and
drops clods of rich loam on my lips
and my eyes open to sky blues
i stand up slowly
i laugh and laughing jubilee
i smell the strokes of a breeze
i taste the song of a blue-vein creek
i touch the sweaty sparkle of a lake
i hear the brown flex of fine-muscled hills
and i see jubilee

si quaeris peninsulam amoenam circumspice

Daniel Koerner
A man who looks forty stands there in the street crying so loud. So very loudly he tells us, "I have been abused," and then very softly, with clenched fists and tears forming on the brims of his eyes he repeats, "I have been abused." I know now that I should be at a movie or something, to forget the possibility of such dreams as this becoming real. I should be, I am thinking, home in bed with a cold and a thermometer hanging under my dripping red nose. Still the man sobbed and babbled. Why is it so hot in New York, I am thinking. To my relief an old fat woman of Slavic descent moves forward from the slowly increasing group of watchers and, with tsk-tsk-tsk clucking noises issuing from her mouth, hustles the man off the street. He is bald.

II The Recognition

"You don't know me, my friends, but I think it's safe to say that I know you," he said. "There's more to this than meets the eye," I thought. "I am no stranger here." he said, "Just you remember that. Now you," he said as he waved his forefinger toward us in the small crowd, "Take me to the pilot, I insist!" He was very excited.

All of us standing near him huddled closer and tightened our circle around him, as if we were by a fire. It was early morning, so I wasn't really surprised to count only twelve of us standing there.

'Ohh,' he began to groan, "Why should I be made to feel so guilty. I am too alone to feel this way." He suddenly awoke from his mournful state to a wide-eyed indignation, and said, "I have a son who loves me, you know. There is nothing I could not have. I gave all of my life to happiness. I should be the master of my fate! If this is love, then I want none of it, I have no need of it, do you hear?"

I looked about me and the others were unmoved. Suddenly I knew I must step in or he would babble on forever. When I took his arm I knew he was trembling, and his skin hung on
his bones like a sack. At once I was unconscious.

III The Initiation

I'm drifting. Green leaves float me on the way down. Merlin has placed me in a deep sleep and little darts peck at my brain. Little flashes of light frighten me. I am in the bald man's shoes... I have no time to lose. It seems so funny to me, but there is a spiderweb around me that constricts me, binds me. There is no time to relax, because the web has Elmer's here and there, and the stuff is drying so fast I can barely breathe... I believe I would like to settle down, but there is something I must do. There is something, something... I must read a book. I want to savor it, I want to live in it, I want to forget I live apart from it. Stacks of them surround me, but when, how?... Help me now. I am frustrated beyond words. Where are the angels and the peace and the promise I need. I know it feels to want, but there is no choice. I have no time... A silent number eyes me and I feel that they've got me where they want me. They have my number... Listen to the ticking sound... A girl is sometimes in the distance, laughing with me, not at me, but I don't get the joke. There are a thousand revolutions of life and I have stepped off. I feel like I have had too much to drink or not enough sleep. My dreams are screaming, hideous nightmares with uncertain endings... All of a sudden there is a briefcase in my hand and a man stands winking before me, saying, "Twenty-four hours and no later, Stanley. You know the consequences." "You can count on me, P.F.," I reply, "Stanley Carter knows his stuff, all right. Just leave it to me."... Oh, put me on a mountain, I am thinking. I can breathe there. I will be all right there. When I open my eyes the man is gone, but I find myself at the door of a little, square, white house, where a dog, a cat and three smiling, greasy children greet me. I go automatically to the kitchen. "It's disgusting, Julia," I find myself saying. "I can't buy meat. Two twelve-year-old boys have fixed the soap box derby and the state department has dropped the manda-
tory school requirement. There are barbarians in the street disguised in hundred-dollar suits. The weak can only die cold in the streets. There is no fuel. The President has been found to be linked to the Mafia. Why, they have found six drug addicts on the Olympic track team. I don’t know who to trust anymore. I can’t find any firm ground.” “There, there, Stanley, come to Mama,” Julia says as she takes me to her breast, “It’s all right now. You just don’t think about it anymore.”

IV The Argument

When I awoke from my strange experience the bald man was shaking my hand vigorously and thanking me for helping him out. “I feel so much better now,” he said, “Thank you.”

“Sir, you don’t have to thank me,” I replied, somewhat incredulously, “I have done nothing.”

“Oh, you are mistaken. Really. You have touched me. You were the only one of the twelve who touched me, and I sincerely want to thank you for that.”

“Oh, no,” I refused.

“I assure you, I am not a man of modest means,” he said, as he put his arm around my shoulder, “I can make you very happy.”

I should be far away, I began to think again. This is nonsense. I had to lead him to some kind of rational discussion. A broad strip of shadow had come between us. We were ignoring a kind of common bond we had estab-
lished when I had touched him. More and more he reminded me of a movie actor I had once seen.

“Tell me . . . ” I approached.

“Tell you what,” he countered.

“What’s on your mind.”

“My mind. Whatever do you mean? There is nothing on my mind except to repay you for a kind service you rendered me a short time ago. Perhaps in the fiscal direction. You could use a little cold, hard cash, maybe.” He had removed his wallet from his right rear pocket while talking, and was proceeding to flip through it for an appropriate bill.

“No, I don’t need your money,” I said, “I just want to talk to you, ask you a few questions, maybe. I experienced something when we touched.

“But, the touch . . . ”

“It’s a gift, you see.”

“I’ve never known about it.”

“Oh, don’t be so sure,” he persuaded, “I think you’ve always known about it. It’s a difficult thing to be able to sense the degree of your own sensitivity. Its potential in you is boundless.”

I looked at the bald, fortyish man, growing fat and apparently foolish. He wore a long, dark beard and had brown, sad eyes, careworn and compassionate. So he was once an ulcerous businessman and now he plays these games in the street like a fool. “Come on,” I said. “There’s nothing to that. It’s just a bunch of crap you made up.”

“You know how I feel. You’ve

Unlike that which I’ve ever experienced in my life before. Do you have any idea what I’m talking about?”

“You’re off the point, friend,” he replied, “You’ve missed the base.” He was adamant. “I never touched you. I touch no one. I only cried out. You touched me, not the other way around.”

“Then what . . . ”

“You touched me. It’s that simple.”

“But, what’s the difference? An old Czech woman touched you, too.”

“No, it wasn’t enough. She was trying to keep me still. I had said enough. I was stepping out of line. She, in effect, attempted to embarrass me by trying to appear sorry for me, but I knew. And you knew.”
For Steve, (No. 2)

Wearing headphones
like earmuffs
to keep the cold out,
and the music in,
you said, unable even
to hear the sound of your own voice,
that it was getting the music in your head
that you were after.
You were, perhaps, too successful.
Like a trombone player
blowing the spit out during a rest,
you finished the final movement
by soaring into a solo
of a single hissing note.

Richard Stravers

been in my shoes. You've spent some
time walking around in my mind. You
assumed my guilt, and shared my
fears. We shared a burden. It's that
simple. Believe it.

A simple breeze cooled us as we
walked down the now sweltering street
for a bottle of pop. "Hot enough for
you?" winked the bald businessman at
a passing stranger. "Great day for a
clam bake or any kind of bake, isn't
it?" he asked a young secretary-recep­
tionist type who was helping along the
breeze with a fan.

"Who are you, anyway?" I asked
him. "Why are you doing this?"
"Just a businessman turned
And just rich enough to pay the rent.
No more, no less."

"What's so different?" I countered,
"You still have to live. You still have
to eat."

"You know the truth already. You
know how you have deadlines to meet.
You've read all the books. You can
read it in the Daily News. I have ulcers
on my ulcers, and a liver shot through
with vodka. I just two years ago came
alive. It went like this for me, as it
does for you now."

I had to admit I was curious now.
"Go on," I said.

"You will never be the same again,
my friend," he replied, enthused and
encouraged by my attentiveness, "And
you must pass it on. You shall pass it
on. It is essential. It goes on before
your eyes everyday and yet you have
never really seen it before today." He
sucked noisily on a Nehi cherry and
wiped the excess off his beard. "The
other eleven watching saw a crazy
man. You, only you, moved to help
me as a man in need. You are the
better man now. You know how to
feel, to think, to sense, to cry, to be
compassionate. Some are chosen, some
are not."

"But why me? I'm not special."
"You are not and yet you are. You
are no better and no worse than the
average man, and yet you are so spe­
cial. You are blessed with the brother­
hood sense, the no-man-is-an-island
sense."

"And what are the stipulations?" I
asked, "What's the catch?"
"If there is one, then it is this: you
must live with guilt. You become
aware of your inadequacies and are
abandoned to them. Your self-preser­
vation is up to you. You must make
the move. That is the sacrifice. That is
your burden."

I am not easily moved by such men.
I imagined that this bald man could
have been a barker at a carnival, coax­
ing the customers to the freak show. If
there had been music I would have
focused my attention to it to get my
mind off him. We were sweating and it
was very hot now.

Irritated, groping for a way out, I
asked, "Why did you offer me money,
if you are so genuinely sensitive? And
why do you approach people so false­
lly, if you are so pure?"

"Oh, I never said I was pure," he
countered, "I merely offered the mon­
ney to test you. I cannot know for sure
unless you are still curious, still con­
cerned."

"You can't teach compassion, man­
ufacture it. It's too artificial, too con­
trived. It won't last."

"Oh, yes, it always does. In every
human being there lies dormant the
seed. All he must do is touch. All he
has to do is reach forth and be moved
by the other man's misfortune." He
walked some distance down the street.
As I followed him, he continued,
"Once he has done that, he may re­
ceive the gift of The Touch and all the
promises that come with it. Like I say,
not every person. Few are chosen."

"Why so few?"
"That is a question I can't answer,
tragic and crucial as it may seem. The time we have, in these times, we must seek to pass it on.”

I was persuaded and I nodded with him quietly. “Yes,” I offered, “We must break those who are ready from the cold cycle in which they endlessly drift away.”

I thought of myself. I am a teacher, I thought, and I will be a teacher for a long time. How inured I have become. I have built a glass house around me. I can’t fully love. I can’t even cry. What a disgrace to be so close to so many and touch so few. “Will I touch my students, Stanley?” I asked him sincerely.

“A few, a few. It is always a few. You must constantly feel them, sense them, show them the way. Avoid frustration, because success is certainly scarce, yet pursue it constantly. Lead the horses to the water.”

“And teach them to drink.”

“There is nothing to learn. It is a gift, remember that.”

I pondered this some more. Stanley the bald man smiled and nodded at nearly everyone who passed by, with his arms folded behind his back. “You must assume the position,” he continued. “You must begin to cry real tears, to shake with real despair. You must be genuine. Reach them, catch them like a fisherman.”

“Fishers of men, and they might follow.”

“Some are chosen, remember that. You have it.”

With this he checked his watch and, seeing that it was almost noon, cocked his head with sudden determination and whisked his way down the street and out of sight.

V The Resolution

My knees touch the pavement. I have no strength. I am shaking violently, but the few who rush by me on the sidewalk ignore me. It is late, they are thinking, they should be getting home to their families. Don’t let me see you, you broken fool playing games in the street. I have no time for your foolishness now. I can’t get involved with it now. Don’t do it here, you’ll make a scene, they are thinking. I am crying now and the tears run gently down my reddened face in streaks. After almost five minutes a woman stops beside me and looks down at my seemingly broken frame. She shuffles her feet impatiently, and reaches to touch me, but thinks better of it and backs off. A second, a third and a fourth come near and she goes to whisper with them and shake heads with them. More of them come around and I raise my blurred eyes and explore them, to no avail. When I look at them, they become nervous and somewhat embarrassed. They don’t know exactly what to do, but somehow they can’t leave. Not yet. “I have been used,” I sob, “With the love of one friend I could have been different, but here I am. I need, I hurt.” I ramble on, until a young, blond man in a tan suit comes forward to touch me. He is unsure, but he appears sincere. I am hopeful. With apprehension I watch him approach me. Slowly, surely he reaches out. I allow him. He touches me, and without a moment’s hesitation, slumps unconscious in my arms.

Cotton Club, 1928

The music at the old Cotton Club
tap dances
at the speed of popping corn.
Black bands with white singers
play with Duke Ellington
for white audiences
in black Harlem's ballrooms.
Sounds like God taking off his suit coat.
Sounds like old radio shows
hovering in the rain over New York City.
Sounds like Grandma sitting in the kitchen
in a silk dress
listening to Jesus come
in 1928 on the hot breezes
that blow the white curtains
like heaven.
Sounds like even the dead
wish they were here.

Richard Stravers

A View from the Sixth Floor

The sunlight is licking down
the streets of this fat soiled city
as an incompetent mamma cat
with kittens too big and untrainable
she circles her days
like so many accomplishments
warming our hearts
like only well practiced and futile devotion can

Thomas Konyndyk
Acknowledgments

CALVIN COLLEGE FINE ARTS GUILDS

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