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A SCENT OF DUTY

Five more hours. The quonset hut, my home for the past ten days, is cold and impersonal. Lying on my mattress, I can feel the numbness moving through me. My body is tired as a second of pain twitches my left leg and runs into my stomach. I think I tore a ligament a couple of months ago. I must think about going home. When did I stop thinking? A commode flushes. How much of me will I leave here? The first hill... our first action... seventeen months ago. It had reminded me of the hill outside of town; the hill where we had played our war games; the hill where the painless bullets of imagination let you fall and groan; where we had bled our little cuts and then went home to heal. But as we moved up the slope, hunched and waiting for the first shot, I was afraid. The crest of the hill erupted, and the loud, white shell bursts reached for us. I clung to the frozen ground as it lurched and buckled under the impact of the mortars. "Run," I thought, "run." And soon I thought myself darting down the hill, my feet barely touching the ground; arms flaying wildly at the dark quiet behind me. And then I was on my feet, but I wasn't running. The first few steps were slow and pointed, but soon I was striding, striding toward the flashing crest. My B.A.R. roared and warmed. I was screaming and laughing and running. Only my legs and the weapon were alive... Bang, bang, you're dead...

"You're a regular dynamo, Private." The lieutenant was patting my shoulder and beaming like my high school coach had done when I made a 'spectacular' catch to save the championship game.

"Yes, Sir." I couldn't take my eyes off the dead gook.

"What's your name, Private?"

"His name's Marsh, Lieutenant; he's in my squad."

"You've got a good man here, Sergeant. Marsh, that was a damn brave thing: charging this hill. We'd probably still be down there if you hadn't made your move."

"Yes, Sir." The gook's face had been torn apart. "You're dead," I thought and a chill ran into my stomach. But, as I sat staring at the mutilated head, and listened to the chattering of the men behind me, the numbness began to move into me, drying the wetness on my cheeks.

"Don't ya know what the hell a jump-bid is, ya dumb whop bastard?" The pinochle game had started about an hour ago. Brown was bawling-out his partner, a young kid with only one leg. I was usually Brown's partner. Brown lost a foot on his first patrol. His favorite pastime is cleaning a .45 he won in a crap game and telling everyone about a guy he shot in West Virginia.

"I was the meanest sonofabitch in our county. They shipped me ovah hea to keep me from killin' those pig feds what was tryin' to ketch me runnin' shine. They said I could get me some Reds, but all I get is fros' bit and loose a foot. Y'all should a seen the way I drilled that bastard, Andrew Tally. Dumb kid shold a never pulled no knife on me. One shot, right between the eyes. Wham! Why if'n I had my foot back I'd take you boys out and show y'all how easy it is to drill a few gooks. 'Course I'd have to go a mite to come up to Sergeant Marsh's record. But tagetna... Y'all know how mean we are when we play cards tagetna, but if'n I had mah foot and the sarge wasn't shippin' statewide, man, could we show yah... Ain't that gospel, Sarge? You an' me could kill a passel a gooks fore this here po... lice action's ovah." I would nod and Brown would continue shining his .45.

"All I'd evah need is this lil ole .45 and a hill full a gooks," he would say, grinning.

Just a hill full of gooks. How many stinking hills and patrols... How many eternal seconds of mine-fields and snipers, anticipating the sound and the pain that never came. But no more. Going back. Back to the dark quiet of Yardley, Pa. Back to her. She's written faithfully; says she loves me; she... She doesn't know me; she wouldn't know what love was if it slapped her in the face. I don't know her; I don't know love; I don't know anybody... Two weeks in Japan last year... Alone in Tokyo... Walking, walking... little bodies darting all around... the noises of the city... the flashing lights on the Strip... not seeing or hearing anything specific, but realizing all of it... Taking the jo-sans and giving nothing... Little moon faces and boy breasts... puking warm beer afterward and drinking some more... Feeling clean and tired the next day... more beer... She keeps writing... My Dearest Darling Gil—Love for Always and Ever, Monica... didn't think she was actually a virgin... she wouldn't stop crying... wanted a cigarette, but she wouldn't stop crying... car was all steamed up and stinking hot... "Where you going?"... tears... "Need some air"... "I'll come with you?"... tears... "No"... "But... don't leave me alone"... "I'll be right back."
“Good Christ, Marino, you’re about the dumbest bastard I evah seen. Why the hell d’yah lead the ten?”
“Lay off the kid Brown”.
“That’s easy fah you ta say Bowen. But every time he screws up ain’t costin’ you no money.”
“It’s only a penny a point, Brown, and you took your share off Bowen and me.”
“Y’all talk big long’s your winnin’, Danovich, but ain’t the money as much as his damn dumb playin’.”
“Gee, I’m sorry, Brown.”
“Don’t sweat it, kid. That was my last hand anyhow. How much I owe, Bowen?”
“Four thirty-six.”
“I’ll square tonight.”
“I’m really sorry, Brown.”
“Fahget it, kid, ‘s my own fault for playin’ with a amateur.”
Shrugging disgustedly, Brown comes toward me. He looks at me, grunts, and flops on his bunk.
“What time you have, Brown.” My watch was stolen my first night in the transient billets. Time is only important when you synchronize before an attack or when the beer garden closes.
“15:50. What time they pickin’ yah up?”
“Truck’s supposed to be here at 16:30; plane leaves at 17 hundred.”
“Yah all packed?”
“Yeh.”
“Did I give yah mah address?”
“Yeh.” I must have twenty addresses of guys I’m supposed to get in touch with. Maybe I’ll meet some of them.
“Lucky you’re leavin’ I don’t know if’n I can stand two more days in this here hole. How ’bout a drink?” He pulls a bottle of bourbon from under his pillow.
“No. Thanks. I want to remember leaving. I’ll take you up on it later.”
He takes a long pull from the bottle, smack’s his thick lips and runs the back of his forearm over his mouth. He can drink. I wonder if he could fight? I wonder if he would be afraid? I wonder . . . Oh, crap . . . Going home . . . Think about going home . . . Forget . . . When did feeling stop . . .”
“Sarge!”
“Huh?”
“I said we were a damned good pinochle team.”
“Yeh.”
“Showed these bastards a thing or two. Sure you ain’t wantin’ a drink?”
“I’m sure.”
. . . another long swallow, stands up, replaces the bottle and opens his wall locker . . . reaches in and removes the .45, wrapped in an oily rag . . . sits on his bunk and begins gently rubbing the pistol. A deep, thoughtful expression slides over his face and the trace of a smile quivers at the corners of his mouth. The lean, pocked face flushes as he fondles the trigger mechanism.
“Shiny shoes, G.I.?”
. . . hadn’t seen the kid come in. They’re not supposed to be in the compound. He’s about eight or ten . . . hard to tell exactly how old they are; so scrawny and filthy . . . their faces so old. Stands at the foot of my bunk; a dirty yellow face in a torn and stained army field-jacket . . . much too big for him . . . jacket almost touches his shoes . . . sleeves hang well past his hands.
“What time is it, Brown?” He doesn’t move. “Brown, what time is it?” . . . louder than I thought . . . kid jumps back, trembling and clutching his cigar box full of dirty rags and greasy polish.
“Huh”
“What time yah got?”
“For Chrissake, can’t yah see I’m busy? Why the hell don’t yah buy a goddamn watch?” He didn’t look up.
“I want to know if I have time to get my shoes shined?”
Brown’s head snaps back, “How the hell’d he git in heah? Throw the filthy pig out. You know they ain’t allowed . . .”
“The time, Brown, The time.”
“Thanks.” He mumbles something and then feverishly polishes the weapon.
Put the left foot on the footlocker and point to the shoe, “Go ‘head, kid, shiny shoe.”
. . . sad old eyes look at me, then Brown. Hesitates, grins and steps toward the footlocker. He puts the cigar box on the floor; throws his tiny arms over his head, the sleeves slide above his wrists, and begins to shine the shoe. Sleeve keeps slipping over the polish . . . dirty hand . . . applies the wax and rubs . . . The shoes shine, reflecting
the grinning face as it surveys its work. “Nice job, fella”... don’t put his head... they all have lice... start to itch...

“Alright, kid, blow.”

Almost time for the truck to come. Sad eyes stare at me, he makes no effort to move. Motioning toward the door: “Scream, kid, before they find you here.” He was still in front of me; hair hanging in his face and a trace of fear stealing into his eyes. How often had those eyes held fear; how much poison and death had they faced? Keep your eye on the ball, Marsh... all the way from the pitcher's hand... follow the ball... follow God... Hill 717... 118... 123... follow me... follow...

Reach down and pick my footlocker up by the handles—the handleless sleeves grab for the right handle... don’t touch me...

“Look, kid, I don’t need any help.”

“Me helpy.”

“Now look, I don’t...” Kid stands, grasping the footlocker... eyes pleading...

“Alright, if you have tah help, take my duffle bag.”

The little head wags uncomprehendingly. I set the locker down; pick up the duffle bag and place it on the small shoulder.

“You take this outside,” gesturing toward the door. The eyes flash happily... dirty pile of fatigues struggles under the weight... follow him with footlocker and some clothes... warm outside... clean... back in for shaving kit and blouse, then home.

Pulling the shaving kit out of the wall locker... clicking of a weapon being cocked behind me... drop... grab the floor... the report... roar... echo... silence... tiny body slams to a bunk... blood splattering... the body twitches, jerks convulsively and rolls to the floor... looking at the body... dull pain thuds into my stomach. The bullet had gone in the back of the kid’s head and torn out the front... Only the eyes are left intact, staring at me, fearless, wide, oblivious to what the clicking sound behind them had meant, staring up at me above the gaping hole that had been a mouth... blank watery stare... a fly buzzes around the head; lands in the red puddle that is ebbing from the half face... slow hurt... another stab of pain... starting to tremble... want to scream, let out the pain... stop the gnawing at my stomach... burning, chewing... Bang, bang... when Johnny comes marching home again, Hoorah, Hoorah, you’re dead... Again the numbness... starting slowly, it creeps between me and the body like a soft red shield... blood and brains spattered on the mattress... wonder who’ll clean it up. Brown is smiling and looking from the kid to the weapon.

“Why, Brown?”

“Dirty gook bastards ain’t allowed in here, Sarge.” He clears the weapon, still staring fondly at the warm metal.

“Christ, look at his face.” Marino wavers sickly on his crutches. Move toward Brown... teeth hurt... “You stupid bastard.”

“Look heah, Sarge, it don’t matter. He’s just...”

It matters... can feel the blood pulling away the numbness... face is flushing.

“He’s dead, Brown.”

“Probably betta off.”

“You simple bastard, you don’t understand. He’s dead...”

“I’ve got to go home... stomach pulling, turning... run... latrine... oh God;... weak, but pain is gone... flush it and wipe the edges off... cold water... eyes are red... can’t let them see the eyes... splash on more water...”

“Sergeant Marsh?”

“Yes?”

“Your transport’s here.”

“Thanks, Danovich.”

Charles M. Gallagher

WINTER PATHS

When the first cold day of winter
Astonishes us to crisis,
The snow is scarred without a scheme,
Or we would have relished
Knowing not even the wind can solve
The smoothness offlake on flake
Riddled on the walks;
So, knowing the mood we are in, we can only wish
To summarize what snow is and we are not,
And never start at birth or death,
Like winter’s first extreme.

F. Gall
THE SEARCHING FOR FOUNDATIONS

There has been much talk of who it is that is thinking meaningful thoughts today; everyone has chosen-up sides and is defending his camp with its doctrines. Strangely enough, even the anti-positivists act wounded when their position is seriously questioned. Of course, positions are held because they have meaning for their holders, and as such should be regarded with sympathy by any serious student. Unfortunately, however, thoughts which comprise a viewpoint, especially those views which one would claim as particularly My Thoughts, become dogma and any meaning which was once present is well smothered. Philosophy which is “love of wisdom” becomes “love of my viewpoint.” It is really great fun to go about rattling cages; for, those who live in cages of their own making are most annoyed. Dogmas are both defenses and traps.

Mathematical propositions are very nice things; we cannot but agree to that, and the argument Modus Tollens will always be clear as crystal, no doubt about it. Meaning, however, invades the moment and place of our thinking; it has an impact upon our self which cannot be avoided; it verifies our thoughts; it gives them value and we can do no other but affirm them as true. If such an impact by Meaning is not present then the smug critics of the academicians are correct, we make too many words over nothing.

Meaning, itself, cannot be postulated, and formulated, and bottled, and dispensed by the professors like a peddler. Information is, indeed, a worthy possession if we do not become gluttonous about it. Man, being the clever creature he is, has been able to "prove" anything he has set his mind to; with bits and scraps of information he has "proven" the most monstrous lies; one need but mention some of the arch-villains of our century to verify this. However, when Meaning invades the moment and place of our thought there is no question about its value. Meaning, therefore, has the potency to cause us to affirm our thoughts as real. In the face of all the many words and ideas the one at this moment and this place is the one which becomes meaningful. This involves a sacrifice of all that was thought before, for now Meaning is found. As we try to make Meaning mine it is lost, for the sacrifice is lost, and we are once again creating dogma. The whole history of man's thought has been a building and a destroying of temples. When ideas are invested with a certain socially derived sacredness they become ideals, but as society changes and these ideals lose the Meaning of the moment and place they become tyrants. This process can and very often does occur with the individual man. He may be called an idealist, he is most likely a dishonest man.

Reality does have Meaning; if man's condition is absurd it is because he has not been able, or more exactly, has not been willing to acknowledge this. In any argument with reality it is reality which always wins. We must let reality be what it is, and see it for what it is, and sacrifice our beloved systems of thought when they don't fit. But, it is all too easy to say the systems don't work, the ideals are demonic and confirm ourselves in our cynicism. If Meaning is to be known we must sacrifice both the dogma and the cynicism. The Meaning which is in existence hits us at the center of our being; if we are honest we can do no other than act in accordance with it. As Feuerbach has put it: “Do not wish to be a philosopher in contrast to being a man . . . do not think as a thinker . . . think as a living, real being. Think in Existence.” It is this thinking “in Existence” and at its center where we experience the impact of the Meaning of our thoughts.

Larry E. Buss
UNBIDDEN NIGHTMARE

A world sits at war, the hot and humid war of the East.
Thru the same atmosphere of that war the feeling of ugliness races from the turgid jungles and hills of Asia... it passes over the quiet sea from noon into darkness & into the land where darkness is constantly illumined.
A town lies illumined but unreal under the clouded, blighted sky of the world's darkness.
The feeling from the East passes over the hill where graves lie, and it sucks from these graves a vapor composed of ugly thoughts and long-dissolved souls... men and women who loved each other in a prior time, and now no longer matter... nor their love.

A room; not a room; a microcosm;
a plaster and wool universe of smothering darkness smoke-filled not with smoke but with uneasy thoughts
Not sleeping in this room, he lies rather unawake, a state where the weeks and days past become like years in memory they float uneasily
Unawake but not unaware now, as the feeling from the East enters and on it's trail the vapor of the graves — the room fills with ghosts; they float and mingle and contend with one another, from the room out into the far atmosphere, to the stars and planets unmentioned, & quickly back to the inhabited room
They are all here, the ghosts of dead and vanished lovers, tranquil though resurrected; the ghosts of dead ambitions, thin and sick, and moving strangely among them his own unwilling frightened ghost... his ghost of a life both past & future, but never present.

He wakes, not in fear, who fears his own ghost? but in a long strangeness—he awakes, driven to waking from ugly dreams.
In the shock of unsleep, the memory which was only fog and mist before, congeals; It stands a brittle lump in a soft and unsettled mind
By instinct his hand in darkness finds the place where hangs a tiny dial... and instinct-fed it turns,

Electricity leaps into the darkness, and speeds from the room, riding the same vast empty path the feeling rode, a sound breaks into the room, sound of the past so long-gone that no one cares to remember, a voice since changed, but prisoned in plastic...

goodnight my love
may tomorrow be sunny and bright
and bring you closer to me

and silence again, and a laugh that is half a sigh and closer to weeping, which celebrates an unbearable irony.

John Bordner
THE BABY

“Jimmy can’t reach the top! Jimmy can’t reach the top!” So Jimmy heaved himself into the swing and strained upward to kick against the walnut branch. His foot fanned the leaves, but he could not clip one of the long, fern-like leaves from the branch as his brother had done. “Jimmy can’t hit.” So Jimmy slammed his feet into the dirt, and jumped wildly from the careening swing. Furious, he hurled himself at his brother, who ran into the house. Jimmy picked up a walnut limb and smashed it down on the swing seat. The seat split and both halves dangled from their ropes.

Jimmy meandered into the house. Set in the geometric center of the farm, the old house with the paneled doors and thick walls, which stood through sheer mass alone, set on a small knoll. A barn lay on the same knoll. It was a big barn with red walls. Smothered under many layers of red paint the kaleidoscopic hex signs were powerless. As Jimmy entered the house his brother ran out the back door.

“Mom . . . MOm . . . MOM!”

“Mother’s busy now Jimmy.” Mother was busy with her new baby, her third.

“I busted the swing.”

“Oh, well dad will fix it then.”

“I don’t care.”

“Don’t bother me now.”

“Why?”

“I’m busy Jimmy. Go out and play.”

“All you do is mess around with the baby.”

“Jimmy!”

“Well you do.”

“All right, what do you want?”

“Nothin.”

“What do you mean, ‘nothing’, you must want something.”

“Mom, when can the baby take care of itself?”

“No for a long time.”

“Will you have to take care of it till then?”

“Of course.”

“I wish it wasn’t here.”

“Jimmy, go out and play!”

Jimmy picked up his BB gun and went outside. It was his second gun; he had worn the first one out. It was raining, but not hard, just a fine warm drizzle. The rain beaded on the shiny blue barrel.

The pigeon sat on the barn roof, and stared dumbly down at the small boy far below it. It was a sooty, gray-white pigeon that looked like a weathervane made of the same weathered slate as the roof. The only way to separate the two was the glistening wet slate and the soft gray feathers which didn’t shine. There is a safety in height; a natural safety known only to birds and men in flying machines. The pigeon held firmly on the slate crown with its scaly, red, bird feet and felt safe.

Jimmy always kept the BB gun oiled. The thin tacky film covered the plastic stock and rolled metal barrel which glistened where the bluing was worn off. There were no sparrows left at the farm buildings. Jimmy was sorry that the sparrows were all gone because he liked to shoot and they were fine targets. He always carried the gun. Once he killed a rabbit with it but that was only luck. He often tried to kill the cats but the gun was not powerful enough for that.

The pigeon was out of range. He probably couldn’t even hit it. He aimed carefully there was no need to hurry the pigeon wouldn’t flit away like the sparrows. Pigeons did not often stop at the farm; only once in a while they would drift in from the neighboring barns and settle on the roof. The line was perfect: the bird, the two sights, the eye—steady. The diminutive toink of the gun-spring was muffled in the misty rain. A split second later a faint plup came from the roof as the copper clad BB smacked through the feathers and buried itself in the gray pigeon’s entrails. “Hit him!” Jimmy jacked the spring back and sent a volley of tiny orange pellets whistling past the crippled bird. He could see the beads streak past the target and disappear into the dull sky. He slowed the pumping and shot more carefully. Most shots clicked against the roof but a few ploughed into the wounded bird. He shot the gun dry, and with shaking hands dug into his pocket and pulled out the pack of BBs. More fell on the ground than dribbled down the narrow tube, the gullet that led to the guts of the gun. Jimmy jacked the spring taunt and continued to pelt the slowly wilting pigeon. Its head dropped in the rain as a thin trickle of blood mingled with the wetness on the crusted redleg.

It looked down at the boy so very far below it. In the safety of height and solitude the BBs came as wind blown sleet. Some streaked by and some landed in the soft wet feathers. Jimmy shot the fireless toy gun, and, too weak to fly and too frightened of slipping from
its perch, the pigeon turned its back on the fiery metal rain. One pellet crashed into the bloody leg and smacked the prop out from under the bird. Uncontrollably it tumbled in rumbled wings and rolled down the roof. The rain spout caught the bird and held it in safety. With a vain attempt to fly, one wing jerked and flopped against the galvanized spout. The left wing, bones splintered from a pellet, hung uselessly. The struggling bird heaved itself from the trough and tumbled down a rag that rushed past the red, wet wall and bounced when it hit the ground. Jimmy rushed toward the crippled target which hobbled under the overhang. It trailed the useless wing under its good leg and jagged stump and held the other wing straight up like a sail. He cornered the helpless bird against a rusty shovel and pumped four BBs into it.

The four point line again: two eyes and two steel sights. This time Jimmy looked directly into the wet black bead, and he saw that the eye was not frightened—only dumbfounded; the eye was senseless. The boy lowered the gun, and as he did so, the bird’s neck melted, and the head dropped against the rusted shovel.

Anonymous

FOR FRAN, A POEM

Like ships in storm,
salt tonnage falling on the bridge
and the rust glowing under a glow
of gleam,
the finality of a rain-shined tin roof
meekly sighs goodnight.

I glance footwards, noticing
a midnight sidewalk-lake.

Tomorrow, you say, the fog-rain of mist
will become a stale beer taste
on my tongue;
lights in alleys,
darkened wood grains,
and the hide-and-seek moon
might disagree.

David A. Scheffler
THE WAGON SHED

The wagon shed was very old. Even in the old photograph of Isaac on a plow horse in front of it, the wagon shed seemed ready to collapse. It was oak; with heavy stringers and beams joined by wooden pegs. The beams sagged tiredly. The supports, big ten by ten squared logs, had pink toadstools growing from the rotten bases where they bedded into the ground. Blanch ed by the sun and warped by the moon, the paintless, gray-white outer boards wrenched at the rusty nails and always seemed ready to fall. The cedar shingles had curled up in the sun like fried bacon so that slivers of sunlight laced the interior. We could still see blacksmith hammer marks on the corroded hinges. One side of the wagon shed was a corn crib, a long room with lateral slats for walls. The slats were nailed a few inches apart for air circulation. John and I would climb the slats to the top and hang there by one hand, or climb at the end where the beams met and touch the thick wooden peg that held them and wish we could have it. Weight from hundreds of crops gave the rough slats a permanent bulge. The crib was floored with rough planks honeycombed with rat holes.

Out of the weather and out of the way an old, double-tree sleigh was suspended from the low roof beams by halter chains. It hung twenty feet above the floor, natural then, but ludicrous in retrospect. The tongue and woodwork were faded red, and the black body had bits, mere traces, of once elegant gilt pin striping. The chickens made nests in it every year; we put a ladder up to it and climbed, cautiously, to get the eggs. They laid eggs in the front well where the driver put his feet. Behind the seat on the sleigh floor were corn cobs and leaves mixed with feathers and chicken droppings.

There were no questions asked; every Saturday morning was "corn shelling" in the wagon shed. The corn sheller was a pink wooden contraption: tall as a man but not as heavy, with gears and disks inside which rubbed the kernels from the red cobs. The sheller set inside the wagon shed in front of the crib door. Saturday morning Mac would crank the F-20, loop the threshing machine belt around the tractor pulley and the corn sheller pulley, then engage the clutch. Shaking and rattling, the sheller separated the kernels and cobs. In the corn crib, John and I filled bushel baskets with ears, and pappy came to carry the baskets out. He set the basket on a keg behind the sheller and fed a steady stream of ears through the clattering machine. Mac tended the chute where the corn came out. He emptied the corn buckets into burlap sacks and threw the cobs on a heap—steadily a pile of cobs grew in the middle of the shed. There was always a pile of corn cobs in the middle of the wagon shed.

There were chickens in the wagon shed. They came from the coops to dust in the dirt floor and pick corn from the crib, make nests under the crib and roost in the rafters. John and I would throw corn cobs at them because even if we hit them it would not hurt them. They would fly and then come back.

On the other side were nails in the wall hung with wrenches and wires and chains and a string of sleigh bells. We shook the leather strip of bells until it broke and lay on the floor and was lost. A ledge above the nails had a half dozen rusted horse shoes. There was a big one which pappy said came from old Dick the draft horse. Dick was dead and the only thing left was the rusted shoe, and that was soon lost.

Robert Wood
A GONEAWAY BONG

The pendulum marks—
ever fast, never slow
to and fro, to and fro—
time, time, time
never faster, never slower
to and fro, to and fro
time, time, time.
The pendulum, blantant clanger,
marks the time,
tolls the tragic bell,
marks the time,
that tolls the dissonant bell,
the bell that tolls for me,
a bell that tolls for thee,
marking time, time, time,
marking time eternally,
marking time, time, time,
marking time to eternity.
Sounding sad silent song
the bell that tolls for me
sounding sad song so silent
same bell tolls for thee!
Back and forth,
to and fro,
ever fast,
ever slow;
same time
for me,
for thee,
for all eternity;
long time,
to me,
to thee,
to all eternity.
A sad song three beats long:
Man is born;
he suffers;
and he dies.

Sad song three beats long:
bong, bong, bong.
Last beat,
a goneaway bong,
ever heard again.

John H. Koch

YOUR FATHER'S MUSTACHE

Burning lamps
in gas-light splendor mantled,
lining street
in celebrated theme,
lighting memories
of antiquated night life,
and flickering darkness
from a great new dream . . .
They whisper tales
of an era not forgotten,
when snuff was lifted,
and mustache shadowed chin,
when straw-hats, spats,
and gartered women strolling
down this gas-lamp lane
to the club came in.

Anonymous
BROKEN HAIR AND COCKATEELS
She is with the wind and red rain it plays
Upon the shoulder, like swarming birds about her mouth are words
His breath in leather pants might utter at the blue
Membrane eye of sleeping cockateels upon a swing,
Of wooden motion molting among the green and yellow plumes;
Reaching the eye of isolation and freedom of the hair,
Against the ruffled verdue broken of a stance,
Against the ruffling yellow recomposing
Begins a flick and flitter of the eye,
Like a flurried shudder
Overbears her rain red hair

F. Gall

SONNET 134
Who cares if mist from lowland heathered moors
May wash the grit Auld Reekie billows out?
Who cares if Gallic flesh may tempt and flout
Parisian prudes, or crop-haired Rhenish boors
Fermented grape from polished beakers sip?
Who cares if wailing solemn Arab chant
Goes Mecca-ward in pious-bending cant?
Who cares if Holland tulips tip and dip?
Who cares? All this is but a vacant shell,
A mute and silent fractured bell,
A broken promise, moaning dirge,
Mute-death of anguish, waning surge;
Wherever on this spinning earth I roam
I know this Maxatawny loam as home.

Anonymous
CARNIVAL OF LIGHTS

There's a carnival of lights upon the corner flashing, "somewhere in the night exists a band playing melodies evolved in sightless sorrow drifting 'cross the neon, palpitating land"; and that carnival of lights is from within me, it is my creation, carried in my breast, in my brain is found the logic to sustain it—(although truly it is more a thing of passion, more emotion than electric thought) in my brain the logic to sustain it; in my heart the blood to cause belief.

The self-same ponderous night—time and space for another facet:
the beggar lying face-down in the snow watches a flake's slow filter from the black, seeks the core of carnivals, finding none and falling back, melting like a snowman at noon-sun.

David A. Scheffler

DREAM IN A SUBWAY CAR

Racing spider's legs or pallid pillars whizzing by; snake-like railings slinking in and about; twisting silvery tracks like straining cobwebs, with sleek, speeding spans of giant, peopled cans, passing o'er in scheduled haste thru labyrinth with frantic pace, like insect spinning before bare winter hails—then crash and end to my imaginary medley in the dark.

Anonymous
you
you are a thing of wonder
a song i never quite learn.
i know you so well
but sometimes can not recall your face
or the color of your eyes.
but your ear
hands
knees
that blood-warm flesh from chin to shoulder,
these i can summon in an instant
while trembling, remember the all of you
and pinch myself to a reality
that your love is not just a never-forever carousel ride.
interlude
how long i sat there reading old letters
i don't know.
but when i looked through the glass and saw the mountains
embracing the sun,
i knew it was late
and time to renew my acquaintance with the now-world.
autumn
the fall is so singular
digit trees raise bony fingers to be kissed
like wrinkled women they are cold
and want the little warmth the sun, fading, can give.

Sydney S. Carpenter
ONLY AN EXPERIMENTAL EXPERIENCE

"If you cannot the evening call whiskey, then drink,
for the irritation of the sand will arise in the esophagus of
the sea and her name is Pearl."
Come on Pearl, with me
To roll dice rolls up and down
The orange table peels cresting in velor;
There waits a horse-van vacated for you and me,
At the portico's shadow's edge, and let us, once
Evolved of the equestrian statues, and the
Moon
Dresses the candle filaments for our hair with mystery
And depth, frieze the pediment of suspicion with broken
Fingernails plastered white;
Yet between the prophesy and the broken window,
Blooms the solitary of one woman's hand
Drawing fire
With a bowl big as the moon and white and hot,
Like a sacrifice, like a plate of rocks,
My knife and fork,
And they pewter to the magnitude of the eye
Of the caterpillar,
Just as he becomes the haircut becomes the
Walking distance around a life, dull to the sun's glitter
On the orange sea.

F. Gall

PORTRAIT IN HOT WAX

The last time I felt I knew her
Was in a molten wax room without a door
With dripping walls of ever moving contours,
As her children and their sons came to view her;
At the loss of her each finger probed the walls
Then clutched her breasts to be assured just once
Of what they always felt she never told them.
They cannot grasp the pungence of her breath,
And the ache which tauts the craning neck
To see her children wave but once and disappear;
And now it seems cruelly too late to return and obey
Without her voicing us out of the evening to sleep,
Now, only she and the hot walls,
Those flowing incessant things,
Sense that barrel-chested lover-brute
Creeping out of here.

F. Gall

F. Gall
WALL-ENCLOSED

Talk to me across the dark emptiness
That holds and wall us
Talk to me
Of Sartre, if God is dead, of the Bircher's threat,
Tell me if one day
The heavy glass wall
That crowds us together
Will break and throw us out
Into a strangeness
Of sounds and colors,
The dream of a child
Hidden by layers of age,
And what if these colors fade?
Will the child still yearn
For another world, another color
Or will he be satisfied with the dark?
But what if the wall shatters
And its icy, sagged sides
fall inward?
Blending us with transparency?
Would — no! talk to me
Across the darkness splintered by electric light
Across the emptiness peopled by society
Talk to me but every as you do, I hear—
Silence hiding the wall's shatter.

Mary Lantz
THE WALL . . . .

Warm and supple
  yielding to the touch,
encase a heart
  too adamant to feel.
Soft communion
  merging flesh to mind
interpreting emotions
  deeper than words.
Hallowed spirit
  breaking fortified holds
leaves naked and raw
  the viscare of soul.
Carved deep through steel,
  shallow words and deeds
penetrate the conscience and pride.
  revealed assonance, renewed life.

Damned impediment of feelings
  mock rigor and code,
personified solitude-barren
  crush the damn curse!
Enfold the stone heart
  and melt it with tears,
wringle the starch from the stays
  lash freely and unabashed—
Humility and pride suffer none . .

Diane Mann
UNFINISHED SYMPHONY #2

The alluring cantor
of rhythmic spiritual madness
relentlessly chimes
in once unlearned ear.
Raging on does counterpoint
hurl paradox at line.
The fitting theme,
which first intended,
falls irrelevant,
closed and vague,
now grows into antithesis—
a counter theme—
open, real, and aware.
The new stands apart,
as unconnected,
strong and confident,
yet groping still.
Now off on a fleeting tangent,
penetrating all that proceeded,
bringing fore and turning aside,
pausing, listening,
developing the integral theme—
the only theme,
which, when such short symphony subsides,
will nestle fresh in listening mind
to remain forever uncompleted.

Anonymous