

CURRENT
1967

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DARIEN HIGH SCHOOL

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CURRENT

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TIM

One summer it rained every Wednesday. Those of us who raced in the Wednesday night series at the Yacht Club learned to predict a squall for the downwind leg of the race, but we never quite decided to be ready for it.

Even Duffy, who always won because he could see the reflection of the number on his locker key in the gloss of his copper-coated keel, was caught with his spinnaker wrapped around the forestay, his tongue wrapped around the crew.

After the race, the rain just stopped. The storm called a lot of attention to an otherwise drab night.

Tim and I usually walked home barefoot so that we could jump in the puddles the rain had left. Tim was my crew and I often wondered if he got a complex from crewing for a girl. He was always challenging me to races and contests which he inevitably won.

When we walked along the street he established himself as the better puddle jumper, better puddle splasher, faster sprinter, runner with more endurance, and faster runner when handicapped with the wet spinnaker in a bucket. If we went by way of the beach he skipped stones farther than I and found more squashable beer cans. He trampled more rice in the rice paddies or flattened more eel grass in the mudflats at low tide, depending on which achievement seemed more glorious at the time.

Once we went through the woods and came to a metal fence strung with barbed wire and plastered with "NO TRESPASSING-Police take notice" sign. Tim decided that we had found the Berlin wall, and not knowing what side we were on, we would have to climb it. I declined and he told me afterwards that I certainly hadn't lived until I had seen the world from the other side of the fence.

Of all his accomplishments, Tim cherished most the art of obtaining "honey" from the honeysuckle. We passed some bushes on our street route, and Tim first showed me how to extract single drops of "honey" from many flowers at once, so that we could have a worthwhile contest. Later, we had races for eating honeysuckle while running; then races for running an obstacle course between discarded honeysuckle flowers. Tim won everytime that involved honeysuckle.

One day we were having a race to see who could

run the fastest with both legs in the sleeves of a foul weather gear jacket. Tim, having made a poor start, was slightly behind and calling out new instructions for me to follow unless I wanted to race invalidated. He called that we had to jump or run around all puddles in the way and I quickly complied.

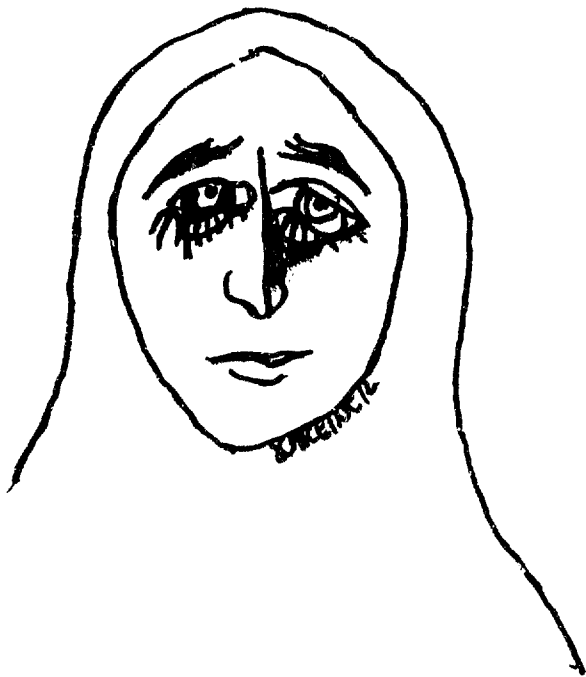
I heard him yell, "Stop!", but I thought it was a trick so I kept on running. Then I didn't hear him yelling anymore, so I stopped.

I turned and saw that Tim's pants were soaked and smeared with mud. He said he had slipped in a puddle. When I asked him how he could slip in a puddle if he jumped or ran around it, he only jerked his head to get the hair out of his eyes.

We didn't eat honeysuckle anymore that summer. I haven't eaten any since.

PAM WESCOTT





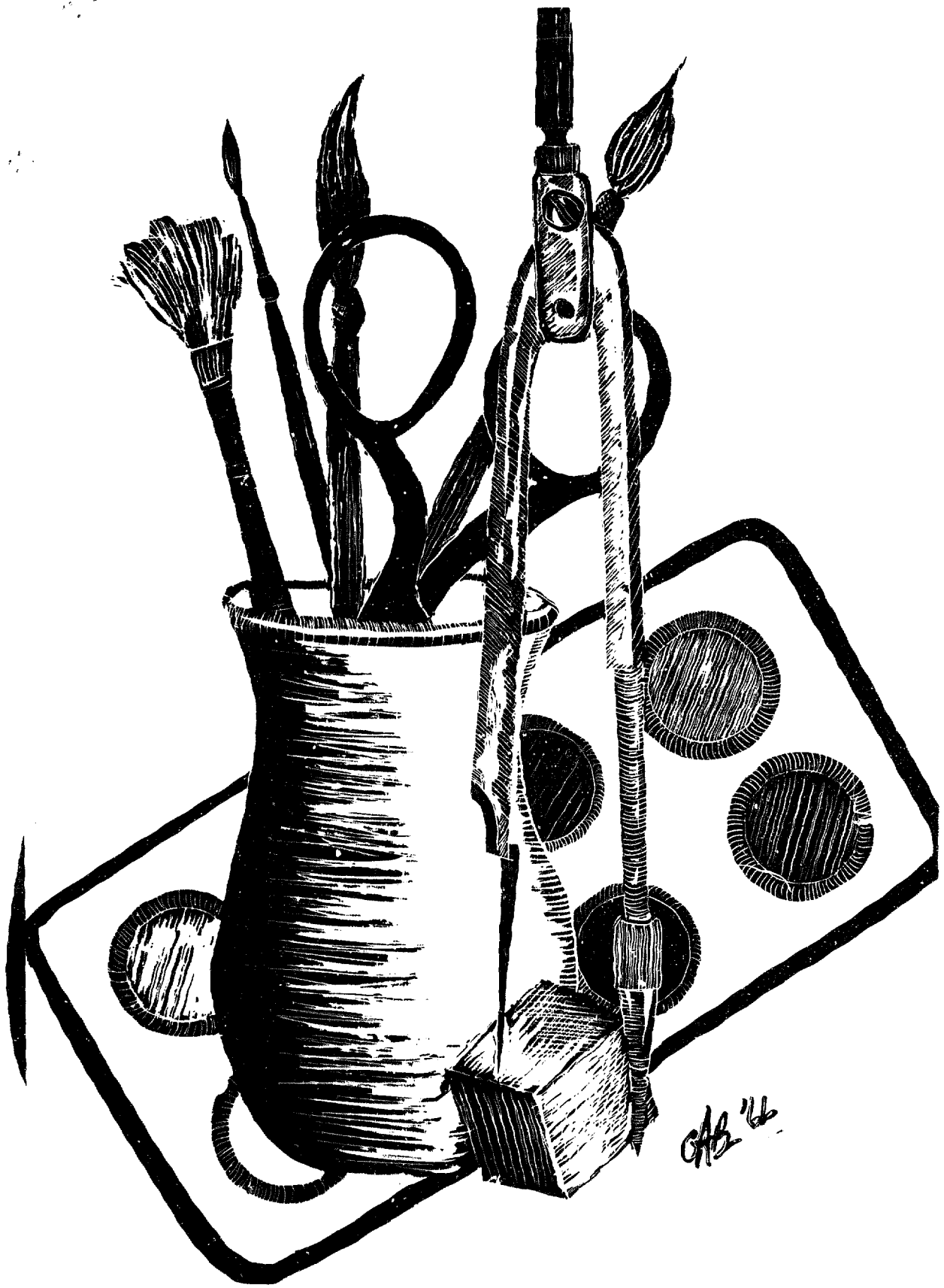
SCHREINER

CURIOUS CONFECTION

You, to me: strange sweet. not
the fat marshmallow people
who flab around my life's candy cupboard,
the gauzy sugar-spun cotton candies
who cloud about and kiss me stickily,
the pretty pliant taffy ones
who mold themselves to my sweet tooth

You, to me,
the tart and tingling lemon drops
in the chipmunks
of my cheeks.

NEWLY WEST



STORY

I sure as hell thought that summer had ended quietly. Labor day weekend had plenty of parties and plenty of stuff to have a whale of a time on, but people just didn't seem to get off the ground. Some of us were pretty far gone but nothing wild had happened. All that good stuff and no one enjoyed it enough to make for a really good bash. I didn't help the party much, stone drunk and depressed like a sick monkey because both Barbara and Judy managed to come to the same place. I was going to have a good time with one of them until they started talking to each other and that's when I finished my first drink and started losing count of the others. What really ticked me off was my good buddy Skip, to whom I had been giving tips all summer, he went and picked Barbara up, and every free girl I approached that whole weekend seemed suddenly to be escorted by someone three inches taller than me who had given training to the marines. I awoke Tuesday with a headache that lasted until Wednesday, and when it went away all the Ritzy people had left their Victorian summer camps for the birds to crap on the roof until june.

I stayed because I had nowhere else to go, and I had to get down to work. You can't really call it work; all I do is stick my thumbs and fingers in the clay for awhile, and if the damn thing doesn't fall apart in the kiln I call it art. Granny comes down every once and awhile to see if I eat properly and if I've found myself. Granny buys the clay and the house and everything else I own, so I really can't complain when she decides to visit. She's alive in her own world, which makes her really useful to solve all my practical problems and darn my socks, call the plumbers and electricians and buy lettuce, but she really doesn't understand me, which is just as well. She pretends to understand my art, and every now and then I let her watch.

Sometimes that was a real game. I'd act the artist complete with beret and call some god-awful hunk "grandmother." She didn't see the connection between herself and the grey blob but she'd coo to every affected swipe and plunge I made at the thing. I was going to make a matching one called "grandfather" and turn them into salt and pepper shakers, but I dropped "Grandma" coming out of the kiln and

several hundred degrees and my creative urge shattered with it. Grammie thought it was one of the greatest disasters the art world had ever known, and I must admit I didn't argue with her on that one.

Grammie left, and as I was burying the pieces in the garbage can along with the bananas that had both occupied the fruit bowl for a week before I could get rid of them, I heard a dog barking down on the beach near the water. I walked a few steps to see over the edge of the dune, and below me was this dumb black mutt, barking and running all around someone rolled up in a trenchcoat, and from the way it walked I could tell it was a girl, even when it stood it was still a girl. I was about to descend when I remembered that the coffee was boiling and in two hours the electrician was coming and I had to clear a path through all the junk so he could fix the busted fixture. When that light did go on, I could really see what a mess it was and I got inspired and spent the rest of the day pushing everything into boxes and lugging them out to the shed to hibernate. It was seven o'clock when I remembered that there was a girl on the beach, but when I went out to look for her she wasn't there, which really didn't surprise me much, but I really almost expected to find her there anyway. Christ, I was tired that night and when I woke up it was past noon.

After a couple of hefty shots of Instant Breakfast I managed to go back to the studio and I began to play with this bust of Barbara, and I found I couldn't remember exactly what it was about her face that had damn near driven me to commit myself to the local nuthouse, except I couldn't imagine what Grammie would say when I'd found myself there. I scrambled through two or three drawers to find the picture I had taken of her to study the pose, but the stupid picture didn't even look like her, so I gave up after rounding out some of the bumps on her forehead. I then got out my acetylene torch to weld together some of the scrap metal around the studio, but it was out of gas before I had even started collecting good pieces of metal. Art was dragging, so I put on my coat, did a couple of harrly flips down the dune and started walking up the beach. There were pretty clouds in the sky and all that, but it wasn't summer and there was no one on the beach to talk or look at, and

was about to turn back when the black mutt started coming down the dune, stumbling in the shifting sand with its tail going like some crazy rudder trying to keep it on course. I started looking around for the girl, but the dog was alone this time, and it was sure I was a good friend so it set out to fetch sticks to that I could throw them. My arm wore out so we wrestled for awhile in the sand until we both seemed to get hungry so we each headed home, he up the sand, and me down the beach.

The afternoon mail had brought a letter from Grandma who said that she had advertised to let a couple of the rooms and some nice sweet man had answered and he was coming Friday, and it was already Wednesday. I took a sip of brandy and rationalized it was Grandma's house, and it might be better to talk to someone on this desert. I took another sip and realized I hadn't had a date in almost six weeks. I went to Boston and was about to call up some dull but sweet friend of the family but decided the local bar would provide a more amusing bunch to talk to. The barmaid was the cutest in the bunch, so I waited until about one o'clock when she got off and took her to a James Bond movie and discussed sex over a bag of popcorn. After the third bag I was sober enough to excuse myself to the men's room, find my car and make it home by four a.m. Sometime Friday, Quincy popped in, and I popped out after telling him where to unload his wardrobe and giving him a drink. I saw the girl on the sand below me with her dog, and was about to call a casual introduction when I remembered my not so sweet introduction to the barmaid last night, and decided some advanced field work was needed before I talked to this one who was probably the only female within five miles. Five miles from here is an old ladies' home, made up of nurses who after many years of service have qualified to become patients. I got my twenty power telescope and slithered through the dune grass to the lip of the dune and poked the scope over the top to look at her. She was lost somewhere inside her tan trench-coat and green scarf, and her hair kept getting in her eyes. Her back had turned before I could really see her face. I heard someone behind me coming through the grass, and Quincy had spotted her and was almost about to shout out a cheery hello when I grab-

bed him with a flying leap, and subdued him in the grass. He was a little shocked which probably did his circulation a world of good, and as he was pinned down I managed to explain what the hell I was doing. He explained to me in bovis^h whispers that he didn't realize what clandestine excitements existed in the world and was glad to cooperate from here on in and could I please let him look through the scope which I did because he was on the verge of developing a case of the hiccups and she was halfway down the beach by then anyway.

He talked all the way through dinner about the escapade and his new life of adventuring and mysterious women so I spent the evening locked in my studio finishing a statue of a matched pair of prize chow chow's which are pretty silly looking dogs to begin with, for some friend of grandma's who was persuaded that that was what she needed and I was the right artist to do it. Posing people is bad enough, but these damn dogs had gotten into everything along with the frustrated witch who owned them, so I finally took a few pictures and used the encyclopedia to pose the things. I was to get about a hundred when the finished thing in iron was delivered. I would be actually earning some money, but with Grandma still around it seemed a waste of time.

Quincy wasn't a bad chap and by noon Saturday had taken over as cook, general housekeeper, utilities director, and sanitation chief, jobs I didn't mind giving up. By Sunday he felt the need to be chaplain of the house, so I let his vanity rise. By two o'clock he was well enough sanctified that his life could stand a little excitement, but I told him it was Sunday and that he should read about it but not practice it so I gave him a murder mystery by Mabel Seeley to curb his blood lust. Sufficiently drugged on three aspirins and a cin-and- tonic I stumbled out the door, and with nowhere to go started rolling down the dunes.

It's really a goof to do it if no one's watching and your stomach can take it, and it releases tons of presusre. Round and round you see the earth, the sky and the sea as one, intermixed irrecardless of race, creed, or color. One roll was enough for today, as the whole damn earth was spinning around and underneath me, and everytime I got up I kicked

my own feet out from under me. I gave up trying to walk or think and laid down and waited for the world to act normal.

Something wet was sipping my face and I first thought it was Quincy washing my face as his duty as sanitation chief, but it was the dumb black mutt licking lovingly with a wet, heavy tongue. I was pushing him away when someone called him, and I recognised the voice, so I tried to stand up but I kept on falling so I finally sat down to say, "Hi, Barbara." She, not fully understanding my condition, was a little shy and kept her distance, but with a little time I managed to convince her that I wasn't drunk, and that I really wanted her to sit again for the bust and that she owned a fine dog with great potential as a retriever. I managed to kiss her and was about to really get going when Quincy screamed and came charging down the dune, scope in hand. Barbara jumped about as high as I did, and the dog, not to be vanquished, came through with a good vocal defensive, which seemed to calm Quincy down some. A few minutes of hasty explanations got Barbara to agree to come back the next day for lunch and a sitting, and a couple of mild hints kept Quincy's mouth shut.

Quincy later explained that he really didn't want to read and he thought that watching me might help him start in his new life, and we were amazed at my swift tactics in seducing this girl and he couldn't control his excitement of seeing our lips meet in focus. I forgave him as usual, and went to bed early.

The next morning and the next, Barbara came over, and I finished the bust and explained the mix-up this summer, and we started our happy-ever-aftering. I told Quincy of a nifty adventure he could take with a barmaid in Boston, and I haven't seen him since; but I still don't have the heart to tell Grandma that I found myself rolling down a sand dune.

JERRY HOLWAY







A TASTE OF STUPIDITY

He passed the U.S. mailbox whenever he walked home from town. It was at the foot of his road, next to a fat, green bag-pickup box. That night, for no particular reason, he pulled open the cast iron maw. The metallic clatter broke his fog bound walking trance. He began to distill the past five miles of whirling thoughts. He slowed down, partly because his ankle ached since he'd twisted it in a puddle, and partly because he wanted to finish thinking before he returned home.

He'd given up, he decided, on the girls his own age. All college bound, New York drinkers who did their best to stay uninvolved. They'd be funny, if they weren't so sad. Hypocrites. And older girls. She'd been his first. He smiled a resigned, disgusted, practiced, smile. He knew he still loved her, knew she didn't love him, she'd said so. It was a bad night for calling back ghosts. But, she wasn't a ghost. That night on the golf course when she'd said that maybe, someday. And then, she'd met...next slide, please. Keep them moving.

Close, very close.

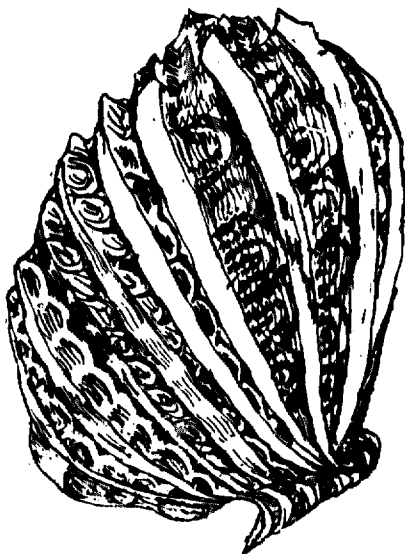
The younger girls, the songs made it so easy, kept rolling across his mind. There was that one little blond. He could see her on his shoulder, listening, nodding, smiling. He could smell her. And he saw himself waking up sweating, still smelling her, and thinking of the things he had said that he hadn't meant. He knew that he was only a boy, changing, always changing, and not to get involved. There was that gap of a year when he remembered so much that had happened. And he'd be gone next year, and she'd stay behind. The perfect backdrop for a bad scene.

He scuffed over the manhole lump at the top of the hill. His feet and hands were cold with the damp. But look. You're changing, she's changing, we're all changing. So why not change together, he thought. You're only as involved as you think you are. Not bad. And you don't have to be serious to have a good time. It can't hurt to try. After all, the thing that attracted you to her in the first place was that she looked as you do. Two negatives make a positive. And one

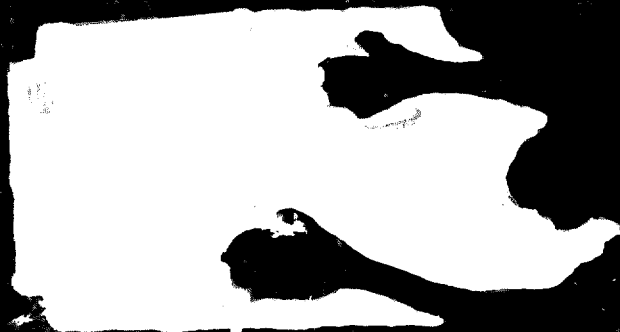
date isn't an involvement; it's an experiment. He thought how sweet it would be to kiss her. To search her face for a full fifteen seconds, and then to kiss her.

He was tiredly satisfied with his walk. The warmth of the kitchen was delicious. The half light from the post lamp outside didn't blind him. It was very pleasant to stand there, just inside the door. He felt hungry. There was a bowl of, yes, fritos on the counter. He took one and popped it into his mouth. It was a small sea shell. The sand and salt cupped in it fell in his tongue. The shell gritted against his teeth. He spit. The shell clicked on the floor and skidded into a corner. The salt sand taste told him he was wrong again, that he was still changing. That he wanted to be involved, or not at all. The taste of stupidity told him he wouldn't call that little blond until he was certain. He was certain only of uncertainty as he climbed the stairs of his room. Then, as the ghosts swept past him, he became certain only of the tears that crashed from his cheeks to the floor.

ANONYMOUS



CAPPY BROWN -



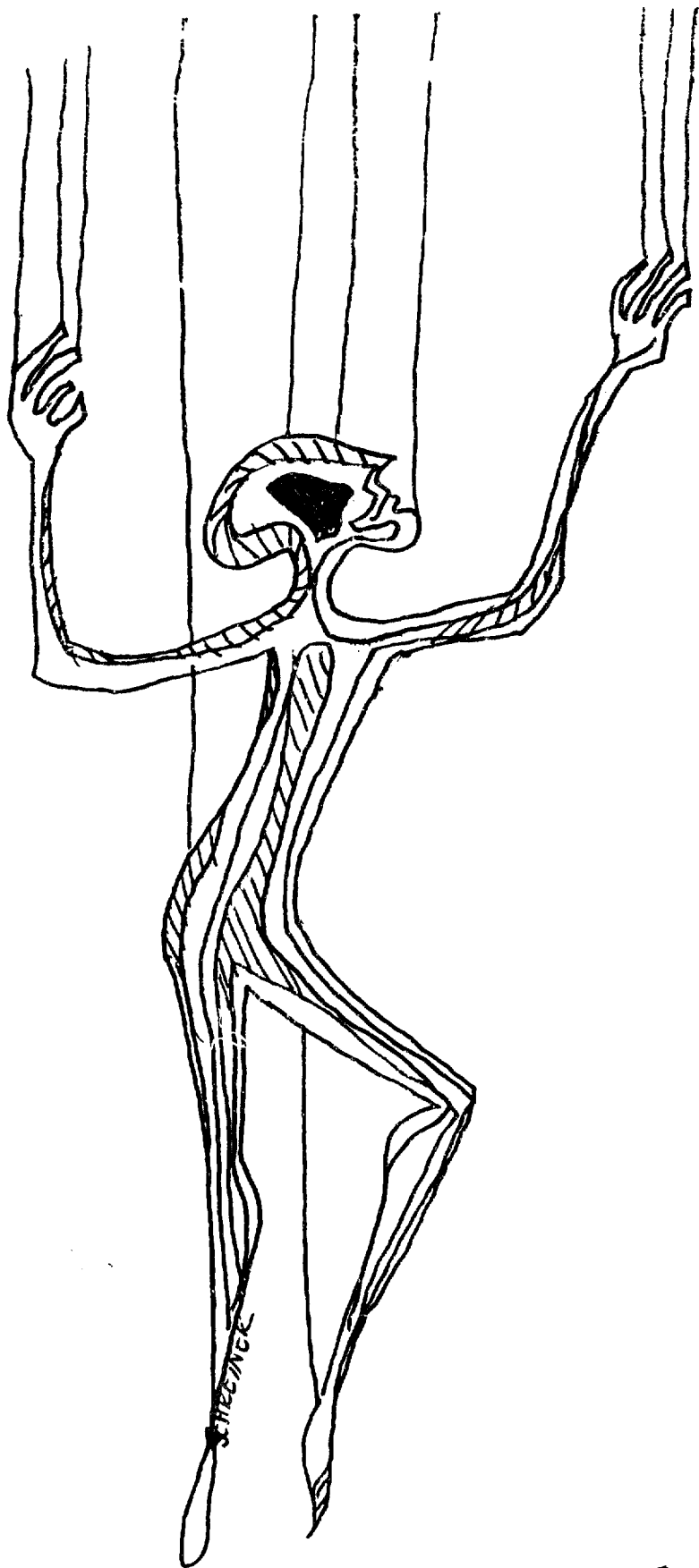
BROKEN GLASS

i went
not out of will
 but the way
and they were all there
laughing
drinking
seeing nothing

their images
dancing in front of
their eyes
 but it was translucent
to them
only i saw it
and what was behind it
they were too close

then i left
taking their images
home with me
letting them
rot
in my mind

DYANNE ROPER



SCHREINER

SCHREINER

STORY

The locker rooms always smelled of chlorine and mouldy towels, but it never bothered us. We were too busy running about finding whose time had gone to what, and did you know that Susie Smith beat Mary Jones. The dignity of Yale University was shattered when the age group swimming teams arrived.

My older sister's friends used to sigh when they heard I traveled to Yale at least two days a week. I never told them that the boys weren't around when we were there...it would have lost the magic for them... and the attention for me.

It was great to walk down those huge corridors leading to the locker rooms. The ceilings must have been fifteen feet high and the marble walls resounded with every step. Along the walls were pictures of past Yale greats from the time when the bathing suits still covered the man's chests. The old records were posted next to the pictures. "James P. Hough, one hundred yard freestyle, 1:02.2." My best friend did 0:59.8. Everytime she'd come in under 1:02.2 she'd say, I beat James P. Hough, captain of the Yale varsity in 1919!"

The locker room tables were as tall as we were and twice as long, and if you could get someone to boost you up you'd have the best position for throwing wet towels at whomever was next to enter. There were a lot of diversions at swimming meets like this. Riding the elevators, giving parents false directions, and just causing general havoc were also pastime favorites. Definitely the worst thing about the whole meet was having to swim.

I remember that particular day we had to go all the way to locker room E; down the corridor with the pictures to the right, past the showers, left, then right and down the hall. The room was L-shaped with only four tables instead of eight, its grand walls peeling from years of consistent showers of steam, water, and rough treatment. Locker room E was a definite sign of bad luck.

The meet that day promised to be shorter than usual. We didn't have to report until eleven A.M. and the finals looked as though they ought to be over by eleven that night. I brought my lunch box packed with sandwiches and a thermos of hot soup, four towels, two tank suits, a sweat shirt, and of course my mascot, a stuffed blue whale.

Surprisingly enough we watched the meet that day. We all brought our stop watches and sat beside the pool. By the time my first event was called my back wouldn't straighten and my legs wouldn't bend. Fifty robots reported for the two hundred yard backstroke.

Each event was divided into heats. There were nine of them in the two hundred back, which was a surprisingly small number. The six best times qualified them for the finals to be held that night. They arranged the heats according to times, the slowest girls first and then working their way back to the faster ones. I was in heat nine, lane four because my coach was a liar. I'd never swam a two hundred yard backstroke.

I sat down on the heat bench marked "nine" and waited. Girls wandered aimlessly up to the "controller" to check in and take their positions. Betsy Ulen arrived then with her mother. Mrs. Ulen never let Betsy go anywhere without her, it seemed. She was a widow.

Betsy ice skated competitively when she was four. When she was seven she received a second in the state in her age group. During the summer she played tennis and came in fifth in the county championships. She tried diving then and when she hurt her back, started swimming. She'd really become quite good since she began to concentrate on backstroke, but she never associated with any of us. Her mother wouldn't let her tire herself before a race by throwing towels or riding elevators, winning meant too much.

I made room for the two of them on the heat bench. Mrs. Ulen always sat with her daughter before the race so that she wouldn't be nervous. Anyway, she had to have last minute instructions on excellent starts and quick flip turns. Her instructions lectured on for what seemed like hours, until finally they called for heat nine to report to the blocks.

A very important aspect of having a good race is the last song you hear on the radio. Nothing stays in the mind like that last song. If it's a nice fast one, chances are your time will be decent, but if it was slow, forget bringing home any more medals for the day. We'd sit for hours in the car before we swam waiting for a lindy. The last song I'd heard though was a ballad, which meant death.

The gun shattered and there was no getting around it anymore, you had to swim or die of embarrassment. Backstroke wasn't my specialty though, in fact it was definitely my weakest point. I decided to be content for a close last place and watched the feet of the girl next to me. Eight laps of agony which ended with only a stomach full of dirty water and the satisfaction of finishing. Betsy had come in third which meant she'd surely qualify considering this was the fastest heat. I was happy for her. Maybe her mother'd leave her alone if she won.

I had to swim two more events that day and qualified in both, which meant I'd have to return after dinner. We always ate at Jo-Ann's Payne Whitney Fountain about two blocks from the pool. Their ice cream was great but we could never eat any. Milk didn't digest fast enough and our coach felt it might hold us up some two tenths of a second. So healthy hamburgers it was.

We returned to the pool at about six and changed into our suits to warm-up. Yale changed at night also. The lighted pool looked florescent; the light reflecting off the water back against the high walls.

The men's open four hundred individual medley was the first event. The atmosphere of the crowd had also changed from that of the afternoon. The only people left were the best in the state in the different events, and the more professional characteristics came out. This was what the whole day had been for.

When the girls backstroke, twelve and under was announced I moved from the corner to the edge to watch my friends. It was a good race and Madeline Palmer won by a body's length. Betsy Ulen was second. Her mother screamed for a while about her poor turn on the sixth lap not bothering to wait until Betsy got out of the pool. Four years later Betsy hung herself in the garage. Her mother wanted her to be a baton twirler.

JANET MEYER



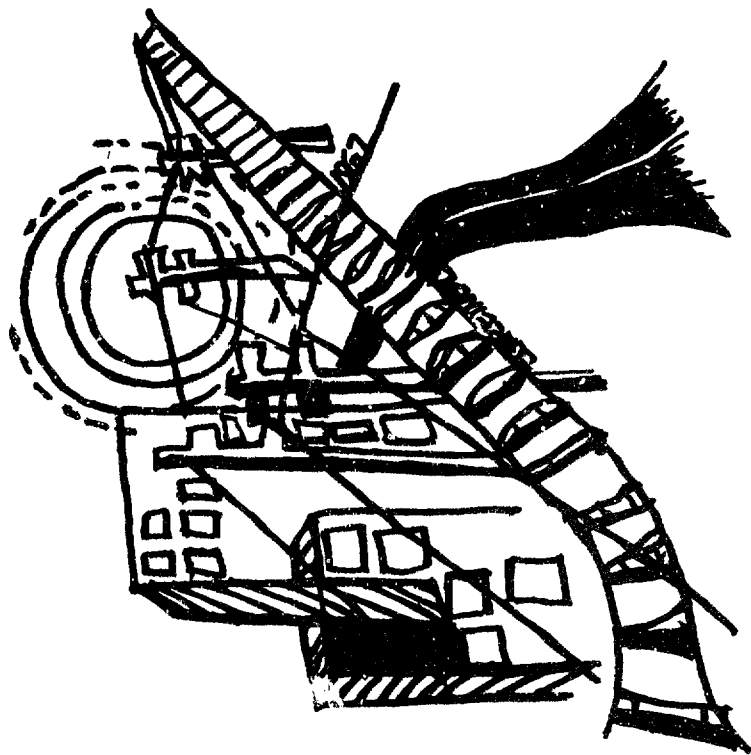
DEFACED HATRED MADE CHILD'S GAME



NIGHT WALK

Slow feet slurp over wet cement,
Leather bounced pebbles click off
Through the fog. Lights hiss by
In dopplered tones, street lamps
Glow every hundred puddles. All
Become constants, defining the night.

FRED CLARKE



SCHREINER



ПОПОВ

MAKE ROOM FOR ROMPER

Joey?

Yea?

You remember what they said last night? About Romper, I mean.

Yea, they said he was old. I know how old he is.

He's ten.

No, he's seventy in dog years.

Older'n Grandpa?

Yea.

You know what they said. He's sick. That's why he gets shots.

Mom thought he had worms.

I went to the Vet with Daddy. He didn't have worms.

Why's he sick?

Something about his liver, something inside. Doctor said he was old. Just an old dog.

Is he going to die?

Someday, but not right away. The doctor gives him shots.

They must hurt.

Romper doesn't cry. He's old.

Yea. If he dies, will he go to heaven?

Yea, dog-heaven. He's a good dog. I love him and God will send him to dog-heaven when he dies.

Mother called them to dinner. It was at the big table and very dark with only four candles, two on each end. Joey finished his piece of meat and his potatoes without a sound, but started swalking and gagging on the spinach. He pushed the green mass around the plate a few times trying to spread it out, but Daddy intervened.

Stop playing with your food and eat it.

I hate it.

Me, too. Joey and I hate frozen spinach, Daddy.

Frozen spinach is good for you. Listen to your father and eat it.

Aw, mommy, it's awful. Who ever invented frozen spinach, anyway?

You should be thankful for frozen spinach. You're lucky to be able to eat it.

Do as mother tells you. Eat your spinach.

But Daddy.

I heard today where they were going to start freezing people, dear.

Daddy! Joey dropped his fork and Fred stopped shoveling the spinach into his napkin. Frozen people to eat?

To preservem not to eat. Scientists will freeze sick people for a long time until they have found a way to cure the diseases. When sick people can be :ured, they will be unfrozen. Understand?

Will they taste as bad as frozen spinach?

I still hate frozen spinach.

After dinner they watched some westerns, and Joey shot all the guys in the white hats and Fred shot all the guys in the black hats. They both shot at Indians, but never at women or children. Sometimes they took aim at the women and the babies but they were sure their guns were never loaded, then at nine, mother came in to send them to bed. They got in their pajamas, and hopped into bed, Joey in tne upper bunk and fred under him. Mother came in and tucked them in and turned off the light, and they could hear her footsteps go down the hall and her door close behind her.

Joey?

Joey leaned his head over the edge and peered down at Fred in the darkness. Yea?

How many did you shoot?

I don't know. I killed a lot.

Me, too. It's fun to kill them. Especially the Indians. I like to kill Indians.

I killed one Indian fifteen times.

Me, too. I like dogs, too. I like Romper best.

Romper is the best dog, I want to have Romper sleep in my bed, but mommy won't let me.

He'd want to sleep with me.

Mommy won't let him sleep with you, either.

I still love Romper.

Me, too.

But Romper's going to die. The vet said he was old.

I don't want him to die.

Remember what daddy said about freezing?

I hate spinach.

I mean about freezing people. We could freeze Romper.

Yea.

Wait until Mommy and Daddy are asleep.

Okay.

At eleven-thirty, Fred and Joey snuck downstairs, and out to the garage to the freezer. They called Romper, and when he came they opened the freezer. It was almost full, and even a small beagle like Romper wouldn't fit. Joey hated vegetables, and started throwing them out. Fred helped.

Hev! Look at what I found.

What?

Popsicles, Joey.

Only two left.

Give me one.

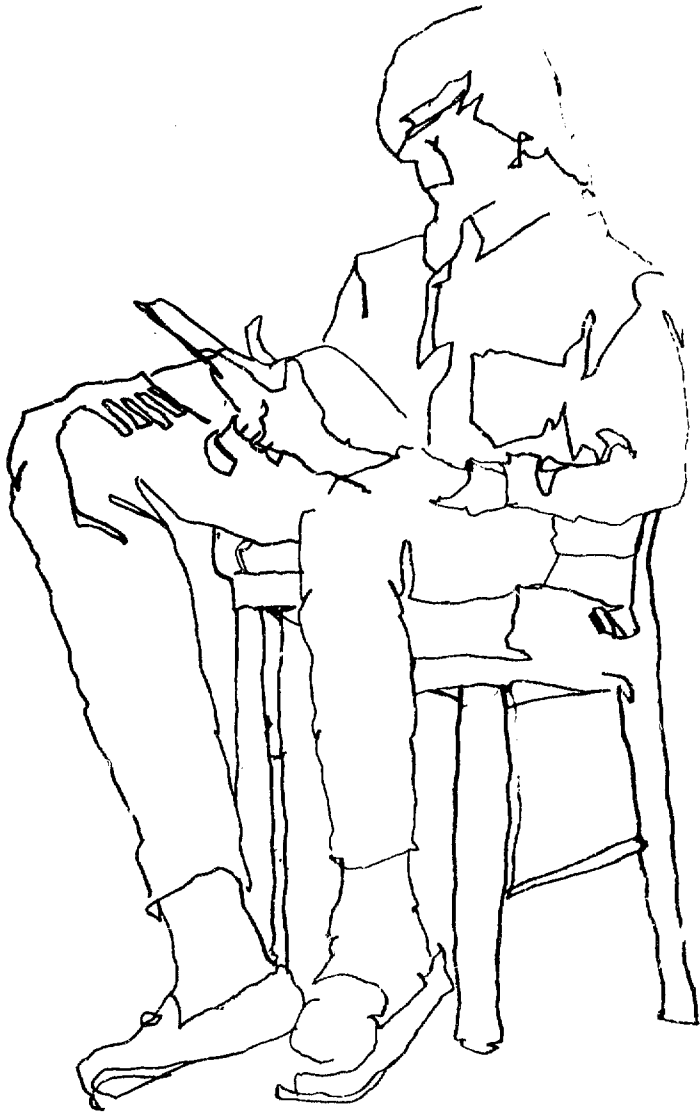
Here.

They bit into the chocolate-covered Eskimo bars, and they started to melt. Romper licked the scraps that fell to the floor. The last bite they each gave to Romper, because they knew he liked ice-cream. They let him finish as they cleared away two more packages of frozen vegetables and a hunk of frozen meat, and they they hoisted him into the freezer, closed the lid, and stuck the popsicle stick through the latch so he couldn't get out. Then Fred and Joey turned out the light and tiptoed up to bed.

JERRY HOLWAY



Cappy Brown





UPRIGHT, PROUD PILLAR OF...

upright, proud pillar of

ectoplasm

eyelashes

earlobes

idioms

and

ideals...

what makes you stand so tall?

(A newly discovered

as yet, unpatented, potentially powerful
highly secret, ultra-technical,
privately-produced, and, as privately, induced
man-made miracle fiber?

Or, have you an inserted ticker
that, with each tick
winds you the tighter
binding you closer, and closer
to yourself?

Or, better yet! An invisible shield
which you may lower, unseen by us
that blinds you (and removes you)
from those nasty, sticky (and horribly humiliating)
feelings of normal flesh...

What is it, apparent upright,

that nullifies your nerves

that crystallizes your contents,

that stuffs the cracks and crevices,

and plays hop-scotch on your heart strings?

ELLEN LINDGREN



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