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Last Ski Race

• Curtis W. Casewit

He had slept badly. Perhaps he had overtrained. He seemed to be skiing all night long. One moment he was asleep; the next he was awake—imaginary ski poles digging in, his hundred and eighty pounds leaning forward. His wife watched him in training. "No risks, Karl!"

"What did you say?" Ernsting asked. But she was sleeping beside him. He closed his eyes, and once more he dipped into the twilight of half-slumber. His skis slightly apart, his head bent forward, he was shooting down from the top. He felt light, bouncy; his legs absorbed every bump of the mountain, like the springs of a car. A *schuss* now, with the speed needle going up to forty, fifty, sixty—boards whistling. His vision was good; he kept his eyes rooted to the obstacles below him. Two trees. He shot through them and felt the wind against his chest. Two bamboo gates flashed past; the flags were blurs of red and yellow.

A house-high precipice loomed under him. He awoke, amid jumbled sheets, pillows, blankets. But his mind was still racing; he pre-jumped the wall-like hill, landed with perfection, flew on down. He was still elastic, still good. Now he lurched into a deep ravine, skiing as in the best of his days. Rubbing his eyes, he remembered—it had all been yesterday in training.

"You're good," Trudy had said.

Because of you, he thought.

She was still asleep when he took the cold shower. The artillery of icicles gave him goose pimples. You're going soft, he decided. He put on his gray stretch pants and the sweater with the faded Austrian Olympic emblem. Then he tiptoed onto the hotel terrace.

It was dawning. The garlands of yesterday's ski tracks were a dark mauve. He could already see the black outline of the timer's platform. Today would be the day. Against the deep blue of the awakening snow, ropes had been strung to keep the spectators off the downhill course. Would there be a lot of people watching the race?

He could still see them when he had won the Durrance Cup fourteen years ago. They pressed in heavy lines against the ropes, trying to get a glimpse of him. He had been in top form then. Quick, fearless, steady. He had taken much of the race straight, crouching low, poles hugging his hips.

Spring had come early that year; the snow had been like melting sherbet, but fast, fast. He'd won with such a wide margin that the spectators had screamed with admiration. Standing on the cold terrace now, Ernsting could still hear the rush of their clapping, the ovation. The photographers were wild. But he was tanned then. No citified pallor. The reporters pushed close. Friends had carried him on their shoulders. Would it be like this today?

"Karl!"

"*Ja*, Trude," he peered into the room. His wife's eyes were open, smiling. He stepped closer. The soft, dim morning light on her face took twenty years off her age.

"I wish I could change your mind about today," she said in German.

"You can't," he said—a little too harshly—then went back to the terrace. A slice of sun had crept up behind the Rockies, sprinkling paprika over the crests. A lot of pink clouds hung in the sky. The steep hill had turned a pigeon gray, with the firs black against the snow-fat mounds. He had to watch and watch, thinking, You're too seldom in the mountains nowadays.

He had better get busy, or he'd be rusty today. He let himself to the brick floor. It was so cold that his hands burned. He did a dozen push-ups and situps, then flung himself into the first kneebend. He was no longer used to the sharp, thin morning air; it stabbed his lungs. He counted: up and down twenty times. Now he stood still on his right leg two minutes, then changed, bird-like, to the left. Good balance. Muscles still hard, he decided. You'll be as good as Ruesch and Brenneman today. You'll get the Cup. You've got more experience.

He had won more races, too. There were the months—sixteen winters ago—when he had gotten both gold medals at the Olmpics for Austria. Slalom and downhill. He had raced in blizzards and fogs and under the glaring spring sun; in today's good weather, he would win easily.

He turned into the warm room. His wife sat on the couch in her blue ski togs, white woolen headband over ears and hair. He wanted to ask her if she remembered the homecoming after that Olympic victory. Even the Austrian chancellor had flown to Kitzbuehel to congratulate Ernsting. They had driven through the waving crowds in the same car.

Trude said, "You'll be skiing for many more years. You don't have to race. Why do you want to do it?"

Why? He could hardly put it into words. He wasn't much good with words, anyway. He had stopped racing ten years ago when he tore both Achilles' tendons. Since then, he had competed just enough to keep his veteran's racing card. His livelihood had to come first: ski boot sales.

But when he had come to the small mountain community this time, the whole town had spoken of nothing but the Durrance Cup. Suddenly he had to compete, to win again. It was an obsession.

She stroked the white mane of his hair. "You know what they all say."

"I know."

"That you shouldn't."

"Come on," he said. "Let's have some *fruehstueck*."

He had an extra-light breakfast—just as in the old days. A cup of tea. Two slices of toast. The waiter was in his twenties, ruddy cheeks, nose peeling. A skier. "I hear you're racing today, Mr. Ernsting?"

Ernsting caught the slight irony in the voice. He looked into the blue, college-boy eyes, which grinned now. "You want to compete against youngsters like Ruesch and Brenneman?" they said.

Ernsting looked at his watch. He had two more hours before the race. He would have time to call on Hoff's shop. Trude would pick him up there.

Hoff was talking to a customer when Ernsting came in with his sample case. The store had the Swiss sense of order: fixtures carefully

dusted, floors polished, tables symmetric with stretch pants in twenty colors. Ernsting stepped past the rows of parkas—still amazed by the riot of purples, greens, and yellows that had become fashionable—and went to the shelves with boots. His own brand was sold out. A stroke of luck. If there had been a lot of boots left, he would have had to sell. He wasn't much good at that. He lacked the will to persuade, the talent to paint with words, the ability to exaggerate. Sure, he knew his boots: the leather, the shape, the weight, the why, how, and where of the stitches. Actually his boots sold themselves because he represented the firm and because he had been a famous skier.

"*Gruess Gott, Hoff!*" They shook hands. The dealer had already made up a sheet with the order. Ernsting examined it. "Too many boots for February!"

"We will have a long spring," Hoff said in German. He shifted a pair of goggles a centimeter, so that he had a neat row of double eyes, with boxes precisely behind them. "Are the rumors true, Karl?"

"*Ja.* I am racing."

"I have known you for many years," Hoff said at length. "Do you remember how we raced together at Wengen? What a downhill it was, Karl! Through powder. Powder snow to our hips. We were white like bakers when we got down. For once the Swiss army hadn't packed the slopes."

Ernsting nodded.

"What does Trudi think?"

"She now accepts the race. She is my wife."

Hoff's lean face looked through the windows. The first skiers were striding by, their crossed poles and shouldered skis eager in the morning air. Inside the shop it was quiet. Hoff said, "You should know when to hang up your boots, Karl."

"I am not ready."

Hoff studied the other man. "How old are you?"

"Forty-three."

Two girls came through the door, giggling, socks outside their shoes. Hoff and Ernsting smiled at them as they trooped into the back of the shop, where an assistant was renting skis.

"Yesterday is not today, Karl."

Ernsting reached for his sample case. His legs felt leaden as he walked toward the door. Trude's fine broad head was bent toward the dirndl dresses and the Swiss pinafores and the Tyrolean hats in the window. She had brought Ernsting's rucksack with the goggles and waxes and the helmet.

Hoff went out to shake her hand. "Make sure he doesn't get hurt, Trudi!"

"I'm in good condition," Ernsting said. He looked at his watch. One more hour. He put on the rucksack and shoved his skis across his right shoulder. He felt limp, and when he stepped off the curb—the unpaved road was full of holes from the tire chains—Ernsting stumbled slightly, but he caught himself. Side by side they walked to the lift toward perhaps the 400th race in the twenty-five years of their marriage.

The parking lot was full of tiny new-fangled sports cars, Ernsting noticed, and under the umbrella of the platform near the lift, Pepi, the timer, had set up his longines and the wires.

"*Gruess Gott, Pepi!*"

"*Gruess Gott, Karl!*" The timer grinned; his Alpine head of long hair pointed in the direction of the finish gate. There were two electro-

nic eyes. "We didn't have those last time."

Fourteen years ago. Ernsting's big victory. But it had been a bad race. Schuetz had cracked up, flying to death in the rocks. Salvatore had broken both legs. It was strange what had become of the men who had challenged him for the Cup that year. Holtzmann floated around the world on alimony from an ex-Texas wife. Ruedi managed a microscopic ski school in Minnesota. Kindlimann had a comfortable *Gasthof-Pension* in Kitzbuehel. And Lindner was wandering from one hospital to the next, trying to mend his thrice-broken kneecaps.

There was a liftline, and the Ernstings patiently waited their turn. Here and there, someone looked at him with curiosity. He had a lot of white in his hair these days, but they still recognized him.

"Attaboy, Ernsting! Still pitching, eh?" It was the lift operator.

"Can I leave my sample case with you?"

"Sure thing. Another forty-five minutes, eh?"

Ernsting nodded. He just had enough time to get to the top. He was grateful when the double chair hoisted him into the air. He already felt the excitement, the old race excitement, in his stomach. As the lift whirred upward, he thought that the suspense was a little worse than usual. Tense, tense. Perhaps Ruesch was faster than he anticipated, and Breneman's legs were known to be strong.

Yesterday is not today. He looked at his watch. Forty minutes. If the lift should stop, he wouldn't make it in time and would be disqualified. "What time do you have, Trude?"

She told him, then held his hand affectionately. He smiled at her, but the smile came hard. From long habit he turned to look at the valley. The sight always soothed him. The long Sunday line of skiers was now a series of nails in the white folds of the snow. The platform was a tiny matchbox, the umbrella the size of a dime. He could no longer see Pepi, who was fiddling with his wires and clocks and phones. The guest houses and the new motels grew smaller. The lift rose clicking, then silent through the leafless aspen, past terraces of firs, and up timberline.

A few spectators were already in position behind the ropes. Ernsting studied the downhill flags which Stucky had set. It was a mean course. Ernsting had trained on it for two days. He had first skied it slowly, memorizing the moguls, the bumps, the degrees of the slopes, evaluating each turn. Then he had run the two-mile course without stopping, but cautiously. And yesterday he had sought and found the shortest line. He was prepared. He couldn't fail. He knew where to let go, where to jump, where to use his body as a windbreak. The position of the gates was printed indelibly in his brain.

The top of the mountain came in sight, and Ernsting got off, coming to a neat stop in front of the warming house. He could see the starting gate. On the hill above, racers were shooting down a few yards to stop abruptly. Others bent toward their ski tips to limber up.

"There's Ruesch," Trudi said.

He was putting on his long thongs just above the Ernstings; small like a jockey, bleached hair shining in the sun. He hadn't seen Ernsting—or had he—for he blazed toward the gate, then herringboned up again.

"Also," Trudi said, "*Machs gut.*"

Her high Austrian forehead bent toward his lined cheeks. "Here is a kiss for good luck!"

For a moment he looked after her solid figure—she'd be waiting for him below. Then he skated to the start, where he took off his skis. He touched the edges. Sharp and complete. The base didn't have a scratch. He dried it with a handkerchief, got the waxes out. He chose two and began to work the first one across the bottom of his boards with his palm.

"How about going as a forerunner?"

Ernsting looked up. Stucky's dark monkey face was without expression. The race chief's brows sat almost directly under the hairline.

"I mean it, Ernsting. We could use another forerunner."

"I'm racing. And for speed."

"It's a wicked course," Stucky said. "You'll make an ass of yourself."

Ernsting didn't answer. His legs were weak with fury and fear. He forced himself to re-lace his boots, pulling so hard that his fingers hurt.

"They'll laugh at you, Ernsting."

"Let them. There is no rule which forbids me to try a last time."

"Just the rule of common sense!" Stucky's close-cropped head pushed close. "Sure, technically, we can't keep you off the slope. You've kept up your racing card. But the top age in this race is thirty. You're an old man compared to those kids."

"What's my starting number?"

"You're out of shape, Ernsting!"

"What's my number?"

"Three."

Ernsting slipped into his bindings, snapped them shut. "*Los!* Help me put it on!"

As the race chief helped with the starting bib, Ernsting looked for the others. There was Ruesch, number 1, wiggling back and forth on metal skis, while Brenneman, number 2, darted down a few yards with impatience, then came up again. Oh, he would show them all a thing or two!

When the forerunner sped through the gate, things moved swiftly. It was Ruesch's turn. His small, gloved hands adjusted the helmet, the goggles. Count down, a light shove, and he roared through and down like a rocket, blond hair flying. Two minutes later, the announcer gave his time: two-ten-fifteen. Brenneman followed explosively. He made the steep course in slightly more than two minutes. The times would be hard to beat.

"Karl Ernsting!"

His throat was suddenly tight. He swallowed. His legs seemed like lead, again. From between the gate posts, he could see the first portion of the run. The spectators were all there, by the hundreds. Over the loudspeaker came a few words about his record. He caught snatches of words: "Lauberhorn, Kandahar, FIS, Roche Cup, Durrance Cup." Then: "Four—three—two—one—go!"

He felt the plastic gate bar hit his shins. Two powerful shoves with his poles. The wax seemed right. He'd already reached the first bump. With split-second timing, he moved with it. He took the first bump. He took the first gate smack in the middle; to increase speed, roared down the *steilhang*, but played it safe by standing up. He saw the dip at the bottom long before he hit it like an efficient piston—down and up—and swept toward the forest. *Weiter!* On. A gate. He flashed through it, aiming high at the right speed. Fine. A sharp curve, which he handled with perfection—body forward.

Under the firs the snow would be

harder. *Vorlage!* Again just the right weight distribution, the right knee action. Spine curved, he whizzed down, head forward, legs slightly apart to let the wind through. Another steeper grade; once more his chest and legs moved with it, as precisely as a scale. He danced through another gate, feeling the air pressure reduce, as he entered the narrow trail through more trees. Here it was flat and slow. He tried poling himself into more speed, but a pole slipped. He lost time, went into a crouch too soon, gaining speed too slowly. Another split-second lost. Was his thinking out of kilter?

Suddenly, a snow terrace with a two-story abyss below. The ledge tossed him, but he made it, and stood up all the way down. He felt the speed increase again, and he welcomed it. He wasn't old at all. He belonged here. Two yellow flags: danger! He heard the scream of his skis, saw the tips rise. Fall light now! *Light!* He somersaulted once, cartwheeled, crashed, but his muscles had given no resistance. He tumbled like an old cat, and stood again, a bit shaky. There were few spectators here, thank God. He shouldn't have looked. There was the next jump. He jumped too late, too far, too hard. The impact tossed him forward, brought him to his side, sent him sliding down the rest of the skyscraper wall with his right cheek and temple against the ice. His face burned with hot liquid. He was bleeding. Behind the ropes, the people stood silent with what? Pity? Disappointment? Fear for him? His speed had been too much for his legs, he realized. He'd gone too fast.

He tore off his goggles, leaned forward, wobbly now, suddenly feeling lost, confused. Three gates. He foolishly braked to a standstill before them, and here someone laughed—laughed!—but then he swung through and down.

"Give up!" his mind cried. But he couldn't, wouldn't on this endless course. Again he gathered speed, skis edging, braking, carving too much, now too fast, now too slow. One more gate, a few more seconds of agony. The ant heap of spectators in view, the timer's platform, the judges under the umbrella. He straightened, knees locked. One last burst of speed—a thousand feet. He pulled in his head, squeezed the poles under his arm. He gave it all he had, shooting through the finish. There was no applause. He felt dizzy and defeated when he stopped behind the platform

The people massed outside the fence, but Ernsting couldn't face them. His breath came in gasps. He was shaking, and his face stung with sweat and blood. Soon the next racer was through. Ernsting could hear the congratulating bellows of the spectators, the stunning under two-minute time. He didn't dare to ask for his own. "Karl! Darling!"

She was wiping his face with a kleenex, and taking off his helmet, and stroking his wet hair. He looked at his wife. Never had he welcomed her so much. He saw the comforting smile on her lips, the familiar charm in her eyes. But the sun shone mercilessly on her face, and, as though for the first time, he noticed the fine lines on her forehead, the widening pores of her skin, the circles of her neck. Oh, he didn't love her less for aging! But if she had aged, so had he. One couldn't deny a fact. One had to accept it.

All around him there was youth now. Ruesch, Brenneman, and the rest—all cut from the same beaming,

resilient cloth. Trude had been right. He could still ski for years. No one could take away that joy.

No one could deprive him of the mountains. He could breathe their beauty tomorrow, as he had yesterday. The downhill course shimmered like the surface of a frozen waterfall, and the crests above were sunflecked. He would always have those.

He took off his skis. Then he went to Pepi. The timer was tucking his complex equipment into leather cases.

"*Na, Karl. Auf Wiedersehen!*"

"Good-bye, Pepi," and Ernsting stretched out his hand with graceful finality.

The Studio

• **Charles Edward Eaton**

Stunned upon entry, we let ourselves recover slowly,
Accepting this bruise, reneging on another,
Walking halfway down that corridor,
Abruptly turning, advancing for the kill,
Treading, trod, by parrots, swans,
Throwing an eye away, tossing our hair
As if a crazy horse erupted as it fled.
This was all part and parcel of being overrun,
Invading the world a wild boar roamed.
How was it that the artist sat us down at table,
Gave us wine and ravished us with food,
Turning us like monsters, angels at a Lazy-Susan?
Was it because he fathomed us before we came,
His shirt still splattered but his face serene?
We had been let in like bulls and lambs,
The maverick coming toward him once again.
We were the brilliant pulsing in the tubes,
The throbbing stuff to fill the flattened forms.
It was upon him, and he fully knew
The hour was swollen in brute mass,
A swan sucking at a woman's ear,
Bandits looting from each others bellies—
Penned, cursing and cajoling one another,
We embraced, resisted as we could.
The man who kept the bottleneck expelled
Us in the motley he preferred,
Making us know, drop by lurid drop,
How he dispersed us from the spill,
Running with the buffet-shield of his wet canvas dam.

Look Up! Look Up!

• Claude Koch

The whole story covers approximately twenty-eight years. Not in detail, you understand; sometimes, in fact, it's as dim and imperceptible as one strand of yarn in a mohair sweater. But at least twice it bulges in a considerable knot. Those were, in substance, Mr. Beal's second thoughts on the matter, after he had mailed his letter of protest to the Dean.

He had returned from the faculty meeting, opened a bottle of beer, taken out a sheet of very good, very plain, and very masculine stationery and, with the candor for which he was admired and liked, explained to the Dean why he thought there should be no more faculty meetings on Sunday afternoons. All the reasons were convincing, and all were lies. However, Mr. Beal did not fully realize this himself; he thought the reasons he gave were valid though perhaps not "seminal." It wasn't until after he had mailed the letter, and returned to put his feet up before the open fire with a book that he couldn't get interested in and a second bottle of beer, that he faced up to the fact that any reason but one was a lie, and that he couldn't in a Sunday of letters explain that one. He could say that Casimir Laddow had come up out of the cellar after twenty-eight years and threatened him and all the comfortable establishment about him in which he placed his trust. He would have to track it all back, like the thread through the Minotaur's cave, and remember the season and recollect the voices.

"Gut. Pud it dere."

He was sure that that was representative of all that Mrs. Laddow ever said to him that first meeting, twenty-eight years ago. Her son Casimir said nothing that was representative. Terence Beal was Freshman football manager; the year was 1938, and football was big at the College. A Freshman football manager was anything but big, so he could hardly expect her to say much else. But they smiled, mutually, and he even smiled at Casimir. It would be twenty-eight years before he saw Casimir smile; and when he did, it shook him to his boots.

The Laddows ran the College laundry. Mrs. Laddow must have been, even then, a woman of fifty; and Casimir was thirty, if he was a day. Thus people *said* (because in a community staffed largely by Irish Christian Brothers all foreigners were under scrutiny). And as the Brothers were not noticeably liberal, no persons save "foreigners" could be found to do the house chores.

So every day in the football season of that first year, and in the fall and spring practices that accrued to it, Terence Beal gathered the dirty towels from the locker rooms and lugged them through the tunnel from the gym to the basement of the Brothers' House, and deposited them "dere" for Mrs. Laddow and her son, Casimir.

The next day he'd pick up the clean ones early.

He remembered the Freshman year especially, because all local luminaries loomed big then—and in the laundry Mrs. Laddow was big. She had a combustible face, as though a firing pin had been pressed or a spring depressed behind that blunt front, and some sort of recoil or explosion was imminent. And yet, under the odd, square-cut glasses that were a product of some other theory of vision than Terence's, her eyes were friendly enough. They were small, in large caverns, and there was a bright fire flickering through them.

He would put the laundry bag on the floor near the boiler, and Mrs. Laddow would nod and smile and hike her two hundred pounds over to it and tug at it and say something in Polish or Lithuanian under her breath; and Casimir, who was always puttering at the washer, would hurry over and swing it on his back, carry it to the washers, weigh it, measure it, and pass it through. Once or twice, Terence attempted to discuss washers with Casimir, vaguely hoping, perhaps, that on the level of the machine they might establish rapport. But no. Casimir's expression was as negative as a freshly folded towel. His brow, even then, was a rock against which a sea of ideas might batter in vain. It was smooth, with the smoothness of the moon washed by waves of space; it was white, as though he saw his towels "through" personally. This was the Casimir Mr. Beal remembered, and this was the Casimir he had encountered on the day of the letter to the Dean.

Casimir was slight and square in the early days and, perhaps, militarv in a nondescript way, like all the privates in all the sad armies of Eastern Europe (even then drilling behind barracks and behind the times). Gossip sometimes observed that he had possibly "escaped" with his mother, had fled from service into which he had been pressed in some unmentionable town in some dim part of the world. Because there was no one on campus quite as untouchable as a Freshman football manager, Terence tended to hold the morose view himself.

But their clothes! Not so much Mrs. Laddow's which were undatable and grimly shapeless—but Casimir's! Had he a younger and much smaller brother, who (God knows how!) had shared a much *older* generation; and had he appropriated that brother's clothes with the determination to keep them, unsoiled, forever?—well, that might have explained their dissatisfaction with his frame, their antipathy to his generation, their outrageous, other-worldly, despairing *suavity*. They were patched in the proper places and (to use the language of the political generation in which Casimir smiled) with meticulous brinkmanship. His hair lay in absolute, limp, and unwavering strands, uncut and black as the tunnel itself, back from a broad white brow, like seaweed cast up on some undisturbed beach. From all this, young Terence would avert his eyes politely. He suspected a different concept of time: did the Laddows live by waterclock, horologue, or heliologue? In what epoch were their roots? Terence Beal had clearly not seen many of the idiosyncrasies of poverty—if that's what it was.

ii

On the first Autumn evening when he saw the Laddows walking to the trolley that rattled the high road a

half mile from the campus, he was appalled, then amused. His own chores were done just before dusk in the manager's room under the gym; and so he gathered his books together and said good-bye to the Sophomore, Junior, and Senior managers, who ranked him so utterly, and walked in that pale twilight along the gravel path to the trolley. The Laddows were arguing under the first arc light beyond the campus gate. Or perhaps they were simply mulling over the day's occupations. But their language was foreignly sibilant, requiring much hissing and a little uncalculated spitting; and they stood apart (unnecessarily apart, Terence thought) and bridged the distance with pitch. He bade them good evening, but their conversation or debate continued as though he didn't really attend the College and haul towels day by day. He walked on; and soon they caught up to him, bobbing rapidly, with Casimir four or five paces ahead—still arguing. In retrospect their dialogue had the phonetic qualities of an improbable comic strip.

"Id's nicer in Lodz dis time of year." That was Casimir.

"Dat's all you know—if we'd stayed dere, you'd be *poof*."—Mrs. Laddow.

"Dar uniform—nice."

"Crazy. You got id nice now—you don' know." Her voice would rise.

"What's for supper?"

"*Perosci.* You lucky, Crazy."

"Aah. Same every night. Not nice, dat."

So that was the way he remembered them, with Casimir's hands in the air as they passed down the road, for that was the way he found them in the evenings: Casimir a few paces in advance, far enough that the normal voice would not carry, and he and the mother always conversing, or arguing, or debating, or lamenting—whatever it was. It was odd enough to see them that way out of the laundry, to have a detached view of their distant life.

Then, of course, he progressed, if the Laddows did not. And soon he was a sophomore, and some other fellow was lugging the towels through the tunnel to the basement of the Faculty House and Mrs. Laddow. He would still sometimes see them himself in the evenings, though he left later in the sophomore year, still later in the junior, and in his senior year —having reached a dizzy pinnacle of authority and responsibility—so late that only when, perhaps, there had occurred some outrageous breakdown in the washers that required Casimir's ministration, did he see them in the evenings at all. He remembered quite clearly, though the parade was the same, the voices the same. He knew better, by then, than to attempt to talk to them as they processed, though he still nodded and smiled. When there'd be a special request to make of Mrs. Laddow—perhaps an extra batch of towels for a scrimmage with a local team—he would see her during the day, and she would settle the terms as pleasantly as ever though at greater length, and Casimir would stand by the washers looking at nothing in particular. Terence was perhaps more self-conscious, or socially conscious, by then, and he would have confessed that they made him slightly uneasy. It wasn't only the quaint clothes. Football was still big at the College, and there seemed no room for football in whatever world the Laddows inhabited or sprang from; and heaven alone knew just what there was room for, besides the laundry. Then, too, he had the un-

comfortable feeling that they had stepped aside from the burgeoning progress all about him and were simply waiting. But for what?

iii

The Freshman manager brought Terence Beal's uneasiness into focus the last week of the football season of his senior year. The College was after the Middle States Trophy, and it looked as though they might get it. There was a Jesuit school to beat, and then they'd take primacy of place among Catholic Colleges of the East. The Brothers knew enough of the Jesuits to consider them as foreigners also. In a word, there was pressure; and when there is pressure on coach or player, the manager is low on the totem pole. Terence was as human as anyone else, but he did try to refrain from passing it down the line.

It was a special scrimmage, called for the morning before the game. An outrageous thing—but the coach, too, was on edge. He had received a call-up notice as a Marine Reserve Captain. It had unmanned him.

"Tell Mrs. Laddow we'll need a complete set of towels for tomorrow morning," Terence said to the Freshman manager, who was a nice boy—a Jewish pre-medical student displaced on the Brothers' campus, a boy whose name Mr. Beal was to forget. The boy was never to be Senior manager, for the war would come that December, and football would never again be played at the College; and he would soon die as a member of a liaison team parachuted among the Polish partisans.

"No," he said. "I won't go over there again. That's three times this week, and they don't work tomorrow. You tell them."

"What do you mean, you *won't* go over?"

"I've got to work with them for the next three years. That Casimir gives me the creeps. And they're getting edgy. It must be the war. There'll be an argument, and I won't get into it."

"Well, someone has to do it," Terence said, "and the rest are down at the practice field."

"I'm sorry."

Terence went down through the tunnel. It was smaller and narrower and shorter than in his freshman year, but still he would have preferred to cross the twenty-five yards or so of open campus to the House. He went through the tunnel out of habit, but it didn't seem the way to come upon people any more.

For once Mrs. Laddow didn't smile.

"What you think we are? He," she lifted a big ungraceful hand toward Casimir, "he clean this place tonight. You think he clean it again tomorrow just because you want extra towels? We don' work tomorrow, don' get paid extras."

Terence tried to interrupt; obviously she would be crying if you could get tears out of a stone. He had never seen resentment in her face before, and it was so hopeless, actually, that it made him uncomfortable. He dropped his eyes. Her shoes were canted at the sides and heels, like unbalanced and discarded barges. She shouted to her son:

"We stay tomorrow. Dey don' care."

Casimir was concerned with something over Terence Beal's shoulder.

"So," he said, just as loud, "what can you do?"

"All right," she said to Terence, "you bring. But you be ashamed."

He couldn't go back through the

tunnel. It seemed that if he did, there would have been justice in Mrs. Laddow's anger. Too, one felt guilty in those days, even on a small Catholic college campus, in the presence of Eastern Europeans. It was discomforting to observe that, even there, they might be condemned to cellars and tunnels.

iv

Then Terence Beal went to war. And after that momentary and unbelievable displacement, he returned to teach in the unmitigated prosperity of his College. The Laddows were still there.

The war had, apparently, discovered nothing for them; unless, for Casimir, it opened a new source for older, more other-worldly clothes. Coats with felt collars and pinched backs and rigorously straight pockets; trousers up three or four inches from the instep, olive drab or grief-gray, and tight as an ancient change purse at the bottoms. In the twenty years from the war's end, he would occasionally see one or the other of them, sad shadows on the blossoming campus, their presence vaguely chiding, reminiscent of the refugees who had taught him a few things about human misery that he did not particularly want to know. They were never together now. Perhaps Casimir had already moved permanently from the laundry room to more elevated occupations that the older generation could never have achieved. Perhaps time and change had irrevocably interrupted the argument of pre-war years. Mrs. Laddow certainly was not the same woman. Formerly her clothes had been shapeless, but she, herself, had presented a formidable, if unexciting, port. Now she seemed driven to pensiveness, her body bent, as though she had lost a thread of argument somewhere in the still alien American dust. Mr. Beal had no occasion at all to speak to her now; and she, for twenty years, did not even bid him the time of day. They had lost their common bond, it seemed, tenuous as that had been. When Mr. Beal was aware of this, and that was seldom (perhaps once every two years or so), he had a momentary pang of easy distress; Mrs. Laddow had slowly become as much a shadow as that sad generation expended in the camps of Eastern Europe.

Casimir, alone, encountered at the trolley corner or, rarely, crossing the quadrangle with a mop and pail in his hand, seemed to have aged scarcely at all. But he was out of the cellar. He was broad (his clothes were tighter); his face was slightly heavier, more expressionless, more anonymous. The years had left as little record of change across that brow as a few generations would leave on cold stone. Perhaps that was his secret, Mr. Beal thought on the occasion of one such meeting. Perhaps after he had worn out a few generations of men, he would evolve as other strange life had done and reach that point of no return when thought rather than the elements took things in hand and assaulted flesh and bone. It was a slightly nagging annoyance that the Laddows appeared not to have shared in the growing opulence of the College, as had all others. It was a nagging annoyance for Mr. Beal to feel that they were indifferent to it. Once or twice he may have felt he should talk to someone about it. Certainly their appearance, rare as it was, could not have left a favorable impression

on visitors. Surely they had no sense of community. They were, somehow, more assertedly *alien* than ever.

v

With these casual and occasional thoughts, Mr. Beal was hardly prepared for Casimir's smile. It was the morning preceding the letter, the weekend following the opening of the Fall term. It was the day of the first faculty meeting of the year—changed now from the first Wednesday, as it had been for nineteen years, to the first Sunday afternoon to accommodate the new cocktail party and elaborate dinner program to follow; but Mr. Beal left before them, and came out on the quadrangle into the pearl gray stillness of the autumn air. A hurricane was teetering along the Georgia coast, and as far north as this Pennsylvania valley, the air had that luminous, cautionary stillness, that quality of indrawn breath between heartbeats, that warned of imminent violence elsewhere. He was well across the quad, disturbing a cottontail rabbit by the shrine of Our Lady, and following with his eyes its graceful flight, when he saw a figure under the plain trees leaning into a camera on a tripod. The man's back was familiar with that distant accommodation that often-seen strangers make to one on trolleys, trains, and buses. Then he straightened and raised his head to the tower of College Hall and swung his body around with a broad smile for the whole gracious, premonitory scene. It was Casimir, and he smiled through Mr. Beal, and around him, and beyond him. Mr. Beal had never seen the like of that smile before. It was such a smile as one might paint on rigid cylindrical surfaces; it was a smile that admitted no cooperation with the face or, perhaps, with anything else. It stopped Mr. Beal as abruptly as any interference with the laws of nature would. It was as indifferent and self-contained as nature itself. It was, perhaps, a Buddha's smile.

Mr. Beal was appalled at the elegance of the man's equipment and his dress—all sufficiently outmoded for them to catch the eye, like a Pierce-Arrow or a Stanley Steamer. His coat might have been Edwardian; its felt collar and heavy pile a dark frame for the tie billowing out below a wing collar. His black trousers had a pallbearer's crease. His gray gloves were snug with black stripes. His coat was open, and one gloved hand was pressed like a dandy's into an antique waistcoat pocket. He wore a bowler hat. His leather pumps, shined to an unsettling gloss, canted reminiscently. They were the clothes of a much older and much more affluent generation of refugees, and Mr. Beal, when he caught his breath, wondered again at Casimir's resources.

"Good afternoon," Mr. Beal said. That shape, with the face so unsettlingly smiling, dispirited him like a glimpse into the eye of the hurricane itself. It was as though Mr. Beal had found an allegorical figure among the living and could not identify it for all his learning.

Casimir did not look at him. "Nice," he said, sweeping his free hand toward the tower and the waiting sky. He brought the hand with a thump against the camera, jarring its position on the tripod. "Nice. I take pictures everywhere."

Mr. Beal could not pass without moving onto the sod, and in his state of acute self-consciousness it would have seemed too ostentatious.

"Pictures, eh?" he said.

"Here," said Casimir, "I show you." He drew the hand that had thumped the camera into his coat pocket.

"Nice equipment," said Mr. Beal. It probably was. It had certainly once been expensive; but even to one so at a loss technologically as Mr. Beal, it was clearly of another age.

Then Mr. Beal recoiled a step, because Casimir was drawing a sheaf of photographs from his pocket with such indifferent violence that they scattered at Mr. Beal's feet, drifting about him like the detritus of a storm.

Mr. Beal couldn't stoop for them, for Casimir at last was looking directly at him with unrecognizing eyes and smiling his fixed smile and waving behind him with his useful hand. "Nice. Nice. I do it all the time."

They stood facing each other alone for the first time in their lives. Mr. Beal felt then the calmness that was indeed the eye of a hurricane, and that if he stirred, he would move out into the peripheral violence that accompanied it. But he forced himself, as though awakening from a lethargy, to bend over and confront the scattered photographs. As he stooped, those facing up seemed gray and distant, so far indeed that he might have looked upon their scenes from a spotter's plane. In fact, he found himself unable to distinguish the forms they held. And when he did pick them up, he saw the truth. They were as indistinct as he had imagined; blurred beyond all but the most general recognition. His hands shook as he shuffled them. Settling upon the top of the pile, he held out to Casimir the one whose vague conformations suggested the tower by which they stood.

"See!" Casimir said. He turned his back again, thumped the hand again on the camera, and lifted his head like a prophet's to the tower. Mr. Beal was freed then, and he placed the pile of photos in Casimir's other hand, disengaged for once from his pocket, and moved away at the same time. "You come back next week, and I have more. Then I show you—" The silence that ensued was as deafening, and as unintelligible, as the language of the spheres.

Show me what? Mr. Beal wondered. "Of course," he said. "I will." And then considerably discomfited by what seemed to him, at first, merely an indecent intimacy, he hurried down the path to the parking lot. At the edge of the quad, he could not resist a backward look. Casimir was standing, thrust forward so that he left the impression of being on tiptoe, his hands on his hips, facing the tower with all the apparent pride of immanent possession.

Mr. Beal was a respected associate professor with tenure, but he was as uncertain and cautious as he climbed into his car as though he were once again a Freshman football manager, floundering under the heels of all the big people on campus.

So he wrote the letter, and lied, and sunk under the fiercesome thought that this was one of God's spies—and that he and his had been weighed and measured like the laundry of his youth. His small soul retired through tunnels of its own.

Sea Gulls

• Michael Lee, F.S.C.

The sun was warm. He had been asleep and now became aware of the sun's presence slowly, as though someone were staring at him in a crowded room. He was lying on his stomach, his head flat to one side, his arms pressed close to his body. He wanted to look at the sun, but did not open his eyes. Instead, he imagined his arms were held to his sides by thick ropes and remembered Baudelaire's albatross. He felt awkward, and outside his environment. A slight breeze blew long strands of sanded hair across his wet forehead. He could feel the sand-joined fibers of the army blanket against his cheek, and the consciousness of it began to make him uncomfortable. He opened his eyes slowly, then closed them quickly. The sun was bright. He opened them again, lifted his head for a moment, then let it fall carelessly, like some punch-drunk fighter. A sun-warmed smile parted his lips. It was worse than getting up for class. He finally raised the upper part of his body and folded his arms to support his shoulders. He squinted into the sun, and looked towards the ocean. The breakers were powerful, and thundered towards shore until, silenced by wet, sloping sand, they went home again, murmuring. He noticed his father, sitting just inside the area of the wet sand. The beach chair slanted to one side, and he just looked out to sea, a light yellow sailcloth jacket protecting his arms and neck from the rays of the early afternoon sun. He wondered about his father. His father was always pensive at the beach. Everyone seemed to understand. He knew his father crossed the ocean once, and it always seemed to him, when they came to the seashore, he had left someone over there.

"Hey, Tim!"

A high-pitched, happy voice called his name, and he left his father and looked up the beach to the left. He smiled. It was his younger brother, John. He turned on his side and propped his head with one arm, surprised at the coolness in the pocket of sand hollowed out by his elbow. He waved, and John waved back, then ran after the four other forms. They chased a box kite against the backdrop of a clear sky, and if someone had asked him who they were, he would have answered John and Eileen, and Susan and Jim and Mother. He knew them. Of course he did. But he knew he didn't. Not really. He had been away at college, and in the past three years had come home only for holidays and summers. The holidays didn't bother him, cloaked as they were in the artificial but comfortable anesthesia of ritual. But there was no protective ritual for the summers. Just the pressure of time. Each summer he came home he felt more awkward. He knew he was maturing. Trying to find his *Weltanshauung*, his philosophy of life, as his professor put it. And he expected that. But the kids were growing up too. No one ever said anything about that. Or

about watching parents grow old. His father was getting older. The double chin was more pronounced, and he played catch only on the Fourth of July, when the family picknicked at Bowman's Hill. His mother was still young looking, and laughed often enough, but he thought she was fearful. He could tell by the way she held him when he came home on his visits. She seemed to be afraid that one day he would not be coming back. And then there were the kids. He smiled as he remembered John's voice, and looked up the beach where the children were gathered. They were hidden by the faceless crowd, but the kite was still visible, its orange siding bright against the cold, blue sky. He decided not to think about them. It was easier to think about kites.

He slapped at a horsefly and, looking down at the white lump on his knee, remembered his cousin. She was lying next to him on the same blanket, only lower down. She was asleep, lying on her back, her head off to one side, strands of long blond hair resting lazily on strapless shoulders. The straps gathered loosely about her tanned arms. She was wearing a two-piece bathing suit, a white knit over a solid light-green background. He remembered the first time he had seen her in a two-piecer, two summers ago. He was on a ladder, painting the house, and she was lying on the grass, sun-bathing. He noticed for the first time that she was becoming a woman. Now, her breasts seemed too full for the knit suit. He watched as they swelled rhythmically, keeping time with her soft breathing. He wanted to reach over and touch her hair, and let his fingers move gently down her warm body. But he didn't. Instead, he spoke to her.

"Natalie—want to go for a walk?" His voice was soft, as though apologizing for something. She didn't open her eyes, but a smile played on her thin lips.

"Okay." She opened her eyes, and turned her head to him. She looked up at him, her eyes wide and clear. "If you promise not to embarrass me."

"Forget it, then." He smiled. He stood and towered over her, large hands resting comfortably on his hips. She didn't move, and her eyes closed again. Her passivity was inviting. "Come on, you can get your sleep later. The way you sleep, you'd think you never sat home at night."

She smiled again, but didn't open her eyes. "Well, you never offer to take me out."

"I'm your cousin, remember? What would people think?"

She laughed, and sat up, and he could see where the tan ended and the whiteness began. He remembered it was the same with his skin when he took his suit off. She pulled the straps over her shoulders and stood up. He wanted to reach out to help her but he didn't. He wondered what people would think. She stooped, picked up a comb from the blanket, and ran it through her hair. He liked the way she tilted her head when she pulled the softness over.

"How do I look?" she asked.

"Beautiful."

She threw the comb onto the blanket, and he started to walk towards the kite and the kids, but she touched his arm and said, "No, let's go the other way."

He turned and they walked towards the surf. The sand was hot. They passed behind his father, and after a couple of hundred yards they turned towards the wet sand. They walked along silently, and he liked the feel

of the cupped shells breaking under the weight of his heels and thought of broken ping-pong balls. He watched her feet. They were small, and motioned towards one another, as though trying to say something. He looked at his own feet. He was pigeon-toed too. He was walking on the inside, and occasionally the water covered his toes, and each time it was like getting wet for the first time in a shower. He wanted to talk, but couldn't think of anything to say. So they walked. Finally, she slowed. "Do you like sea gulls?" she said.

He was surprised by the question. "Yeah, I guess so. Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. I just wondered. I like them too."

He still wondered. "They seem sort of friendly, in an awkward way," he said.

"Yes. I always want to touch them and hold them. But they look at you out of the corner of their eye. As soon as you think you can touch them, they're gone."

He was confused. He had never heard her before. She was always just his young cousin, the kid with the wild hair-dos and the crazy dancing. Most of all, she was the kid with the laugh. He loved her laugh. But now, she was different. He realized they had never talked about anything before. He thought it was odd talking about sea gulls the first time. But he spoke anyway.

"They don't like people to touch them, I guess. They're probably part pigeon." She laughed, and he remembered his father. His father used to laugh at him when they went to the zoo. He would spend more time feeding the pigeons than looking at the animals. His father couldn't understand that. Tim could almost hear his deep, authoritative voice: "Drive twenty-five miles to a zoo to see animals, and he spends most of the time talking to pigeons." His father told the story all the time. And Tim didn't mind. Someday his father might understand.

"I think they're lonely. They fly all day and huddle together on the beach, only to be chased by the surf or people like us." As she spoke, a flock of sea gulls cawed their way over the top of the breakers, then circled, and landed on the beach behind them.

He heard her, and remembered the first time he went pheasant hunting and how the pheasant didn't move until he was right on top of it. Then it fluttered and was away, so that he was rattled and fired late. But his friend had fired too, and the pheasant fell hard. And when it was dead on the cold ground, he knew why it had tried to escape. It was pretty and didn't want to be hurt. The gulls sounded again, and he forgot that other day. It wasn't important. Besides, sand couldn't hide anything, like the tall weeds on the farm. Sea gulls had to run sooner. "Well, at least they have each other," he said.

She looked at him, then smiled faintly. "Sometimes that isn't enough. Did you ever listen to their cry? It sounds like they've lost something."

He had listened to their cry. And he couldn't answer it. He couldn't answer her cry either. Why did she have to ask him? He didn't know any more than she did. He decided not to try to answer her. "I wish I was a sea gull, though."

She looked at him, her eyes narrowing like they did when she was small, trying to decide what kind of popsicle she wanted. "Why?"

He was surprised at her concern and felt guilty, but spoke anyway.

"Well, just think. All day long they get to fly up and down the beach and take in all the pretty girls." He was sorry he had said that. She laughed and punched him on the arm, but he was still sorry he had said it.

They walked along in silence again. A stronger breeze was coming in off the ocean now, and she kept pushing her hair out of her eyes. They came to a section of the beach where there weren't many people, and he decided to ask her.

"Want to go in?"

"No. It's too cold." She smiled.

"Listen, honey, are you going to go in willingly, or am I going to have to help you?"

She laughed and started to run. He gave her a few yards in the wet sand, then sprinted after her and caught her easily. He held her by the waist and she fell against him, laughing. His arms moved up to her stomach and he held her tightly and was surprised at her firmness. She was laughing uncontrollably and, finally, let her head fall against his chest. Her hair was smooth. He liked the weight of her body against his. Then he saw an older couple coming and he suddenly let go of her, afraid they would notice. She was younger, but they looked enough alike to be of the same family. She looked at him quickly, but didn't say anything. The couple passed, and they began to walk slowly again, their toes touching the foam of the incoming surf.

"That's some glass of beer," he said. She laughed. He was always surprised at how easily she laughed. He waited for a moment, then said, innocently, "Want to go for a swim?"

She looked at him calmly. Then an undisciplined smile broke into a laugh, and she started to run again. He caught her quickly and lifted her, one arm around her back, the other around her legs. She held her arms tightly around his neck. He could feel her breast against his and her warm, pleading breath. He ran into the waves with her and was shocked by the cold. She held him more tightly, and he thought for a moment she was really scared. But he knew she wasn't. He waited for a big wave, and threw her into it just as it crested. It broke right on her. The wave knocked him down too, but he got up quickly, so that she wouldn't notice he had fallen. She came up laughing and threw back a head of wet hair.

"Let's go out farther," he said.

"I'm afraid."

"Oh, come on." He took her hand and was surprised at how small it was. The waves were getting bigger and began breaking chest high. The water was getting deep. He spotted a jellyfish and scooped it up without her seeing it. She didn't want to go out any further, and they stopped, and he let go of her hand. He could feel the undertow forcing them down the beach, and felt helpless as he tried to dig his feet into the sand hidden beneath the troubled water. He waited for a calm, and then spoke.

"Want to see something?"

"What?"

"Well, pick the correct hand." He held out both hands. He remembered how they used to play the game when they were younger. She thought for a moment, and swayed close to him with a large swell, and their bodies touched. He wanted to stop playing games and tell her, but he couldn't. She finally made her choice, but pointed to the hand without the jellyfish.

"Sorry, you lost."

She feigned hurt. "Let me try again."

"All right. Just once more." It was all he could do to keep from laughing. He knew she hated jellyfish. Almost as bad as she hated snakes. Even just garter snakes.. He put his hands behind his back and brought them out again. "Okay, which one?"

She pointed and he opened the hand with the fish. She screamed and held both hands up to her face. "Get that thing out of here."

He laughed, then threw it directly ahead of them. It splashed, and some gulls circled over it, but didn't swoop in to take it.

"It'll come back." She was scared, and moved closer to him.

"Okay, get up on my shoulder." He waited as a large wave went by, then stooped, and she sat on his shoulders. He rose with the next wave, and started walking out to sea. He was surprised at her lightness. She seemed fragile. Her hands clasped his forehead, and his arms were wrapped tightly around her legs. Her legs were smooth. He had never touched them before. A large wave broke over them, and he held his ground, but could feel her legs stiffen with tension.

"Let's go back in, Tim."

"Okay." He turned awkwardly and headed for shore, the waves pushing him from behind like a crowd leaving a stadium after a football game. He reached the shore and stooped to let her off. She put her hands on the top of his head and jumped off, and he remembered playing leap-frog when they were small. He stood slowly. "What a load," he said. She smiled, then splashed him.

"Bet you can't catch me."

He watched her run, kicking the water, and suddenly he wanted to run the other way. She was alive and pretty and young—but she was his cousin. He just stood there, looking. Then she called, playfully.

"Come on, beer belly you—"

He laughed. Beer belly. How did she know? He ran after her, and the water splashed on his chest. He caught her and wrapped his arms tightly around her waist. She fought to get free, then, suddenly, relaxed, and rested quietly against him. He gently let go, and they walked towards the sloping sand. The sun was warm, and felt good after the chill of the salt water. They walked along the beach quietly again, and then she did it. She slipped her hand into his. He refused it at first, then she slowed. He looked at her, then squeezed it tightly. They walked together, and he noticed, after a while, that his father's chair was gone. Up ahead, he could see his family gathered around the blanket. Packing up, and he was disappointed. The day had ended too quickly. When they were still a few hundred yards away, his brother saw them and called out. Tim waved and said, "God, he's sure a great kid, isn't he?"

Natalie suddenly stopped and looked at him. Then, quickly, she reached up and kissed him and held her arms around his neck as though she would never let go. He put his arms around her waist and held her to him. And he didn't care what people would say.

Prophets, Politicians, Professors, and Priests

• Dennis O'Brien

Claude Brown, author of the prophetically titled autobiography, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, suggested during a recent New York mayoralty campaign that the solution to the problem of Harlem was to burn it flat to the ground. Such has always been the attitude of prophetic souls to the wickedness brought forth in the cities of men. The prophet Amos, a simple herdsman of Tekoa, looks out on the city culture of his day when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam the son of Josh, king of Israel, and he says: "Thus saith the Lord: for three transgressions of Israel, and four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes, [they] pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek." And for this "the cities [shall] be wasted without inhabitant and the houses without men and the land be utterly desolate."

One should not think that the prophetic voice is merely an anguished cry against the passing wickedness of the city—there is the deep suspicion that the city is in its essence always given over to corruption. Hebrew religion was in origin the religion of the desert places, combining what has been labeled "sour Wahaby fanaticism" with "the great antique humanity of the Semitic desert." The history of Israel as recorded in the Bible can be seen simply as the struggle to keep the ancient desert faith of Yahweh when the Israelites moved from the nomadic, mountain existence into Palestine and became sedentary dwellers subject to all the corruptions of "the cities of the plain." Time and again the great prophets hearken back to the desert Israel, where primitive democracy reigned and there were no kings with splendid palaces "to oppress the poor and crush the needy." Desert life is poor by necessity; it is preeminently a life of faith because there is no security from sun-up to sun-down, and one can pray fervently for daily bread because the day-after-tomorrow's bread is too far away to imagine. But in the walled city there is security, and the accumulation of daily supplies creates the possibility for trade and wealth. One creates within the city a class structure of rich and poor, a political structure of ruler-ruled, and the old immediate togetherness born from the desperation of a desert tribe is lost irrevocably. The arrogance of affluence and power is violently denounced thus:

> They who lie upon ivory couches
> And stretch themselves out upon divans;
> And eat lambs from the flock
> And calves from the midst of the stall

They who sing to the accompaniment of the lyre
And compose songs to themselves like David;
They who drink chalices of wine,
And anoint themselves with the finest oils;
But they are not heartsick at the ruin of Joseph,
Therefore they shall be the first of the exiles to go into exile
And the shout of the revelers shall pass away.

I abhor the pride of Jacob
And his palaces I hate;
So I will deliver up the city and everything in it.

Amos, Ch. 6.

It is superfluous to note that prophetic voices are heard again in our day and the cry is the same — in the cities, men have become indifferent to the sufferings of others, the poor are oppressed as always; we have built a society of complex overlapping bureaucracies where one can no longer meet one's brother except by filing the correct papers before the first of the month. The solutions to our ills are the same: Recover the sense of the brotherhood of man, care for your neighbor, establish primitive or "participatory" democracy, love one another!

It is equally superfluous to commend such a view, the fascination of two thousand years with the message of the prophets is sufficient to show its relevance and power. I would like to try the more difficult task of saying some good things about the kings and tax-gatherers who get such universally bad press from the Hebrew prophets. Take Ahab of whom it is said in *I Kings*, "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him, and it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethball, king of the Zidonians, and went and served the Baal and worshipped him." It is against Ahab that the Lord raises up Elijah the Tishbite. And Eliam denounces Ahab in the country style well recorded in the King James translation: "Behold I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall and that is shut up and left in Israel."

Ahab and Jezebel stick in our minds as a particularly unattractive pair, but consider the verdict of the English historian Hugh Trevor-Roper. "The greatest of all the kings of Israel, Ahab, by his foreign alliances [he married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Zidonians] and religious toleration [he allowed altars to be raised to the Baal], might have saved his country had not the terrible Elijah, the mad mullah from the mountains of Gilead, swept up from the wilderness of Jeshimon, to mobilize the fanatics against him." Ahab was doing just what a good politician should do; he was trying to work out a sensible way of harmonizing the diverse interests in the society of his time. Foreign alliance and religious toleration, however, is wholly unacceptable to the prophet fired with the vision of the close-knit community, the family of Israel in the desert.

But one can say, Elijah *was* a fanatic; he wanted to preserve the purity

of Israel against the incursions of foreign elements, but Christianity has it all over the Hebrew prophets because the message of brotherhood has been universalized beyond the scope of tribal lineage in the House of Abraham to the whole world in which there shall be no Jew nor Greek, no master, no slave. *All* men are brothers, and this is the message that the Church brings to the city.

I don't think that this reply will be wholly satisfactory. The quarrel between prophets and politicians is a difference in the basic *structural* vision of man and society. The world of the city, presided over by king or president, is by *necessity* a world of *functions* not of brothers. The simple technological diversity which made up the ancient city has been magnified enormously in the modern metropolis but the central notion of a distinction between rulers and ruled, those who trade and those who produce, the whole functional complexity is still there as a barrier to brotherhood. I do *not* meet my fellow man as brother in this "city of brotherly love"; I meet a host of functionaries, subway ticket takers, cab drivers, hotel clerks—and all that I wish from them is that they fulfill their function. If they can be replaced by automatic ticket dispensers and computerized room-clerk machines, I am not a bit discomfited. In fact, I heave a sigh of relief at the efficiency of the machine compared with the grumpy fellow who used to hold this job.

It is against this essentially bureaucratic and divisive vision of man and society that the prophet raises his voice. Peter Berger, a sociologist and a follower of the prophetic spirit of Karl Barth, has written a book entitled *The Precarious Vision*, which he subtitles "A sociologist looks at Social Fictions and the Christian Faith." Berger's point is the prophetic one that the city is a structure of social fictions, of myriad roles that men play to mask their basic humanity and which leads to dishonesty and a failure of love. He says that

> Men put on a magic cloak to do certain acts in society for which they claim moral immunity for their persons . . . The alibi is that one does not do this personally but *qua* a particular office holder . . . Camus mentions the inscription on the executioner's sword at Freibourg, Switzerland: "Lord Jesus, Thou art the judge." The meaning of the inscription is simple. It proclaims that the hangman is not doing the killing, neither is the judge, the jury, nor the good people of the Canton watching the executioner.

Berger uses to good advantage the confrontation of the prophet Nathan with David. David has lusted after Bethsheba and has seen to it that her husband Uriah, the Hittite, is placed in the front row of battle, where he is killed. Nathan comes to King David and tells him the story of a rich man who had many flocks and herds, and there was a poor man who had only one poor ewe lamb for whom he cared most tenderly. But a stranger visits the house of the rich man, and rather than take from his own flocks for the table, the rich man slaughters the lamb of the poor man.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan,
"As the Lord liveth, the man that has done this thing shall surely die."

* * *

And Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man."

"Thou art the man." Berger reads this line with the accent on *man*. It is not the King who acts; it is *man* who acts against his brother man.

Or Mario Savio, putting both the civil rights problem and the issue of student freedom in a single prophetic framework:

> In our free speech fight at the University of California, we have come up against what may emerge as the greatest problem of our nation—depersonalized, unresponsive bureaucracy. We have encountered the organized *status quo* in Mississippi, but it is the same in Berkeley . . . We find functionaries who cannot make policy but can only hide behind the rules . . . a situation that is truly Kafkaesque.

To the politician, the world is a world of functions; to the prophet, a world of brothers. The politician attempts to construct a functional unity out of disparate interests, religions, races, nations; the prophet would make a true family of man.

Like Ahab, who marries the Zidonian woman, he allows the separate parties to remain separate but seeks a way of compromising and controlling the actions of the separated parties for the common good.

The modern city is and must be a structure of functions. The urban crisis is a crisis of function, and no appeal to the prophetic inspiration of a close-knit primitive democracy or universal brotherhood will solve the problems of the city. The city does not suffer from a failure of brotherhood as much as from a failure of intelligence. I much prefer the words of the city planner to those of Elijah, the Tishbite, or Elijah Mohammed.

Oh, but you say, that will never do. It may be true that many of the urban problems are functional—how do we build a sensible transportation system, prevent smog and the like—but surely *the* problem in the city today is precisely a problem of brotherhood, the integration of the Negro into the American community.

I agree, but before I surrender to the rhetoric of human brotherhood in connection with the Negro crisis, let me play out my politician's string a bit farther. In a very fundamental sense the Negro problem is a political problem. When the Supreme Court decided to reverse itself on the question of segregated schools, it was not done in a wave of brotherly sentiment, it was done on the political ground that the *indirect* consequences of separated schooling on the Negro child were of sufficient severity to warrant public action. Surely, much of the plight of the urban Negro is due to a failure of the political leaders of the community to do their homework. I do not know

that the mayors of the major cities have suffered from a lack of fellow feeling or brotherhood; what they have lacked is a clear sense of the indirect consequences on the Negro population of such things as mortgage decisions by central banks—which made it impossible for a Negro family to borrow money at reasonable rates in order to effect home improvements, thus leading to slum conditions. It has been shown that in Watts it is literally impossible for residents of that area to travel by public transportation to one of the major employment areas in the city of Los Angeles. This is not merely lack of brotherhood; it is sheer stupidity.

Which gives me a chance to make a reference to the third of my four "P's"—professors. Political structures, the polis, the city and its managers arise because we come to recognize the indirect consequences of our actions and learn how to control them for our own good. Some things anyone can know—like where the smell from the glue factory originates—but some things it may take a special expertise to know—like seeing that the effect of segregated schooling is demoralizing to the Negro or that cigarette smoking has a correlation with cancer. Professors can bring a public interest into being when they discover an indirect consequence of a private transaction that was not immediately evident to the untrained observer. They can also generate public action by devising techniques—a filter for the smokestack or the cigarette—or strategies of social action, special schools, psychiatric counseling. There is no public field unless we *know* the indirect effect of our actions and know also some technique for control.

One could suggest, for instance, that the answer to the slums is not a conversion of the heart from fear to love, but a political and technological strategy for allowing the white home owner to protect himself against the indirect and unintended consequences of having Negroes move into the neighborhood. Although it is repugnant to our higher democratic rhetoric and would prove, I am sure, an expedient which would be outgrown, planned integration on a percentage basis, backed up by the power of the law, might prove more useful than all the sermons in Christendom.

I mention professors, because so many students today seem to find the world of study irrelevant to the burning issues of the day—Civil Rights, Vietnam, and the like. Direct engagement may in the long run be necessary, but I would simply insist that the answer to the urban crisis will not be found on the picket line but by the extraordinarily complex process of trying to *understand* our cities and make them work for us and not against us. This task is one to which the college and university must address itself and is one worthy of much consideration. The city is the creature of the politician, but the politician is not merely a strong man in power; he is also someone desperately in need of knowing *how* to exercise power. What are the strategies for a sensible program of breaking up the slums or building a transportation network? For these answers, he will have to look to people who have special knowledge.

Having said this much against the prophetic vision of brotherhood, let me take a more positive look at this powerful notion. Of course, the strategy for public action, the political program thought out in terms of consequences and techniques by city-planners and politicians, will not operate if there is

truly an "ontological gap" in society. Unfortunately, this is often the case in our society and has been so in ages past. One can only have a public control when those indirectly affected by an action are thought to possess the same fullness of humanity, of rights, as the one who initiated the action. The master certainly knew that the slave was indirectly affected by the master's action, but he may have regarded this with something like the casual indifference with which I regard my interest in sirloin steaks in relation to the beef population. Perhaps the function of the Christian Church in the urban crisis is to continue to hammer at this point: that there is no ontological gap between men, and that in this sense we are all brothers. What I should underline, however, is that *brother* is used in this instance metaphorically and as an hyperbole to point out some sort of commonality which is not literally brotherhood.

It may well be the case that the "mad mullahs of the desert," the Elijahs, Isaiahs, and Amoses of the Old Testament, were reactionaries, hearkening back to the lost life of the primitive tribe. One would have to read their message today typologically, as a prefigurement of an old age to come, not the return to an age that once was. Brotherhood is a powerful notion in human affairs, and I would not wish to see it introduced into the arena of political action if it is meant in anything like the literal sense. We have seen false prophets in our century who have sought to find a more fundamental unity for human society than the functional harmony of the political world. These prophets, like the desert prophets, found a fundamental unity of the group in ties of blood and race. In a horrible irony of history, the latter day Zidonians cut down the descendants of Ahab and Elijah for intermarrying with pure Aryans and weakening the fundamental unity of the race.

Not all the attempts to realize a fundamental brotherhood are necessarily malign. They range from sacramental witness to good-hearted bumbling, to simple-mindedness. A religious order of Christian Brothers may serve as a sacramental sign of an age to come when brotherhood can be realized in some exalted fashion which does not require, as I believe it does require in our age, a retreat to primitivism. As far as I know, the Christian Brothers do not offer their rule as a textbook in city planning.

The retreat to simple and benign brotherhood has been a frequent response to the pressures of technology. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels save their juiciest scorn for the romantic socialists of their day like Morris, Pugin, the Fourierists, and others who sought to return to the simpler days of hand-manufacture. Ruskin forced a group of bewildered workmen to make very bad paintings and carvings in the reconstruction of a London church because that was the way it was done in the Middle Ages before man and his product were alienated by the industrial revolution. Nikita Khrushchev was being a true Marxist when, on being offered some exquisite handweaving in Indonesia, he turned it aside with scorn: after the revolution that kind of thing will be unnecessary.

I think that the Mario Savios of this world, the tattered legions of romantic socialists who make up the SDS, DuBois Clubs, and the other groups that seem to so fright the FBI, are hardly communist threats. They are precisely the heirs to the sentimental socialism which Marx found worse

than capitalism. The threat is not communism, but fascism. Instead of attempting to control the vast technological complexity of society by the workers—the USSR is a technocrats' world—we see an attempt to submerge the complexity of this technology in the direct and primitive response to my brother.

We have gone through several phases of the romantic retreat in the Catholic Church in the last 50 years. Some have been malign like *Action Francaise*—and one should remember that Hitler was welcomed warmly by the majority of the German hierarchy. Sincere Catholics have given up the city and sought solace in tilling the land and the simple pastoral community. One must judge each effort from Dorothy Day's community to the latest wilderness retreat on its own merits. But what it seems to me that the Catholic must say is that these brotherly communities do not achieve salvation either in whole or in part for society in general or for the members of the spiritual politburo. I am not a Pelagian and I do not believe in salvation by works. The error from a Christian point of view of SDS or the Communist Party is that they think they have a workable scheme of salvation that men can apply in the here and now. The error of the Catholic who seeks to assure his salvation in a community of Christian Brothers or in a retreat to the farm is the same: there is no personal scheme for salvation, no works, no community, no place in which the Christian will *guarantee* his salvation.

Brotherly community, then, is sacramental and priestly, rather than literal and prophetic. This is a dangerous thing to say because the priests generally kill the prophets, and it is the message of the prophets, not the mediations of the priest, that is remembered. The role of the priest is that of mediator between a City yet to come and the City at hand. He sees and knows the ultimate brotherhood and commonality of man, but he sees that this can only be a sacramental promise in this age, not an accomplished fact brought about by an excess of zeal or intelligence. The priestly vision then moves into the city and does not advocate retreat to the desert or the monastery—except as the artificial sacramental and symbolic witness to a world yet to be realized which goes beyond both the city and the desert. The Church need not take the collective or individual stance of standing prophetically over and against the city; neither must the Church accept the city as the scene of man's final liberation and salvation.

The priestly world is a world of sacrament, and sacrament is a kind of promissory note which cannot be cashed in except by Him who gave it. The world is a promise of things to come, and we live in the vision of this promise. Because the *promise* of a higher brotherhood is a fact for our lives, we come to regard our life in the here and now differently, like the struggling wage earner who lives with the promise of an inheritance. For today he can only toil and use his wits to keep ahead, but he sits lightly on this world because he is one under the vision of a promise.

When the prophets remind us that we are children of a promise, then they do God's work; but if these accents of prophetism suggest that we should cash in on this promise right now by bringing heavenly brotherhood to earth, I can only say that the brotherhood of man is the work of God.

Supposing Trials: Sentences

• John Fandel

Metaphor trips pedestrianism.

Naturalists live without backyards.

We shall not chart the astronomy of a raindrop.

No one is competent to be superior to dust.

Too much depends on local color to be skeptical about forever.

Heaven was not made for hesitancy.

How recently have you looked at galaxies in a dewpoint?

Parnassus is only one altitude of a universe.

No one will know so much as how to open a front door who has not scaled some alp.

Security begins with a finger's grasp on a precipice.

Anyone wants fingerprint proof of existence.

Modesty, if not a virtue, has a grace.

We sometimes prefer the enigmas of him who defines the cosmos in ten sentences, to the scrutiny of him who, puttering with it, compiles disquisitions alerting our suspicion of the gillyflower.

The astronomer explains the sun to me, but it is simply shine when I walk out, January or June.

Dispassion identifies the passionate man truly.

Appreciation learns to consider enjoyment the earliest rendezvous with an absolute.

We have to love to learn our own humility.

Didacticism need not have a birch rod for a hand.

Who can ultimately understand without first understanding?

A direct highway to the citadel of one's wholeness defines a choice mileage.

Some choose the savory; some, the diction of its taste.

Having the whole cosmos at one's fingertips might touch off a false accommodation to graciousness.

Limitation is a healthy awareness.

There are too few sightseer's vantage points of earth not to consider one's ancestor's grave Mount Everest.

Probing is a probation, too.

One hard look at the rose, reason for an excursion to the local greenhouse or a backyard fence, colors the going home of the traveler.

The resigned and the renouncers had to undergo the reason for desert and Didache.

Omit the apostrophe from the word describing their ability, to define the wisdom of pedants.

Truth is preached; convenience, embraced.

A troubled world is made by troublemakers who want to share.

"I believe in beauty," he said, carving a rose into the gallows.

"There, but for the grace of God, go I," he said, as the Bishop rolled by in his limousine.

A poem does not belong in a desk drawer, nor in a little Quarterly.

Arrived writers scarcely scan the timetables of critics.

A friend who feasts on intimacy, fasting his, wasn't.

Equating your name on a Social Calendar with friendship is your loneliness.

Your hand-numbering those 10,000 bound vellum fascicles is a magnificent job — but where is page 2?

They praise your taste: theirs.

Brief friendships are not friendships.

Cynicism is a philosophy invented by complacency.

It's a cinch to be an optimist: deny the facts.

Everybody would be a Christian were singularity not so lonely.

If you must speak your mind, be laconic.

How many friends can you count on before speaking your mind?

Those friends you gained in speaking your mind — you had better not change it.

A genuine bore is the worst experience after the alarm clock.

Three cheers for Truth — for trying.

More time for the timeless!

If you do not live up to a reputation, you might have to live one down.

I am my neighbor to my neighbor.

Hypocrites are rarely offended by the truth.

So many social gatherings are performances.

He who writes to be paid should be.

Vulgarity is more often than not vociferous.

We are allowed solitude that we might invent society.

Why join a Society? I already am a member of The Human Race.

It is not difficult to be misunderstood, however easy it is to understand.

"Try as we will in hard, exacting language to voice serious commitment"...

Our friends surprise us by mocking the ideals we privately blessed them for being.

In writing Autobiography, remember Biography: the Father's *Book of Life.*

Solitude without a thought for society rapes the mystical body by refusing intercourse with it.

Christ instructs us to be perfect as our Father in Heaven: happy.

"I love you" should be tried by "I love me."

Is the Utopia usurping the mind Plato or possibility?

What morning does not guess, night knows.

Silence is sometimes the hardest truth.

For the one exclusive Private Viewing, look into a mirror.

We live in a world of Weather Reports.

One page proves a writer; an author requires books.

Lent means Spring.

All life should be Lenten: Joyful.

Christ lived one Lent—successfully.

There is but one failure: not to be the Saint you are.

Brains and Mind; muscles, brawn.

Hamlets and hams; hackneys and hacks; look them up—and down.

No one goes to his grave not having loved, not having been loved; ghosts had having or having been, too little or too much.

"Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme" is true of more than lust, in action.

Never is *not* plus *ever*, the sweetest root of the saddest union in English.

Recessionally washing increasingly more and ceaselessly more softly towards dimmest diminution, the faintest most motionless and deepest susurrus of diminuendo, the receding seafall slides to the purest hushed pitch of secondless silence, slowly from which the crystalline universe mistily unrolled.

Gertrude's Easter

• Thomas Tolnay

"Charlotte's come," Henrietta murmured.

Jane turned in her chair to look toward the back of the long room and said, "So that's her."

"She's early."

"Doesn't look like you at all."

"One of these days," Henrietta said, "I think her body's going to explode."

The attendant, who had been adjusting the floral wreaths, now noticed the new arrival. He immediately stopped what he was doing and glided slowly to the door. Nodding respectfully, he said something to the woman. Charlotte, who filled out most of the doorway, did not reply. She moved past him, hesitated, then began her slow march down the side aisle, toward the polished casket. The attendant watched her a moment, then sat down on a folding wooden chair in the last row. Except for the deceased, no one else was in the dull-lighted funeral parlor.

Jane faced the casket. "Your sister seems to be taking it quite well," she commented.

"Charlotte's been waiting for this day a long time," Henrietta whispered, tucking in a loose strand of hair that was gray at the ends.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It's not supposed to mean anything." She regretted having brought it up.

Jane's curiosity was aroused, however, and she stretched her neck out like a turtle. It was the one remarkable feature of her appearance. "You certainly can be secretive," she said.

"Just family gossip."

"You never mentioned anything like that to me," said the turtle, patting her compact black hat in a way that suggested she felt snubbed.

Henrietta became annoyed. "Why should I mention it to you?"

"I was under the impression I'm your best friend."

Henrietta shook her skull fretfully. "If you *must* know," she said, "Charlotte despised Gertrude. Always did. Are you happy now?"

Squirming in her seat, scratching her rubbery neck, Jane showed she was sorry she had pressed the point. And she let her eyes stray nervously to the flowers she had sent, trying to take comfort in the fact that her basket—perched on a wire pedestal—was the tallest one so far.

The silence made Henrietta feel awkward, partly because she was a talkative woman, but mainly because silence seemed to emphasize the need for an explanation of what she had revealed. She brushed the pleats of her dark gray dress, as if wiping away frustration, and said, almost hastily, "Gertrude turned my father against us." She looked at Jane to see if there was any reaction. And realizing there was none, she explained, "Charlotte never forgave her for that."

"I didn't know," said Jane, her small face becoming creased as if growing older in seconds, her white

hands clutching the shiny black pocketbook in her lap.

On her way to the front of the chapel, Charlotte had not looked at the two women. She went straight to the casket, positioned herself at the open end, and stood there looking down at the body, which had been decorated with a sky-blue dress. Fifteen feet behind Charlotte, in the first row, Henrietta squinted at the silent reunion. Jane watched equally close, and it was she who finally toppled the tenuous quiet.

"What's taking her so long?"

"It's been a long time."

"Is she crying or anything?"

"It wouldn't surprise me if she laughed," Henrietta whispered.

"I think that's terrible."

Henrietta raised her sharp eyebrows as if to say, "You wouldn't if you knew everything."

Jane got the message. "Why, what happened?"

Henrietta did not speak for a moment, as though trying to decide if she should say any more. At last the silence became too noticeable again, so she said, "Gertrude used to tell my father she was *his* child, and that Charlotte and I were my mother's children."

"Really?"

"My father laughed," she went on. "But I swear he actually began to believe her."

"What did your mother say about that?"

"Oh, she told Gertrude she wouldn't go to heaven if she kept talking that way," said Henrietta. Suddenly doubting the wisdom of going into the past, though, she added, "Why am I bothering you with all this?"

"What's a friend for?" Jane assured her. "Especially at a time like this."

The two women grew silent, both taking a few moments to inspect the bulky, motionless figure at the casket. Henrietta was wondering what was going on in her sister's head at that moment. Jane looked to see that Charlotte had not yet knelt to say a prayer at the bier. It was just the kind of thing she liked to point out to her friend. But she realized it wasn't really the time or place for such observations. Nevertheless, Jane did feel compelled to say something.

"It give me the chills to see your sister staring at Gertrude," Jane whispered, "now that I know she—they didn't get along."

"I hope you don't think I condone Charlotte's attitude," Henrietta replied, thinking she might as well go on, now that she'd started. "It's just that I understand how she feels."

But her friend made no expression of sympathy, so Henrietta felt obliged to justify herself. "One year Gertrude was the only one to get a new Easter dress. My father said there wasn't money for more, and since Gertrude was the eldest—"

Jane interjected: "That can happen in any family."

"Every day for a week she tried on that dress in front of the mirror. She knew Charlotte and I were watching her, eating our hearts out."

"Children love to show off."

"In the evening," Henrietta said a bit more intensely, though still quietly, afraid Charlotte might hear, "instead of putting the dress away, she'd hang it on the doorknob where we could see it. Just to upset us."

Jane shook her head.

"Charlotte couldn't take it any more," said Henrietta, as if she couldn't take Jane any more. "Easter morning she cut the dress to pieces with a scissors."

Stretching her neck, Jane said, "Gertrude must've been furious."

"She didn't even cry. She went right down to my father and told him. Naturally he beat Charlotte. And Gertrude watched."

Jane peered toward her friend's sister as though searching for evidence of that beating. She said quietly, "Even so, do you think it's right for her to take it out on the dead?"

"You can't change the past," Henrietta said.

"Course not. Charlotte ought to follow your example."

Henrietta thought about her dead sister for a moment and said, "I always tried to be a good sister to Gertrude, even after she told my boy friend some terrible things about me —when I was in high school."

"What did she tell him?"

"Oh, just some lies about me and another boy." The dark skin around Henrietta's eyes contracted. "You can imagine how I felt when he stopped coming around."

* * * *

Glancing at the blanket of orchids and lilies on the casket, at the words *Beloved Sister* pinned to the silky white ribbon, the stout woman turned and lumbered across the dark rug to the first row of chairs. She sat down beside Henrietta, who promptly greeted her. "Did you have a good trip?" she asked.

"Trains depress me," Charlotte said, sighing.

"How's Herbert?"

"Spring is his busy season," she replied. "He won't be able to get down here."

Henrietta reached over and patted her sister's hand understandingly.

"Where's Sam?" asked Charlotte.

"He'll be over this evening." And realizing at the same instant that she'd forgotten to make introductions, Henrietta added, "I'd like you to meet my neighbor Jane."

Charlotte, in blue, nodded to the woman in black, on the other side of her sister.

"Please accept my condolences," Jane said respectfully.

The round face of the round woman remained expressionless, but Henrietta frowned faintly, and said to Charlotte, "Seems like it always takes a funeral to get a family together."

Charlotte shook her large head, acknowledging the fact.

"I didn't even know she was having trouble with her kidneys," Henrietta explained.

"Neither did I."

"I got a telegram from the hospital out in Salt Lake, letting me know what happened. They asked me where the body should be shipped."

"Guess nobody out there would take the responsibility," Jane commented, the same as she'd done the first two times she heard the story.

Henrietta smoothed the gray pleats of her dress, though they didn't need to be smoothed. "We're all Gertrude's got," she murmured, avoiding Charlotte's oily eye. "I sent them a telegram to let them know I'd accept the body."

"What a confused day that was," Jane said.

"Who would've thought," Henrietta said to her sister, "after all the years Gertrude's been out West, that you and I would end up burying her?"

"Odd how it worked out," Charlotte conceded.

"Anyway, Sam and I have taken care of all the funeral arrangements. I didn't think you'd mind."

"I don't mind."

"Gertrude liked mahogany," said Henrietta quietly, nodding toward the casket.

"Everything looks all right."

"The flowers are beautiful," Jane remarked.

Charlotte looked at Jane but did not speak.

"They did a good job on Gertrude," Henrietta said.

"I guess so."

"You don't think they did?"

The woman shrugged her great shoulders.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know," she sighed.

"Tell me what it is."

Charlotte, pouting, glanced at the casket. "She looks—funny to me."

"When I first got here, I thought so too," Henrietta confessed. "You'll get used to her after awhile."

"I mean the face is—odd."

Extending her neck forward to look at the large woman, Jane broke into the conversation. "The hospital said your sister, uh, passed away after a long illness. That can take a lot out of a person."

Charlotte tried to avoid speaking to Jane. But she said, "Does kidney disease get rid of scars, too?"

Not understanding, Jane looked at Henrietta, but she seemed equally puzzled.

"Gertrude fell down the stairs one Easter, when we were kids," Charlotte said, sounding as if she were teaching class, "and had to have ten stitches." Lifting her gloved hand toward the casket, she showed what she was getting at. "There's not a mark on that face."

"I forgot about that scar," Henrietta said thoughtfully, looking toward the figure sunk deep in the silk, the figure surrounded by the avalanche of flowers.

"See for yourself if you don't believe me."

"I believe you," Henrietta said hesitantly.

"Go ahead. Take a look."

The bony woman glanced at the fleshy woman, then rose slowly on two stiff legs, and moved toward the bier. Jane immediately got up and followed Henrietta, leaving her black pocketbook on the wooden chair. Charlotte, too, hoisted herself up, but lumbered forward at a slower pace.

At the casket, Henrietta examined the waxy face in the light of two electric candles. And after several moments she gave Charlotte—now separated from her by Jane—a long, steady look and said: "It was on her chin."

The stout woman took a deep breath, as if about to say something. But then she released the air from her lungs and drew her flabby lips tightly together.

"What is it?" said Henrietta.

"Nothing."

"You were going to say something."

"Just an idea that got into my head before, when I first saw the body."

"What kind of idea?"

Charlotte shrugged her shoulders like a child being coaxed to recite a nursery rhyme. When it became apparent that Henrietta wasn't going to coax her any more, though, she came out with what was on her mind. "Do you think there's any possibility that it isn't Gertrude in the coffin?"

Henrietta's eyes stretched wide open, and Jane reacted with her mouth. "Ridiculous!"

"What about that scar?" said Charlotte, glaring at Jane.

"Neither of you have seen your sister for a very long time," Jane reasoned. She glanced at the powdered

chin in the casket. "People change. Even scars go away, sometimes."

But Charlotte wasn't convinced. And Henrietta wasn't listening. She was concentrating on the contracted, drained, horizontal face. And the longer she stared at its glossy flesh, the less she seemed to recognize the flat nose, the sunken cheeks.

"Look at those lips," Charlotte said, almost as if she had been tuned in to Henrietta's thoughts. "Gertrude had long, sharp lips. Remember?"

Henrietta squinted at the corpse. "Yes, I think you're right."

"I kept trying to recognize that face," said Charlotte. "But it just didn't look like her to me."

"It doesn't look like her," Henrietta repeated.

"That's impossible," Jane said, glancing back to the funeral attendant.

"They could easily have mixed up the names and shipped the wrong body," Charlotte said. Her jowls shook.

"You're both just upset," Jane said.

Edging from the casket slightly and facing her friend across Charlotte's back, Henrietta said, "Jane, I don't think that's my sister."

The two sisters looked down into the casket again, deep in their own thoughts. Henrietta was thinking how strange it was. And Charlotte, turning, finally verbalized her thoughts. "More than likely Gertrude is still at the hospital out there."

At first, Henrietta merely nodded, but then something occurred to her. "That means," she said stiffly, "Gertrude may not be dead after all."

"It's possible."

"What an absurd thing to say," Jane gasped, her neck stretching out to its full length as she peered uneasily from the sister on her left to the sister on her right.

"How do we know she's dead?" said Charlotte.

"That's right," Henrietta emphasized. "We have no way of really knowing."

"But the telegram."

"If they thought the body was Gertrude," Charlotte reasoned abruptly, "naturally they'd get in touch with *her* next of kin."

Henrietta gave one nervous tug to her gray dress, as if preparing for the final, most terrible judgment of all. "Then you really don't think she's dead?"

"Let me have a look at the death certificate," Charlotte said importantly. Her inspection of that document could settle everything once and for all.

"I didn't get one," Henrietta admitted shrilly.

"Sh!" Jane cautioned, clutching her friend's bony arm. "Your voices are rising."

Charlotte aimed her eyes at her sister. "I have a feeling Gertrude is still alive," she concluded solemnly, bowing her head.

"Good God!" said Henrietta, her voice beginning to crack. "She isn't dead. Gertrude's still alive!"

The funeral attendant in the last row stood up when the sisters began to cry.

Treasure

• Paul Ramsey

We came at night, by river, to the foot
Of cliffs that worked the river's foam to mud.
The sand was ruined; gray water was the root
Of marsh grass pale as gray stone scoured of blood.

We tied the boat and climbed steep ways. We found
The coarse vines snarled across a ledge of clay.
The river's plunging body deepened sound.
Our eyes that gave on darkness turned away.

The mark the map relinquished told the cave,
A dagger planted in an X of wood.
We gazed upon it, and our bodies gave
A legend credence in the tideward blood.

The pirate brought here with a fiercer lust
Than wine or body takes, his share of gold,
And made the darkness steward of his trust,
Companionate with silence and with cold.

We shook our fear as one might shake a child,
Pulled back the vines and entered, crazed with love
Of gold we sought in darkness, reconciled
To ways that fit the darkness like a glove.

The map was accurate. We paced. We found
The rotten wood, the wine remains, the rest.
The bones in shallow order held their ground.
The snake's skull rested on an empty breast.

For love or fear of God we shoveled deep
In fury masked as warning for his pride
And offered to the passive clay to keep
What once had kept a world at bay, but died.

We stuttered out a prayer above his bones,
Then climbed in earth, in dim light felt our way,
And heaved the chest beyond the foaming stones
And heard the waters on the high cliffs play.

Contributors

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