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Quiz & Quill

The Quiz and Quill

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THE QUIZ AND QUILL CLUB

of Otterbein College



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Winter, 1965-1966

Founded 1919

THE QUIZ AND QUILL CLUB – 1965-1966

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DIALOGUE: THE SWEATER

Verda Deeter

"What're you knitting?"
"A sweater."
"For who?"
"Whoever it fits."
"Why do you have to do it that way?"
"I don't."
"Why are you, then?"
"Hmmm?"
"I said, 'why are you doing it like that?'"
"Like what?"
"Oh, never mind"

She watched the knitter's hands. The needles ticked mechanically, power driven. Twenty-four ticks. Stop. Turn over. Twenty-four ticks. Two rows. Twenty-four ticks. Stop. Three —

"Will you quit staring at me! Why don't you think of something creative of your own to do? Don't just sit there and watch me work!"

"But you're my big sister and I like you!"

Snick, snick. The knitting machine started again, agitated now.

"So what?"

"So I like you and I wanna talk to you because you're my sister."

Snick, snicksnicksnick. She knitted faster. Snicksnick-snick — then stopped.

"Now see what you made me do. You and your gabbing! You made me drop a stitch. If you really want to know, I'm making this sweater for you, and if you really like me you'll shut up and get out of here!"

"Why are you making it for me?"

"Because you're my sister and I like you."

★ ★ ★

NIGHTWALK

Barbara Barnhouse

So I shook the moon.
I spun the silver starflakes
And stirred the shadows.

★ ★ ★

BALLAD OF A COMPULSIVE CONTEST-ENTERER

Barbara Barnhouse

I understand you like to fight
And try your hand at every sport.
I think I know just how you feel
For I was of a similar sort.

When I was young, there was a race
To fly to England across the sea.
I thought it would be lots of fun,
So I took off quite happily.

For hours I flew and flew and flew,
My eyes toward the rising sun,
Until I saw England at last
And knew that I had really won.

But now I faced another test
More difficult for me to pass:
The blooming fog was everywhere —
I couldn't tell street from tree from grass.

I took a chance and brought her down;
The wheels made tracks across the green.
And then I found I'd cut my path
Right through the gardens of the Queen.

At first she was somewhat irate,
Then I explained the facts to her.
She granted me a coat of arms
And made me royal minister.

"How very nice," you smile and say,
"So very young for such a thrill!"
Oh, I don't know; another race,
More dangerous, lay before me still.

There was to be a contest there
To swim across the Channel wide.
Although I did not have a suit,
I struck out for the other side.

No swimming cap nor suit had I —
Just rubber swim fins on my feet.
If I could win this race, I thought,
My prosaic life would be complete.

The waters slid by cold and swift.
With beating heart I took the lead.
And there ahead the shore at last;
Yes, once again I would succeed.

The people praised and honored me,
They watched amazed and full of awe.
"Why, you're the bravest girl," they said,
"The bravest girl we ever saw!"

Of course, it wasn't really hard —
Why, anyone could do the same.
But still they paid me tribute great
And published far and wide my name.

Just then a man came up to me
And said, "Excuse-moi, mam-selle,
A beauty contest will be held
In which, I think, you'd do quite well."

"Oh dear," I said, "I can't do that.
My hair is wet and such a fright.
I feel some seaweed dripping down —
I really must be quite a sight!"

Reluctantly I gave consent,
Although I hardly thought it wise;
But soon I found myself on stage
And in my hands the French first prize.

They crowned me with a paper crown
And led me to the royal seat;
They thought my beauty quite unique
Despite the swim fins upon my feet.



SUMMER STORM

Barbara Barnhouse

Rain like angel-hair
And woven crystal droplets
— Net of silver mist.



THE RAGE

Linda Zimmers

While I was sitting reflecting,
There was a poised beauty about the world,
The pause before a summer cloudburst
When the earth is full of silent joys pressing down on all....

(But I began to remember again –
The caressing sighs that I would
never more hear.
And I wondered why he left me for
the other,
Why he left. . . .)

Abruptly a forboding imminence grasped the atmosphere;
The wind blew a strong thrill of coldness to me,
And my spine quaked with the trembling trees.
We shook, in expectation of what was to come

(“No! Stop the memories of our love;
forget the misery, Heart,
For despondency is still blame-
worthy in others’ minds.
Disperse this weakness from you.
Do not let it come. . . .”)

The thunder started a weak rolling that approached. . . .

(“Never cry out; rest in mellow
peace. . . .”)

And the storm-clouded sky densened, threatening to burst. . . .

(“Stop! Stop! Do not let it break;
contain it. . . .”)

Then suddenly the squall crashed out the exterior quiet. . . .

And the rage began.



LEAF POEMS

Verda Deeter

Loneliness and a dry leaf
blown in the wind
scuttle across the sidewalk.

* * *

and I never saw
him again. . .
except in shadows
of leaves on a wall

and I never heard
his voice again
except in the echoes
of an empty hall

* * *

loneliness is a language
everyone knows
but no one speaks
aloud.
it echoes in our minds,
whispers in our ears,
and cries out silently
screaming from wordless eyes.

* * *

I saw his face again —
a fleeting shadow on a wall.
once more I heard his voice —
a whispered echo in the hall.

★ ★ ★

“TERMINATION”

Nathalie Bungard

Listless on the frost-firm ground —
Fallen; Crushed by Hopelessness
. . . Lonely leaf . . .

★ ★ ★

ESSAY 1

Linda Zimmers

"Smile, darn you, smile!" Just because you are under extreme pressure from school work, have hyper-irritable parents, and just ran out of money is no reason to be depressed. You can still find someone to madden you with generously gleeful sympathy, someone who will say at every grave situation, "You wouldn't be unhappy if you laughed at your problems." Or are you a proponent of this idea that everyone should be the blithesome image of the Gerber baby? If the latter, don't bother to continue reading my heap of complaints! I want to speak only to my cohorts about the acceptability of "moodiness," as it's been called.

I honestly think it is about time that we started defending ourselves against the belief that only jocundity can be permitted in our society. Are you ever gloomy? And then haven't you felt the ostracism forced by those happiness pushers? Then you see what I mean. We have lost, for the greater part, our rights to feel as we please to feel.

Let us consider this thing psychologically. Our personalities are parts of us. We have grown up with them. They might be modified somewhat through the passage of years, but every expert of human nature agrees that trying to revamp our basic selves is attempting an impossible and hazardous task. Those who try to get us to be merry outwardly when we are not the type only make us frustrated pretenders. No wonder the world has so many desperate people! A great number of us have to put on fronts when we are in an off mood!

And then where in the Bible or the laws do those constantly cheerful folks find the mandate to be forever jubilant? Nowhere. Get the point? I cannot understand how being mirthful has necessarily more authority behind it than being sensibly earnest. By the same token, we cannot for a moment think we are justified in attacking the rollicking ones. Yet they feel free to deny, by declaration or implication, our rights to be in low spirits.

To define and illustrate the nature of the difficulty more precisely, I'd like to explain the results of a very limited survey—well, really just my own personal case study. I have ascertained that the most poignant issue in the total complaint is mornings, specifically breakfast. Those early attacks on us are savage!

I myself arise every school morning about three hours before I would like to. I know that that happens to many of us! Usually there are just few enough of those sparkling students near me that with luck I can get up and get dressed without running into any of them. Sigh of relief. But I can never avoid those smilers at the breakfast table.

On the more ill-fated days I run into a particularly obnoxious

friend of mine. Imagine us sitting near each other. She shouts, "Hi there, kid!" and giggles right into my face breaking my grand silence. "Oh, isn't this a simply earth-shattering, fabulous morning?" she confidently demands. Only with a great struggle do I control my desire to tell her the truth, especially on cold, drizzly mornings. I usually avoid her too-radiant face and stare into my sober, comforting cup of coffee, which remains kindly tacit.

"You ought to put some sunshine in your smile," she might say. Then I begin gulping down my food hurriedly in the hope of early escape, while my antagonist chatters and spouts joy throughout the dining hall.

Is it possible that I will never find a way to pass those early hours without the affronts of some jolly ambassador of good will demanding to force some elation into my private world? I say that if somebodies like me want to be speechless, even cross, during those first painful cracks of dawn, give us our liberties!

Many of you friends of mine have suffered like this, too. There is no reason for you to be intimidated by society. Assert your right to feel as you please. Let us seek a respect for our emotional status, be it at breakfast or at any other crisis. And let us hope that one day the world will realize that sometimes we are as happy unhappy as others are happy happy!



TRIOLET

Barbara Barnhouse

The triolet is very hard to write
Although its form is plain. I must confess
So many of my favorite rhymes are trite,
The triolet is very hard to write.
So far no sign of skill has come to light
Although five lines are written, more or less;
The triolet is very hard to write.
Although its form is plain, I must confess.



CHRISTMAS

Betty Steckman

Outside the window the snow had been falling all day long, but the kitchen itself was toasty warm, and the smell of baking cookies filled the room.

She bustled around, shoving hot crumby trays onto counters, stacking cookies, rolling more dough, dropping sticky blobs onto trays, and humming quietly to herself as she peeked into the oven.

"Now, Emily, the sand tarts are ready to be cut out. Beth, if you'll swab them with yolk, and John, you can sprinkle them with nuts." She began with brisk efficiency to blend chocolate bits into another bowl of sticky dough.

"Can I have some chocolate chip cookie dough, Mother?"

"If I let you have some, then the rest will all want some too, and the first thing you know there won't be any left for cookies. Now, Henry, don't get into the sugar." She removed the sugar bowl from the grasp of the baby, who opened his mouth to let out a wail, but changed his mind when she handed him a saucer of candied fruit pieces. He grinned with delight as he stuck a bit of cherry into his left ear.

"Emily, would you scrape this tray please? It doesn't have to be greased for these cookies."

"Mother, may I have the scrapings?" asked Beth hopefully.

"Put them into that dish with the other scrapings, and then you can all help yourselves. No fighting, now." She peeked into the oven once more, then with a sigh of victory she reached for the potholder. "The molasses cookies are done. Are the sand tarts ready?"

John carried the tray of white sand tarts over to her, and she eased them carefully into the oven.

The baby started to gurgle. Having decorated his hair with candied fruits, he was restless, looking for other things to do. "Would you like some applesauce?" she asked him. "Here, you look like a cookie yourself with that stuff in your hair." She deftly removed it, gave his mouth a swift wipe with the washcloth, and reached for the fresh applesauce. He watched with large greedy eyes as it flowed into his bowl. "I don't really have time to feed you," she said, easing a spoonful into his mouth. "Emily, would you start dropping the tollhouse cookie dough on that empty tray, please, and John, if you'd get the bar of lemon jumble dough from the refrigerator ... yes, that's it, next to the sugar wafers. I swear I don't know how I survive this season every year!" She sighed in mock desperation. "If it weren't for you children, I'd just sit back and take it easy. Why, after Henry's all grown up and gone away, I'll just sit and relax."

She looked out the window at the snow for a moment. "Oh! My precious sand tarts! They're not burned, are they? Oh, thank goodness, they're all right. Shove in the tollhouse cookies, Beth."



Paul David Robinson

Ever taste the tea of sassafras brewed from the bark
Or leaves? A taste as tangy as catnip to a cat yet
Sweet upon the tongue and gently settling like pepto in the stomach.
. . . And pennyroyal? — rich in scent and tranquilizing
As the jasmine lauded much by gourmets of the oriental foods.
But much less pleasant though more stimulating
Is the bite of Bitter Root — life's instant brew.

a. a.



FALL

Verda Deeter

As leaf to tree
bird to branch
am I to thee
but if a wind
our selves should sever
I wonder whether
I would fall
or fly.



CHRISTA

Stu Leichter

The sky was dark gray. A fine mist of rain was falling, and it glistened on the dry grass. The wind lashed across the field, and he woke with a start. He looked up. Standing by his feet was a young girl, or a young woman; he was not sure which. She was smiling, and her eyes were green and bright.

"Who are you?" he asked her, at the same time wondering where he was.

"I am Christa," she answered, blinking her eyes as a kind of reassurance to him. "We saw you come down. Our house is over there," the girl said, pointing to a small, gray-brick farmhouse behind him.

He noticed the strong German inflection in her speech, and now he remembered how he got there. "How long have I been unconscious?" he asked.

"Not long. Your big cape with the strings is in the house." She spread her arms wide, trying to express what she meant.

The soldier laughed. "Oh. My parachute." He stared across the field and stood up, shivering from the cold. A searing pain cramped the back of his neck. His feet were numb. The cold rain continued.

"Am I in Germany?" he asked, massaging his neck and wincing from the pain.

"No. This is Austria. We are about eight kilometres from Ruursburg."

The soldier almost sneered. "Is that right? I was thinking of going to Ruursburg after the war. How far are we from Germany?"

Christa caught the sarcasm in the soldier's voice. "Actually, you know, this is Germany. But my family does not recognize rape." She smiled and added, "Political rape, that is."

"Oh, then you don't goose step when you feed the chickens? Not very *achtung* of you, is it?" They both enjoyed the trade of humor.

"Ruursburg is near the center of Austria. Goodness, you must be hungry! Come to the house."

She offered her hand as she led him to the farmhouse. He was weak, and his steps were unsteady.

"What is your name?" Christa asked, walking beside him, and still holding his hand.

He slapped his forehead. "What an idiot I am. My name is Robert. Robert Lassiter. Please forgive my American manners," he mockingly pleaded. Then he added in a whisper, "They stink."

When they entered the house, Robert saw an old man seated at the table. Christa introduced him to Robert in her language, and told Robert that it was her grandfather. Robert extended his

hand, but the old man sat nearly motionless, his pale blue eyes glaring at the soldier.

Christa glanced at her grandfather with disappointment. She looked at Robert. "Grandfather is afraid the Gestapo will come after us for helping you," she told him, offering an apology for the old man.

Robert looked at Christa, then to her grandfather, and at Christa again. "Just give me something to eat, then. You're too kind to get into any trouble. Put something in a bag and I'll go."

Christa smiled and took his hand. She replied softly, "Ruursburg is very small. There is no need to worry. My grandfather is also a grandmother." She led Robert out of the room. "Come to the kitchen and meet my mother."

Robert could only offer the old man a helpless smile. He turned and followed Christa. It was hot and stuffy in the kitchen, but the food smelled good to him.

At dinner, Robert told Christa about Italy and North Africa. She was fascinated by his descriptions; he spoke to her more like a tourist than a soldier. Neither Christa's grandfather nor her mother spoke to Robert. Only once the mother looked at him, and when he caught her glance, she quickly looked away.

"Do you like music, Robert?" Christa asked.

"That depends," he answered. "Say, how is it that you speak English so well?" he asked all of a sudden.

Christa shrugged. "I learned it in school at Vienna before the war. Come. I shall entertain you." She got up and led him to a small room at the rear of the house. She removed a large Persian rug from the wall and spread it out on the cold floor. They sat close together as Christa began playing on a mandolin and singing. Robert listened to the beautiful rhythm of her song and to the beautiful music of her voice. He had decided much earlier that Christa was not a girl. He had never seen green eyes and light-brown hair complement each other so well.

When she finished, she smiled and asked for some sort of approval with wide-open eyes.

"That's very beautiful. It's not German, is it?"

"No. It is a Hebrew song about Orpheus and Eurydice."

"That's kind of odd, isn't it? Greek mythology in Hebrew?"

"I guess it is. It is my favorite, though."

"Why so sad a story?"

"I do not know. It seems the only beautiful songs have ugly themes.

The lantern next to them flickered, and Christa's eyes sparkled brightly as she looked at Robert. He took her hand.

"You are very pretty, Christa," he said, gently squeezing her hand. Christa took her hand away and looked at the space of carpet between them.

"Robert, please do not take me for a French farm girl."

Robert took her by the shoulders. "What does that mean?"

he demanded.

"Do not try to play with me. I do not want to be made a fool," she answered without looking at him.

Robert stood up and walked to the other side of the small room. His arms were folded across his chest. He turned and began talking in a stern tone.

"How could you say such a thing? Here you are, risking your neck to save my life, a stranger, and you don't even have enough insight to see a small bit of gratitude. I'll tell you, you girls are all alike. French, American and Austrian. Everyone of you thinks everyone of us is out to make you. Can't a guy —"

Christa cut him off. "Robert, I am very sorry. I did not mean it that way." She stood up and walked over to him. Her eyes were watering. "You need some sleep, Bad Manners. I shall bring you a mattress."

Robert brushed his fingers past her eye. "Better still," he said, in a forgiving whisper, "you're very beautiful."

Christa smiled and walked out of the room. She returned quickly with a small, home-made mattress. Placing it on the rug, she turned to Robert, and with mock anger she pointed to it with a thrust of her arm. He took off his shirt and lay down on the makeshift bed. Christa brought a blanket over to him and knelt beside him.

"I am sorry, Robert," she said, covering him with the blanket. "It was unkind. I become flustered around men like you." She bent over and kissed his forehead. "Good night, Robert."

He watched her as she walked away with the lantern. He said nothing as she closed the door.

The odors from supper were still in the house when Christa left the back room. She placed the lantern on a shelf in the corner and walked to the table where her grandfather was sitting. He sat there motionless, with one arm in his lap, and the other on the table.

Christa's mother came out of the kitchen wiping her hands on her apron. Her hair was messy from the steam of the day's cooking. Like her daughter, she also had green eyes, though they were very pale. She sat down at the end of the table and expelled a full breath of air to signify that she had finally completed the day's chores.

Christa sat down across from the old man. She began pushing a bread crumb around with her fingernail.

"Is he asleep?" the mother asked. Christa nodded and looked at her grandfather. He was staring at her. She tilted her head to one side, then to the other, in a beckoning gesture for him to focus his eyes. He looked at her without changing his expression.

"He must leave," the old man began. The words sounded high-pitched and guttural. He cleared his throat and tried again. "He must leave before daylight", he ordered, clearly and

authoritatively.

"Why, Grandfather?"

The mother spoke up forcefully. "You know very well why! All the Gestapo needs is a rumor, and — ! She made a slicing motion across her neck.

Christa looked down at the table. "Whose side are you on, Grandfather?" Her mother's hand lashed out and struck Christa's face. At the top of her voice she ordered, "Get him out now! Now!"

Christa covered her mouth with her hand, trying to keep her lips from quivering. Her eyes welled up with water, and finally overflowed. She stood up quickly, knocking over her chair, and ran into the back room.

She knelt beside Robert and shook him until he was awake. He mumbled some nonsense sounds, and then noticed that she was crying. He jumped up.

"What is it?" he asked. "What's happened?"

"You must go," she began, but her words were almost inaudible; her sobs were becoming convulsive. "They will not let you stay," she stammered, turning away. The stream of light from the outer room crossed her face. Robert looked at her swollen eyes. From the way she had said "they", he felt a sudden compassion for her now that he did not feel before. He reached out and brushed his hand through her hair.

"It's all right," he said softly.

Christa turned and looked at him. "Oh, Robert; Grandfather is so afraid," she sighed, trying to weaken the old man's order.

"I wanted to leave before, anyway," Robert said.

"I am so sorry, Robert."

He got up and started to put on his shirt. Christa drew imaginary pictures on the wooden floor. She looked over to Robert and stood up. She was still whimpering when she ran to him and embraced him, burying her sobs in his chest. Robert held her tightly and his body tensed. He wanted to thank her for being so kind; for being so beautiful to him.

"Kiss me, Robert; please kiss me," she pleaded. The whole effect of her words was shattered as the door flew open. They both turned and looked at the old man. Christa's eyes were wide, but they shut tight as the gun went off. Robert jerked back into the wall and slumped to the floor, his eyes staring at Christa's pictures, but seeing nothing.

Christa had dropped to her knees, and she was looking at the door. She stayed in that position for a long time until a sudden, twanging sound echoed through the room. She looked over to the corner and saw a mandolin string swaying freely over the neck of the instrument. She watched it until it stopped, and noticed that she no longer heard the scream of the pistol shot.



JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE, RINGO AND KUBLA

Stu Leichter

On Brighton Beach did Dutchmen then
A sun-filled funny-dome decree:
Where Coney Island River ran
By hot dogs measureless to man
Down to the Sheepshead Bay.
So once five miles of sandy ground
With roller coasters girdled round:
And there the subways looked like sinuous rills,
Not far from where the Dodgers used to be,
And here was Brooklyn's balmy beach of thrills,
Enfolding Irving Goldberg's beanery.

But oh! that roller coaster ride which slanted
Near the boardwalk athwart an oaken cover!
A crazy place; expensive and enchanted
As e'er beneath a ferris wheel were daunted
Vendors wailing for a popcorn lover!
And from this coaster, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if New York in August-time were breathing,
A double dip had momentarily been forced,
Amid whose tracks the riders all had burst
Their lunches vaulted like rebounding hail,
And every egg creme seltzered down the rail:
And 'mid these pulpy boards at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the Coney River.
Five kids aboard it had a mazy motion
By Gravesand Bay the reeking river ran,
They reached the hot dogs measureless to man,
And gorged themselves with beef and mustard lotion:
And 'mid this tumult Dutchmen heard from far
A mogul's money prophesying more!

The new-found form of loony leisure,
Where a Mouseketeer behaves
To suit a Russian premier's pleasure,
Is the only Western thing he craves,
It seemed a miracle of rare device,
A daffy Disney-dome with Mickey Mice!

A damsel with a transistor
In a pinball place I saw:
It was a Flatbush Avenue maid,
And on her radio was played,
The sounds of yeah, yeah, yeah.

O, would that she could see me
At home where I belong,
In modern Liverpool she'd win me,
With that music loud and long,
I would woo her with my hair,
My shaggy dome! besieged by lice!

And all who heard should change their fair,
Yet parents scream, Beware! Beware!
Their flashing eyes, their floating hair!
They ask a million as their price,
So "close your eyes" as they have said,
For they on money-new hath fed,
And rid their hair of Prairie lice.



FIRE

Betty Steckman

Leaping on the blackened laps
Of logs, it licks the kindling,
Snaps the thinnest sticks in two
And spits the sizzling embers on the bricks,
And curls around the thicker wood,
Then, growling to itself, it settles down to sleep.



JANE MILLER

Linda Zimmers

Jane peeled potatoes unconsciously while she watched the barnyard activities from the kitchen window. Her mother, always sober and taciturn, was coming into the house from doing the milking.

"What else needs to be done here for supper, Jane?" she asked.

"I can handle it all right tonight, Mother. Wouldn't you care to rest for a spell?"

Mother seemed very tired. She was probably too old to be milking even if Jane's brothers, Jerald and Bobby, helped... fifteen cows. Daniel, her suitor, had twenty-five. But then there were he and his father....

Wilbur Miller stamped his feet on the porch and hung his black hat on a nail there. Father was coming in, and supper was not yet ready! She must hurry. Jerald and Bobby followed Father into the kitchen.

"It'll be ten or fifteen minutes yet, Father," Jane announced. He nodded and, with his sons, left to wash for the meal.

"I wonder how Daniel will look with a beard like Father's," Jane thought. All of a sudden it seemed very strange to her that Dunkards felt the need to hide a man's face in order to avoid temptation...to avoid temptation...temptation...Modern ways were temptation to her. Why did lovely, short dresses and pretty shoes give her such a longing?

She adjusted her apron over her plain brown skirt. Soon she would have to wear the long dresses and have her hair long, tied back. Mother had already laid out the pattern for her cap.

"Jane, are you finished yet?" Mother sternly queried.

"Yes—yes, Mother."

She hurried. Mother plodded into the kitchen and helped set the hot food on the plain old table.

All sat down quickly and bowed over their places. Father began praying, "Our great and merciful Heavenly Father, who hath graces us with Thy beneficence, we today thank Thee and praise Thee and hope to live in a manner extolling Thy greatness. Bless us in our daily decisions...Guide our boys...Guide dear Jane in her coming marriage to live in the serene sobriety of Thy commands...." He continued.

"Live in serene sobriety," thought Jane. "That means wearing no hair around my face, dressing in ankle-length dark skirts with a cape, rearing children, gardening, milking — but always silent, industrious, and restrained in my thinking. I can't do it; I'll never be contented! If I could find a job in the city and escape...and be condemned by my family forever! Like Aunt

Ellen. Just because she was different, Grandfather made her leave the family. Yet Aunt Ellen seems so gentle and happy a person when Mother and I see her on the street in town. What a harsh punishment to throw her into the midst of nothing! How can it show her God's love and peace?

And what will Father do if I confess my doubts? Of course I'm not completely rejecting the religion...but if I don't marry Daniel, will I regret not having freedom — freedom to think, to live? Oh, my God! If I could believe that one of my parents understood just a little! I would have someone to talk to...."

Jane had an impulse to leave her chair, but now Father was finished and everyone was starting to eat. "Relax," she said to herself. The supreme crisis would come later, though it was approaching. "I must be reticent enough not to disclose any of my feelings until I am sure one way or another...sure...When will I know? But I need to forget my problem now. I'll think about it later."

The meal progressed. Jerald and Bobby enlivened the family spirits with their accounts of boyish adventures at the big school in town. Jane remembered graduating not so long ago from the new million-dollar high school. Theirs was the first class to graduate from it...She never knew her classmates very well. Dunkards were in a definite, secluded minority since they were not allowed to participate in after-school activities, or see ball games, or dance at the proms....

"Jane. Jane!" her father called. "Please pass the carrots."

"Oh, I'm very sorry."

Suddenly life came back to being life. And for a while she stopped thinking of "have-beens" and "maybe's" and began concentrating on her existence. The meal was pleasant even if a bit severe in mood. It was so reassuring and enjoyable to be a part of the family circle.

Jane found it relatively easy to keep busy that entire evening with cleaning and mending. When the long and wearisome day was over, she knelt in absolute peace beside her bed.

"Heavenly Father, I do humbly beseech Thy forgiveness for the sins I have committed. Keep me always by thy side. Let me learn Thy ways and follow them wherever they lead. But grant me a right understanding of my true direction. Let not my self interfere with Thy Will, and yet let me follow my path as Thou revealest it right to me no matter how demanding for me or for others. Amen."

She was so rapidly in bed and asleep that her mind had no time to re-examine her need for the decision of her life. After she had mentally summed up her tasks for the next day, she relaxed her body and slept comfortably until dawn.

The brutal alarm shattered her dreamy shell. A stark 5:00 A.M. jarred her into reality. She was soon dressed and in the kitchen,

where her mother had already set the breakfast table. From the kitchen window Jane watched the rest of her family go to the barn to do chores.

Sunrises on the farm were beautiful. It seemed that anything in life would be acceptable if she could always see the morning sun glitter across the fall-time woods just as this morning. She stopped for a few minutes to receive the full sense of the beauty. "My God, how can I ever forsake Thee!" she exclaimed. Her entire world was happy so far today. And she felt not the crushing weight of her dilemma but the lifting of her whole being.

Suddenly she jerked into the realization that there was a big breakfast to make. She hustled to prepare the meal.

She could hear what her father would say about her mind's wanderings, "Jane, you are dreaming again. God does not look lightly on the disproportionate waste of time." And then he might go on, "Another thing is your desire to debate matters once in a while. It only shows weakness in your faith. Aunt Ellen was that way. She ran away from God and now she is alone. You must believe completely. Affirm your weakness to God and seek to overcome it." Father was right, as usual. Arguing with God was a grave foible. But how could she know exactly what God was dictating for her, even though Father seemed to know?

"Oh, I will have my thinking dwell on the blissful peace here with my family!" she resolved. And she kept her affirmation easily until 9:30 that morning.

At that moment Daniel drove up the lane to the house. He walked straight to the back door. Since Jane was already obviously nearby, she had to go answer his knock.

"Good morning," Daniel formally and gruffly declared. "Is your father on the property?"

Jane hesitated while considering his absolute coldness. He showed no sign of affection for her.

"Well, is your father here?" he repeated brusquely.

"Oh, yes, certainly. He's in the north field there next to the woods!" Jane rapidly responded. She couldn't help feeling very much like a scolded little girl!

Daniel wheeled around and emitted an austere "thank you" while striding away. Never a smile. No touch of tenderness or gaiety.

"I wonder whether he ever admires the sun, the clouds, or just a simple blade of grass," Jane thought, watching him disappear behind the barn. "If he does, it must be absolutely in secret!" she suddenly spoke out with sarcasm. Immediately she started. She had shocked herself by saying such an outspoken thing.

For a moment she almost began sobbing over her predicament. How could this marriage ever work out happily for her? But true to her upbringing, she refrained from the pleasure of being so

overtly emotional.

"There's much work to be done cleaning. I must get busy here," she chided herself. And once more she diverted her attention to other matters and retained a semblance of contentment for another hour or two.

Then, as she was scrubbing, Father appeared at the threshold of the bedroom. "Jane, Daniel is here to discuss the date for the ceremony." Jane was stunned. So soon! The marriage was tentatively to be next spring! What could she do? A date would be too definite. She would have to explain this somehow to Daniel. How?

"Jane, daughter, didn't you hear me?"

"Oh, Father! Yes. I — I wonder if you could permit me to speak to Daniel in private — for just a few minutes?"

"You know that that's not the proper behavior. What could you want to say that can't be said before your parents?"

"But, Father, please?"

"Certainly not, Jane. Now come into the parlor." Father was beginning to be angry.

"What can I do?" wondered Jane, meekly following her father. Her anger flared up within her, and she mutely dissented, "This whole thing is absurd. People don't live like this anymore. Why is it improper to want to know a man's personality before marrying him? What if we are totally incompatible? There are some who have been so."

The parlor was warm and bright under the fall sunlight. Daniel, rigid, and silent, was seated next to Mother. Both gazed intently at the doorway in which Jane and her father paused. Finally the sober Dunkard and his quiet daughter entered and sat opposite the others.

Father blurted, "Jane here seems to have something to say to you, Daniel."

Jane was at a loss for words. "I — well..." She paused and then darted on. "I'm just not sure of marriage or — anything."

"Jane, surely you don't mean that!" her startled father shouted.

Daniel was obviously astounded, but Mother stared on as if nothing surprised her.

"Jane does not mean to question the marriage, I'm sure," Father declared. "She certainly realizes the divine love and guidance which has been the basis for the planning of this marriage. Now let us proceed, Daniel."

"But, Father!"

"Enough, I say. You are not yourself today, child!"

"I fear," Mother intervened, "that we had better finish this some other day, Daniel."

Daniel rose quickly, and Father followed him out of the room.

Jane turned to her mother frantically as the two men departed.

"Jane," Mother stiffly whispered, "perhaps you had better retire to your room for a few hours. I'll take care of dinner."

"Mother? Mother, don't you understand that it is hard for me to accept a life unless I'm positive that..."

Mother was very stern. "You have caused quite enough trouble. Now go."

So Mother couldn't understand!

Jane fled, hysterically frustrated. What would she do? Leave her family? Deny her own self?

It was still and dismal in her bedroom. She heard Mother and Father quietly eating dinner and then the long afternoon began. She looked for a long, long time out the narrow window at the lawn of fresh-fallen leaves. But even with the full beauty of the farm, she found it impossible to be serene.

About 3:30 Jane, tensely reclining, heard footsteps outside her door and saw a white envelope pushed through the crack at the bottom.

She arose, picked up the envelope, and looked inside. She read:

"This is Aunt Ellen's address. Go to her and tell her all. I will explain to your father as best I can. Aunt Ellen will help you to find yourself, I'm sure. Both of us had to make decisions like the one you are making. With the help of God you will find your peace.

Mother"

Enclosed was an address and a precious twenty-dollar bill.

This was her chance! She would probably never again have the possibility to be truly free — or so alone! How could she leave all she had ever known? But Mother suggested it....

Jane quickly gathered up a few items in a scarf and stepped outside her room. Mother was nowhere in sight. Although Jane searched everywhere, she could not find her. Finally Jane went to the back door, glanced for just a moment at the only home she had ever known, and dashed out and over the harvest-time fields toward the city and her refuge, Aunt Ellen.

She paused at the last corner of their property. Squinting her eyes hard, she thought she saw Mother's rigid dark form at an upstairs window. "My love goes to you, Mother," she reflected. "I shall never forget the lesson of love and sacrifice that you taught me." And suddenly she turned and marched on toward an entirely new life.

Fall, an ending, was still beautiful that year. For the sorrow of parting did not destroy the new peace of liberty of conscience.



"IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN"

Lourene Dellinger

From the top of the cliff, the young man watched the dusty progress of a car for three miles along the flat seashore highway. The car rounded a deep curve and came dangerously near to colliding with a transport truck approaching from the opposite direction. As though to conceal embarrassment, the high-pitched horn of the car bleated its scolding to the frightened truck driver who had seen the car approaching in the wrong lane too late to halt the heavily loaded trailer. Both drivers successfully veered out of each other's way on the narrow asphalt stretch.

The five-year-old station wagon climbed the unpaved drive which wound its way through thirsty cedars to the top of the cliff. The car pulled to a screechy halt in front of a white brick cottage, and two children and a large hairy dog tumbled out of the rear door and ran around the dirty yellow wagon whooping and wuffing. In sunglasses, sneakers, blouse and slacks, the tousle-haired young mother emerged, arms loaded with pillows, sweaters, toy trucks and dolls collected from the back of the car.

She dropped the load on the hood and grabbed the two children around their waists as they scampered around the front end of the car.

"All right, you Indians, grab this stuff while I bring in the suitcases."

She placed a knee on the open tailgate and leaned forward to drag out the few suitcases.

"Hello, Jen." A quiet voice behind her spoke.

She hesitated as if to savor the moment of expectation before turning to face the young man. She knew who it was before seeing him. It wasn't the voice she recognized after eight years but the name he had spoken. Everyone else called her Jenny; to Doug, she was merely Jen.

He was leaning his arms on a shovel handle. In a tee-shirt, levis, worn loafers, and with the shy smile that made his thick eyebrows and heavy lids droop even more, he appeared little changed except for an added thickness around his chest and stomach.

"Doug," she finally exclaimed, broadly smiling and thankfully recovering her grace after her surprise. "Whatever are you doing here? How are you? You look great. Come on inside. I've got groceries to take in."

The children were already calling from the porch.

"Oh, I hope my key is handy," Jenny moaned under her burden.

"It's unlocked." Doug's words received her renewed look of surprise. They walked to the front door, Doug carrying the suitcases and Jenny, a couple of grocery sacks.

"Go on in, kids, the door's open," Jenny called to the children, and they vanished inside after fumbling with their loads and the heavy wagging tail of the dog.

"I'm working over the grounds for the caretaker," Doug explained as they passed into the kitchen. "He had a heart attack last winter, and I heard about the opening for the summer. I was available for it since I teach during the rest of the year. I've been painting and fixing up in here according to your directions sent to Mac. Course, I didn't know this was your place."

The two children filed back into the kitchen. They stood quietly beside their mother, holding onto her hand and arm.

"These are my two children, Jill and Andy. Twins, this is Doug Morgan."

"Twins...how old?" The two, fair, blond-haired youngsters shuffled restlessly as Doug smiled at them.

"Five... and hungry as cubs by now, I'll bet. I'll put the groceries away, fix some sandwiches; then we can have a look at your handiwork."

Jenny began unloading the sacks and opening the cabinet doors and refrigerator.

"Well, this is wonderful. You must have known I was arriving today. The refrigerator is turned on, and I guess the paint is dry in the cabinets?"

"Yeh, I finished that up yesterday." Doug was stroking the shaggy brown fur of the young sheep dog who had sprawled out on his stomach across the cool linoleum floor and was panting excitedly.

"What's the pup's name?" He directed his question to the two shy faces on the other side of the dog.

"Rufuth." Their voices collided and disguised the sound.

"Rufus," Jenny laughed, setting away the last of the cans and packages.

"Well, how about Rufus and us going outside and maybe Mommie will bring some sandwiches out to us."

As the door slammed behind them, Jenny thought: Just like Doug to take over the situation — as if no time had passed — he makes me feel that it hasn't.

When Jenny walked to the edge of the back yard carrying a large tray of sandwiches, glasses of milk, and apples, she saw Doug and the children kneeling in the grass. They seemed to be intently peering into a thicket while Doug whispered to them.

"What is it?" Jenny questioned in a soft voice as she approached.

"A rabbit's nest, with babies in it." Doug turned to face her with a boyish expression of suspense. "I ran across it while I was digging up weeds before you came today. The babies are so small — born only yesterday probably."

"How sad. The mother won't desert them, will she?" Jenny adopted the prevalent attitude of childish wonderment. "They're so wild, you know. I tried to raise a nest of them once, but they all died."

"I hope that's no indication of your maternal nature." Doug winked. "The mother will be back as long as we don't disturb her nest. Is that vittals?" Doug nodded to the tray.

"What's 'vittals', Mom?" Andy rasped in his hoarse voice.

"Food, dear. Here's your peanut butter and jam. The kids will eat nothing else," she added turning to offer the tray to Doug. "Here are some sliced ham and cheese for us."

Doug eagerly helped himself. While he ate, Jenny queried:

"Is Beth here? ...and your children?"

"No." He paused to take a drink of milk. "I left them home. We live in Arizona now. Beth is teaching school for the summer."

A pause. Jenny bit into a crisp red apple.

Doug continued. "Where is your husband?"

The children had eaten their sandwiches quietly and quickly, eyeing the thicket most of the time. "We want to watch for the mother," Jill had whispered at the end of Doug's question.

Jenny handed apples to Andy and Jill before they trotted off to the nest again. "Don't touch it," she called after them. "Remember, the mother won't come back if you do."

"I married Bud Gaynor," she finally replied to Doug. "He is a lawyer, and we're living here in California, San Jose. It's only a few hours' drive from here."

Her grey-blue eyes averted his curious brown ones. She was sitting on the grass, and he was lying across from her, propped on his elbow. As she gathered the glasses and napkins, she felt him watching her movements. She glanced toward him quickly to catch his stare. The stubble of his unshaven face and his unclipped crew-cut shined copper in the sun.

"You know," she remarked to break the silence, "they say when casual friends meet away from home, they suddenly become long-lost childhood pals."

"Do you think we're casual friends?" he returned.

Jenny laughed nervously and jumped to her feet, picking up the tray. "I remember you too well after all these years." She blushed from the implications of her statement and turned to the house. "Be right back," she called over her shoulder.

Rufus was barking loudly as she came to the back door again. The children's voices were startled and pleading.

"Mom, Mom!" Both children ran to her crying and out of breath. "Rufuth is going to get the mommie!"

Jenny hastened to the thicket where Rufus barked wildly, and a nervous mother rabbit flitted as close to her nest as she dared.

"Rufus." She demanded. "Come here!" She had to step closer

to him and repeat her command several times, but the huge dog obeyed and returned to her, whinnying. "Bad pup," Jenny scolded, tapping him firmly on the nose.

Her attention turned to Doug's absence. "Where did Mr. Morgan go?"

Everyone seemed calm now, including the mother rabbit who bravely returned to her nest to protect her babies from the invading beast.

"Don't know," Andy remarked and Jill passively shook her head.

"Well, come inside and let's see if we can get our things unpacked."

The children went to bed immediately after their dinner. It hadn't turned dark, but they were exhausted from excitement and spent energy. They crawled wearily into their freshly made up bunks in their thin flannel sleepers.

Jenny finished cleaning up the dishes and stored the left-over lasagne from supper in the refrigerator. She took a hot shower and wrapped a white cotton, quilted duster around her. Propped up by a pillow on the couch, she curled her feet under her robe. It was eight o'clock, and the sun had set. The living room window, tall, wide, and many-paned, looked out over the back yard which sloped gently to the cedars bordering the abrupt drop of the cliff. Beyond was the Pacific, dark and cold. It was the first week of June. The surrounding cottages were most likely still empty. Their owners would probably not be coming for another month except perhaps for weekend trips. Jenny picked up a novel and began reading while she waited for Bud's call.

She had read the first few paragraphs of the story when she heard a short, soft knock at the front door, and she started. She walked barefoot on the rug to the door. Through the curtain in the moonlight, she recognized Doug Morgan.

"Hello, Doug," she greeted him cheerfully after unlatching the door. "I'm glad to see you again after you disappeared this afternoon."

He was wearing a khaki jacket over a yellow shirt. He had changed his levis for khaki slacks. Behind him stood a large foot locker.

"I'm sorry to disturb you so late, but I thought you might need this," he remarked, hoisting the trunk to his shoulder.

"Oh, yes. You might as well bring it in here." Jenny held the door open and directed him to the living room.

The telephone began ringing. "Hello?" Jenny questioned into the receiver, motioning Doug into a chair.

A burst of static blurred the operator's words, but Jenny replied, "Yes, I'm here."

"Darling," Bud's voice came across, just barely audible.

"I can't hear you," she shouted to him.

"Well, I can here you fine!" Her husband replied in a louder voice.

"Oh. . . That's fine. How are you? What about the case?"

Doug picked up the book she had been reading. It was hard to pretend he was not listening. She turned her back to him and listened to a lengthy explanation at the other end of the line.

"Well, I hope it's soon," she replied at last. A pause. "Yes, it's lovely. I hope to get out on the beach tomorrow. The children give you their love." A pause. "Yes. . . Good night."

She placed the receiver in its cradle and turned to Doug. He closed the book in his hands.

"That was Bud. He's home working on a case but hopes to join us at the end of the week."

Doug nodded. "Railway Express sent the trunk to my cabin. It was there when I got back this evening. Thought you might want me to bring it up."

She wondered why he had dashed off earlier, but he failed to respond when she mentioned it as he came in. He gave no indication of wanting to leave now, though the conversation had ceased.

"How about some coffee," Jenny suggested, rising from the couch. "I can give you a piece of cake."

"That'll be fine," Doug answered, following her into the kitchen. "Have you found the place in pretty good shape?"

"Excellent," she answered, opening several cabinets before locating the coffee can. Doug reached up behind her to lift the can from the upper shelf. His arms brushed her hair and his chest softly leaned against her back. "Why, thank you," she smiled, turning to face him as he stepped back.

They sat down at the couch together with steaming cups of coffee and chocolate cake. "I'm grateful for your company tonight," Jenny said as she curled her feet under her duster. "I'm afraid I would have developed a bad case of the willies up here tonight."

"There's nothing to fear."

Jenny held the hot mug between both palms, gratefully accepting the warmth. "No doubt, but I have a very vivid imagination, and this place has always seemed spooky to me at night."

Doug laughed and popped a bite of cake into his mouth. "It's loneliness," he said, gulping down the morsel, "and I know how you feel."

She tilted her head to one side so she could look into his face and eyes.

Are you happy? She thought but stopped the words before they reached her lips. She wondered how his marriage had been; her surprise at the news of it had been immense. They were both attending college in Illinois. They had dated regularly for over a year. They were in love, and they were young and beautiful. The summer before their senior year, he asked her to marry him. She

astonished herself to find that she could not accept. They became strangers in minutes while she struggled to understand her hesitation. Both utterly confused and desperately hurt, they had parted on a night in early August. Eleven months later, he married Beth.

She realized his head had also tilted to meet her gaze, but she had not seen him because eight years had slipped away, and she was twenty-one again. She had no idea how long they had been staring into each other's eyes, but he seemed just as hypnotized as she.

She shivered but not from the cold. He noticed, and she lied to him, "It's quite chilly in here."

"I'll build you a fire," he replied enthusiastically, already rising from the couch.

She watched silently as he carried logs from the patio and stacked them in the fireplace with small twigs and crumpled newspaper from the kindling box. He lit the small heap, and soon the silver haze of the moon falling through the window mingled with the pink-gold and white-green-and-blue of the fire. She joined him on the carpet where the cold and warm hues converged.

He stroked her hair. He rubbed her neck, her shoulders, the small of her back. And she wept soundlessly against his chest.

Jenny awoke at dawn to find herself lying on the couch, her head upon a pillow, her legs covered by the blanket from her bed. The ashes in the fireplace were black and dead. She went to her room and changed into her bathing suit. She peeked into the children's room and grabbed a towel from the bathroom as she passed through the hallway.

She was outside with the warming sun on her back as she trotted barefoot down the wooden staircase built against the cliffside. Reaching the soft beach, she dropped her towel and continued running until the waves swirled around her ankles, her knees, her waist. The icy water took away her breath, but she craved its refreshing, rejuvenating powers. She faced the rising, glowing sphere of the sun and drew water in her cupped palms to her face. Eyes burning, body numb with cold, she splashed through the surf to the beach. She retrieved her towel, tossed it around her shoulders, and hurried up the steps feeling new and clean like a new-born baby being dropped into a sterile white world.

Jill and Andy heard her enter and called sleepily from their beds. She was in the hallway beside their room, so she entered.

"Can we get up?" Jill asked, sitting back on her legs on the lower bunk. Andy was already crawling down the ladder from the upper bunk.

"Of course." Jenny placed a hand on the side of each small face. "Let Mommie dress, then I'll fix your breakfast."

"Can we go swimming?" Andy questioned when he noticed her suit under the towel.

"Well, dear, I tried the water myself, and it's a bit too cold right now. But we'll sit down on the beach and build castles, and if the water warms up, you can go in."

While Jenny set out the breakfast, the children ran out to the yard. When she went to call them, they were already nearly at the back door.

"The rabbit's gone," Andy reported, his face twitching in a battle to hold back the force of tears.

"And all the babies," Jill remarked puzzled. "We couldn't find them anywhere."

"What happened, Mom?" Andy sniffled. "They couldn't walk yet."

Jenny glanced through the door at the deserted thicket. "I don't know how they got away; the mother must have carried them. But she must have felt there was danger, and she knew she had to protect her family. It's an instinct."

"What's an instink, Mommie?" Jill questioned.

"Instinct, darling. It's something we are born with that tells us what we must do when we do not know or when we forget."

"Do I have one too?"

"Yes, we all do, animals too." Jenny watched a host of questions well up behind Jill's puzzled face. But Andy interrupted.

"We wouldn't have hurt them, Mom," he promised. "We didn't even touch them."

"I know, dear, but sometimes we don't always know what the mother knows. If she's a good mother, she won't take any chances. She must protect the family that she has made and loves."

"Is that instink, Mommie?" Jill asked.

"Yes, Jill, sometimes that is instinct."

"You're a good mother," Andy suddenly said. He patted her arm and swallowed the lump in his throat when he saw tears fill the rims of Jenny's eyes.



