



folio

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EDITORIAL

Have you ever been so disillusioned by the people around you that the whole world seemed like nothing more than a horrible joke? Have you ever been so in love that you couldn't even breathe except in gulps and spasms? Have you ever been so angry that you felt your head would explode if you didn't scream like a madman?

Between the covers of this magazine you will find the guts of several people who know what it is like to feel those rampages of passion which are the critical factor differentiating men from perambulating vegetables.

If you are able to sympathize with even a few of these pages, then the satisfaction of understanding some aspect of experience may follow. If you are unable or will not sympathize, if you are generally apathetic to the voicing of emotion, then please give your copy of this volume to someone else and go plant yourself; you are wasting our time and your own.

For those who would read this issue with a spirit of involvement there is a quality of expression in the work capable of arousing the whole gamut of flutterings and squeezings of the mind. To you we present these pieces.

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Photos: Arnim Walter, Ross Cameron, Mike Curry

Cover: D. R. Brown



SND
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just a trickle of a thought
from the copious ocean
of the mind's activity
brings you back to me
in a whirlpool of confusion

and you, floating free
in the sea of my memory,
perhaps have already offered me
(with a wave
of your impatient hand)
the stepping stones to
your own secret chambers,
which I have failed
to recognize

and just a trickle of a tear
is the pool that's left
as you begin to ebb away
into the dim recesses
of my mind's uncertainty

—Anne Gardiner

Contentment

Contentment is for babies and for cows . . .

to
live
vib
rant
ly
is
to
dan
gle
se
cure
ly
at
the
end
of
a
frayed
str
i
n
g

—Sister M. Doris Shaver, C.S.J.

Dawn

Do you see
the sun
even when clouds distract
and the moon
vies
for attention?

Do you see
the sun
even when stars beguile
and planets
reveal their presence?

In the night
when all
light is superficial
do you see the sun?

or do you just
remember
what it was like in the day?

Have you ever seen
the Sun?

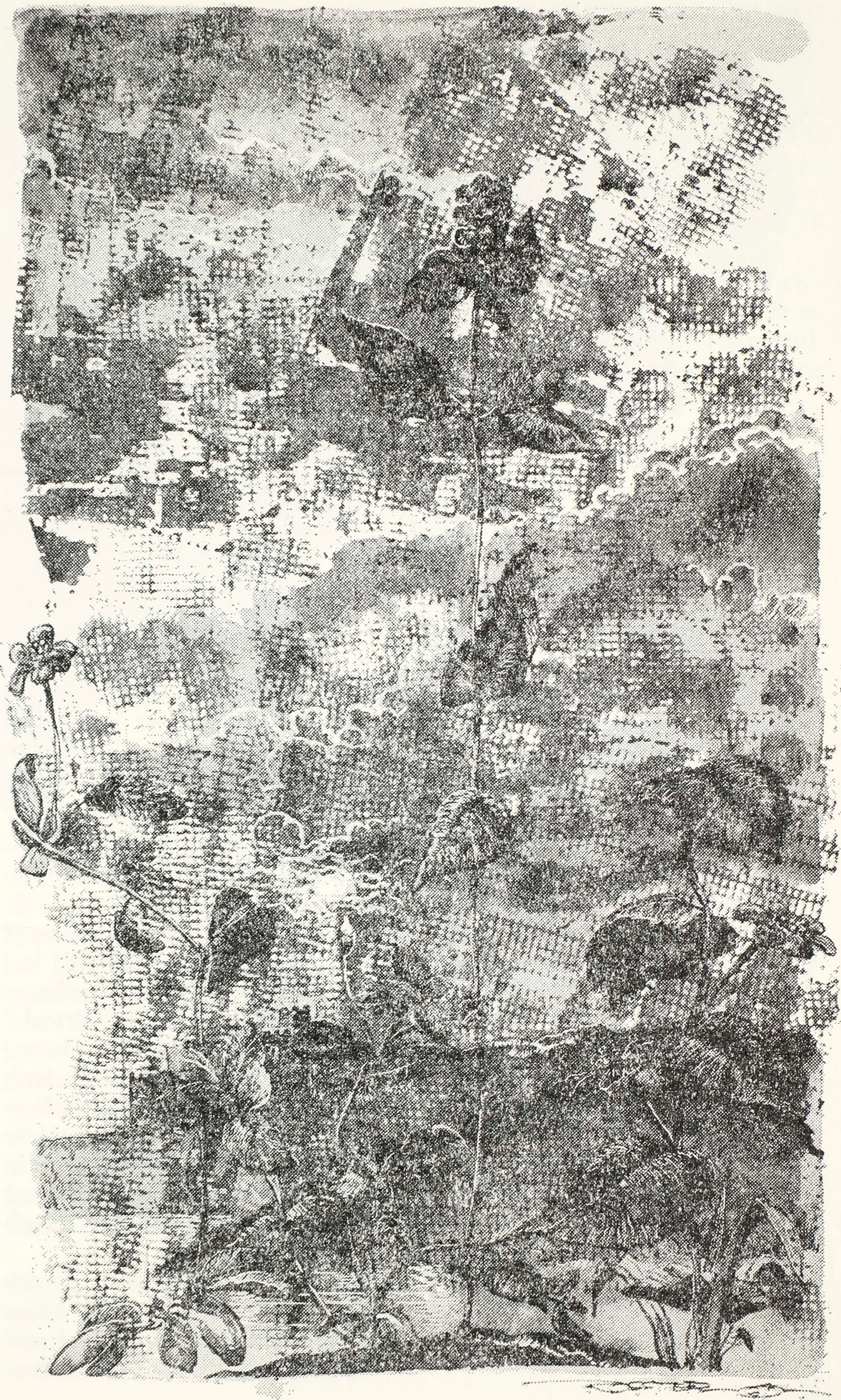
—Mary Ellen Holland

One Night Heidelberg

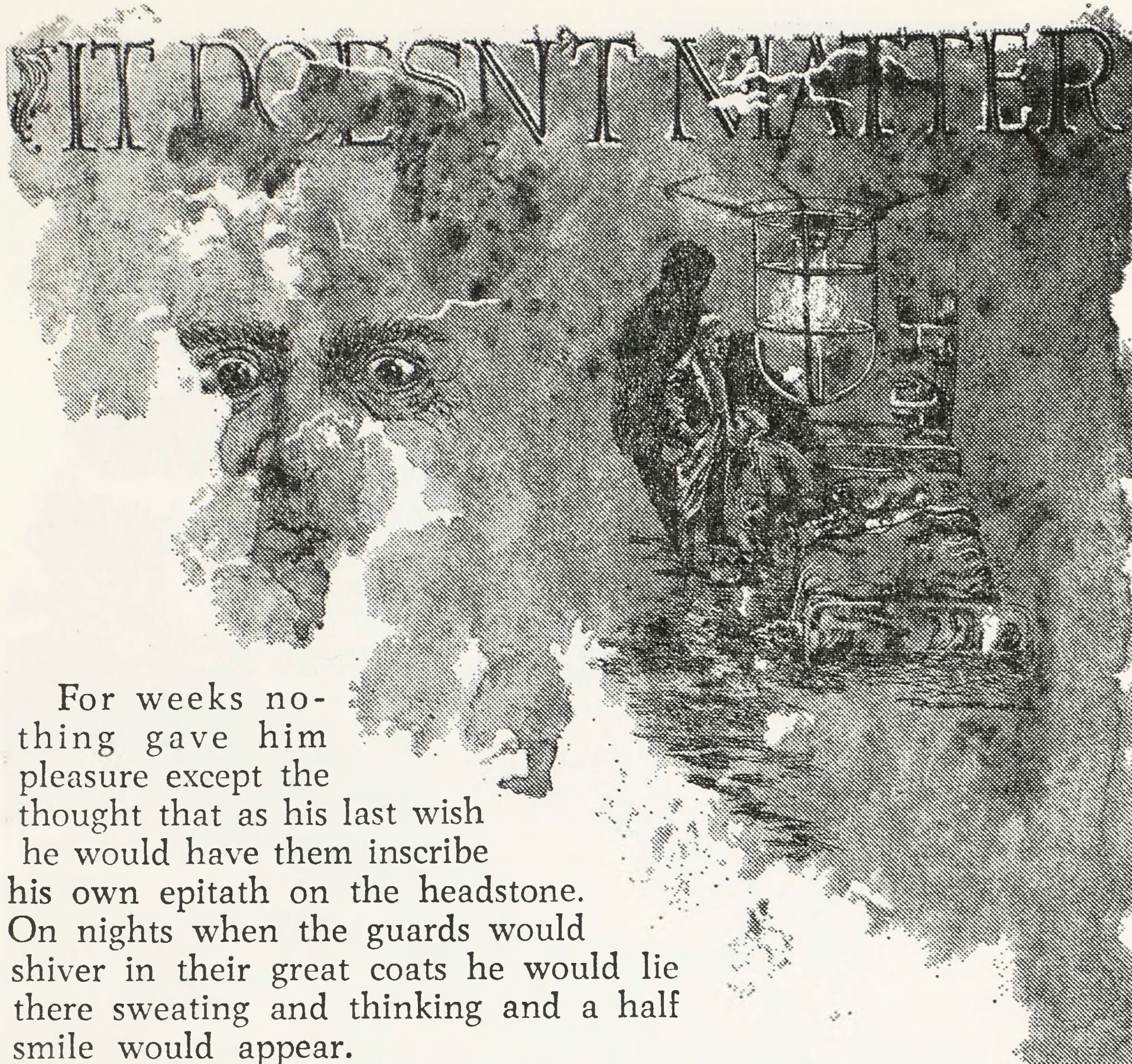
The wine Rhine runs
in ripple haze and grass
beside the bank of dusk,
hears the hic up crickets
in the always night all noise
and sees the web of spider weaves
that wonders which of ways
is there for whipple wings.

But what became of moon
when cloud came down
and dipped her sticky fingers
in the cobweb silver sky?

—Ray Sealey



IT DOESN'T MATTER



For weeks nothing gave him pleasure except the thought that as his last wish he would have them inscribe his own epitath on the headstone. On nights when the guards would shiver in their great coats he would lie there sweating and thinking and a half smile would appear.

Only one other person knew of it. He had discussed it with the lawyer on the last days of the trial when the verdict had become obvious. It was what carried him through. He imagined it in large, hard capitals chiselled in marble. His message was simple: IT DOESN'T MATTER.

He didn't get along with the other prisoners and refused offers of cigarettes from the guards. No one knew why he was imprisoned but there were rumours that it was something political. And everyone knew what happened to those who were in prison for "something political."

During the first two months, he was in the common blockhouse where all the prisoners, in individual cells, were ranged along both walls of a long, narrow wing in an ancient stone building. Stark, dirty bulbs which burned all night hung in an erratic row down the middle of the corridor. Every second cell had a slot in the outer wall that let in a little light, flies, bugs and cold night air. Looking out over the inner courtyard provided diversion for at least half of the inmates. Though he had one in his cell, he never bothered looking out.

There was always somebody talking in the cells but at dinner time the noise was deafening. The prisoners would run their shoes back and forth across the bars or rattle the locks as they shouted and swore at the guards. No one took it very seriously. It was just some-

thing that had always been done. As soon as everybody had his plate the room grew quiet and only the conversations or jokes of those in nearby cells could be heard.

In two months no one had heard him take part in the dinner ritual nor had he spoken to any prisoner or guard. They didn't like his indifference. At first they ignored it. Later they taunted him. In the cell on one side was a little Greek thief who led the group in that area. They didn't know why he was there so they called him Rapist or Queer or Informer or whatever came to mind as they shouted.

Often he ignored them. Occasionally he would seem momentarily interested enough to sit up and watch them. As his eyes moved from one raging figure to another his face showed no emotion. Then with what appeared to be a slight shrug of the shoulders he would settle back down on the cot.

To the other prisoners this was the ultimate display of arrogance; to the guards, a challenge to their superiority. One night after having done this he fell asleep on his cot. In the cell on the other side was a huge dark-haired man who spoke with a Slavic accent. Between each cell was a wall of verticle bars three or four inches apart.

That night, to the great delight of the other prisoners and the two guards who stood at the end of the hall and watched, the big dark-haired man in the cell next to him stripped himself completely naked and, to the chants of the others, stood over against the bars and urinated into his cell and soaked about half of his cot before he was awakened by the wet blankets and the noise of the other prisoners.

He said nothing. He took the wet blankets from his bed, threw them through the bars into the main corridor and then went back and lay on the cold bare mattress. In the morning he had slept little and was cold. The stench of urine hung in the corridor.

Two days later he was taken out to meet with his lawyer and face the last sittings of his trial. Even before the postponement his chances were slight. Now the prosecution had more evidence to use against him.

"Look," he answered the lawyers' first question, "don't bother me about the trial. It doesn't interest me. That's your thing. I want your advice on something else."

"How the hell am I supposed to defend you if you won't help?" shouted the lawyer. "I didn't ask for this case. You might have had a chance at first; but you won't talk, you don't care. You know the sentence as well as I do and the verdict is just about as obvious."

"I didn't ask for this case either. But you're getting paid and it has given me time to think. And the prosecutor's wife will get a new dress. So let's get down to business."

Yes, he knew the verdict and the sentence. He had once heard that condemned men were accorded one last wish. He had one and when the lawyer assured him that he would personally see that it was carried out, his eyes sparkled with a sense of purpose and hope that had not been there for years.

He was brought to the courtroom for the final session of his trial. Court was conducted in a converted section of a storehouse. It was a small, deep room with dirty glass windows on opposite walls. Old furniture had been brought in and arranged so that the judge sat at one end on a raised dais behind a scruffy but solid desk.

Both the defence and prosecuting attorneys had small desks facing the judge, on either side of his platform. There was a special area for the prisoner and guard at one side and the rest of the room remained bare except for three or four rows of weathered benches, apparently for observers, but no one was present for this trial.

The judge eyed the prisoner with interest as the prosecutor paced up and down and fairly shouted his case. Occasionally he would stop and walk over to the prisoner and stare at him to make his point. Then he would pace again. The defence attorney looked dejected.

The prisoner seemed lost in thought as he glanced around the room. When he first noticed the unkempt, unshaven appearance of the judge, a slight snicker appeared on his face and then dissolved into a dispassionate look that lingered for the remainder of the proceedings.

His eyes settled on the dusty window panes on the wall opposite him. The sinking sun struck them obliquely and they glowed with an eerie brilliance. The air in the room was still and small particles of dust filtering down from the rafters glittered in the sun's rays as they floated downward to become invisible again as they fell through its path. The buzzing of a single fly trying vainly to get through the glass and regain its freedom was all that he was aware of until he heard his lawyer calling his name.

"Stand up and hear your verdict," the lawyer said with a weary air of resignation hanging about him. It was the look of resignation that comes from prolonged periods of frustration.

The prisoner wondered if the fly at the window also felt resigned and as the judge read the verdict he emitted a brief snicker on the realization that it didn't matter a damn whether the fly got past the window for he would surely die in the cold night air that he sought so desperately.

After the trial he was returned to the common cell block and left there for a week. Then they moved him to a separate building in which there were four cells. The other three were empty.

It was different. He was in a corner. The cells were larger and straw covered the bare stone floor. Two walls were made from huge blocks of dark cut stone. They were cold to the touch and always felt damp in the mornings. Here and there were initials or obscenities scratched into the stone. There was no window and only one large bare bulb lit the entire room. It was dark and dingy and it smelled of sweat and urine.

The three days remaining to him were hardly enough. All the discipline and concentration he had used to shut out the other prisoners

before his arrangement with the lawyer were called again into use. He was now a man obsessed with purpose and direction. He had one last wish. To have a marble headstone. And on that headstone in clear, cold lettering, his message: IT DOESN'T MATTER.

He went over it hundreds of times. He considered limestone and then granite. He imagined it on dark stone, then light. He measured the advantages of size and shape and then the type of lettering. He made changes and adjustments and for two days continued to refine his conception so he could describe it exactly and precisely to the authorities at the very last moment.

On the first day a fat priest came to see him at mid-afternoon. His breakfast was still on the tray, untouched. He listened as the priest said things such as, "Join with me," "There is still time," and "You are not alone" then burst out laughing as he continued. He laughed until tears came to his eyes and the priest didn't understand. But he said, "I understand" and called him "son" and then left.

The next day he came and tried again. This time there was no reaction at all and he began to rationalize to himself that condemned men can't be understood, when suddenly the prisoner began talking.

"Father," he asked, "are you sure I'll be buried in that small graveyard next to the main road into town?"

This upset the priest. "Son, where your body will rest is of no importance. The body is only a temporary home of the soul . . ."

"To hell with the soul, you fool! Where will my grave be? Where?" he burst out, jumping to his feet. Immediately a guard rushed in and let the priest from the cell and led him away as the shouts of "Where? Where?" were shut behind him.

When the prisoner became quiet he slept for a few hours or so and ate a slice of bread from his dinner plate. Then he sat up and faced the dark wall. He estimated that it must be about 3 a.m. by the feel of cold and dampness. The light had flickered once earlier but glared steadily now. Utter silence enveloped the room.

He sat limply looking at the wall. His eyes scanned over the stone and seemed to take note of every scratch, every bulge, every sharp edge. Then his muscles began to tense. His body became rigid and his gaze turned into a cold stare. His toes dug into the stone floor and his hands clenched the edge of his bed.

When the guard brought in his breakfast the following morning he found him just like that. His knuckles were white from the pressure of squeezing. His pupils were dilated and it was impossible to tell where he was focussing. Sweat was beaded on his forehead in spite of the cold and his shirt was damp.

Talking to him was useless. All other attempts to restore him to his senses were futile. The fat priest came and stayed with him.

At 3 a.m. the evening before as he had gazed over the stone wall he had begun to lose control of reality. His imagination was set loose.

The wall became his headstone. It was huge, monstrous, looming there before him. It gave an air of eternity and authority to his message.

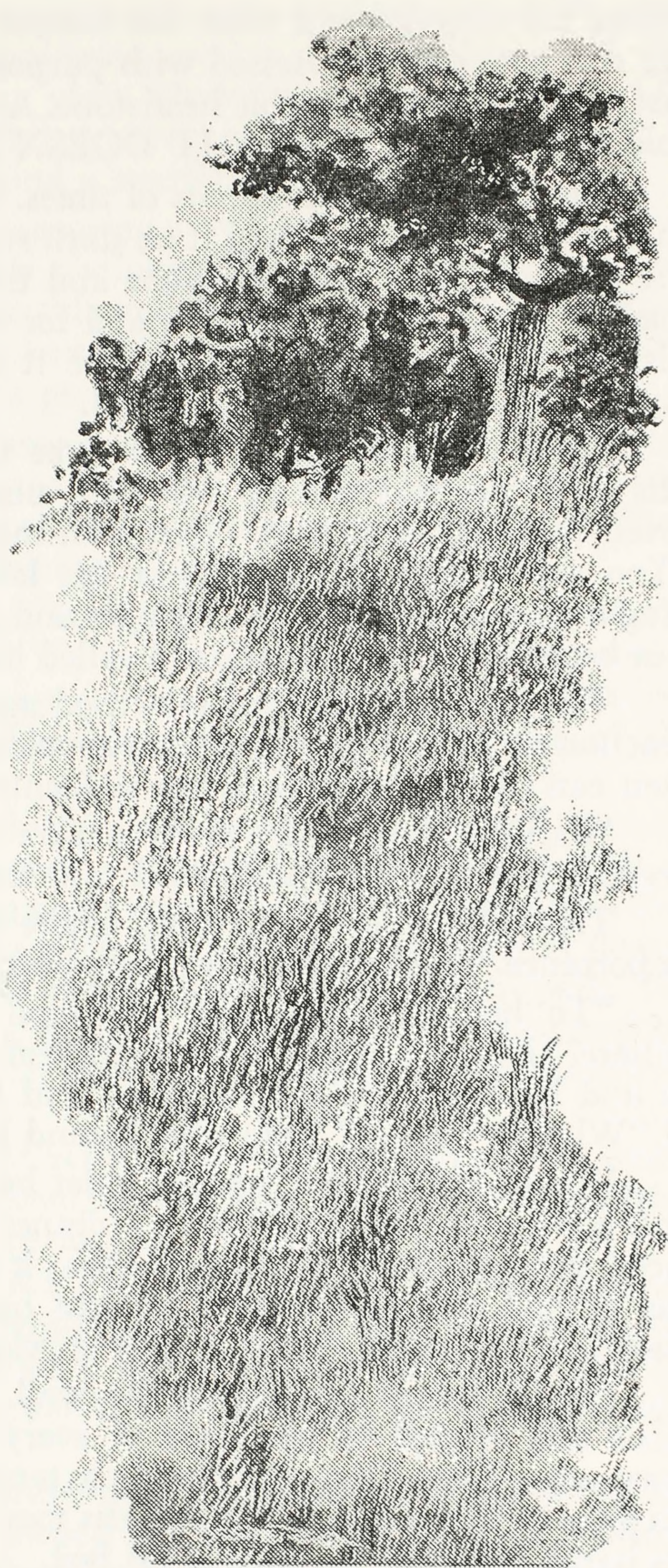
It was there too, chiselled into the heart of the stone by some master craftsman. The light reflected from the bevelled sides of the letters and flashed in his eyes and dazzled his senses. It was alive. A sense of great responsibility, a feeling of ultimate authority overcame him.

Then he came apart from himself. He could see the stone and its message there on the hill, at the top facing the road. And he knew that he lay in the ground beneath it but he saw himself down on the road standing in a group looking up at it. And all around people were looking and pointing it out and talking.

Beside him there in the group was the fat priest and he was speaking to him. As he turned to listen he saw something that he had never noticed before. On the priest's golden cross written in Latin were the words **IT DOESN'T MATTER**. Then he understood how he could be there and under the ground. He was there and he was on the fat priest's cross. He was everywhere that his message was. A new sense of power urged through him.

Time and space no longer existed. He was anywhere, everywhere, now and always. It was pure psychic power. He was no longer a mere puny man. He was a message. An idea. An abstraction. He had transformed himself into an absolute, to exist unchanged through all time.

Then in an apocalyptic instant it hit him. He realized. He understood. His euphoric trance was broken. After the orgasm the apex of pure emotion instantly sank into the cold waters of rationality.



The fat priest started at his first move and then watched as the prisoner's muscles began to relax. His eyes focussed, far away at first and then on the dark stone wall in front of him. He relaxed his grip on the bed and spread his fingers out straight and then eased them. After turning to face the priest he remained apparently oblivious for several minutes before he recognized him and realized where he was.

He couldn't stand yet but managed to lay back on the cot and stretch himself out. Dinner was brought in and the priest began to explain. He had about one hour left. Then he could issue his last statement and instructions.

He was listening. He had wiped the sweat from his forehead and his expression was calm and serene.

Waiting this last hour was annoying. The priest was animated now with anxiety. He talked continuously, gesturing emphatically all the while, half in Latin, half in English. A small nuisance to endure for a short period of time, the prisoner thought.

At last the priest rose. "I am authorized," he said, "to record and effectuate your final request. Do you have one?"

"Bury me in an unmarked grave," he said and was led out.

—RJS

Nocturne: Upon Whitehall

A view from the bridge, of Whitehall —
Dominant jewel,
Set into the depth of night's dark close,
Irregular of contour, as a coal
When fire has passed,
And hues of orange and yellow blend;
Electrified alike on river glass.
Warmth of humanity
Filters through the night to where I stand.

—Robert J. Knight

the monster Time
ravishes the daughter
of man
leaving her
abandoned
in Eternity's ditch:
leaving her to rot
and return unto
dust:
to conceive
and bear the fruit of
rashness:
to eat
from the Tree of Life
and live
forever

mis-shapen

and

grotesque.

—Mary Ellen Holland

Limited Spectrum

Almost mahogany and emerald
like old leather sandals on turf
or shades of wood and felt
in an empty pool-hall,
warm brown and green
are the colours of me;

And I talk to
moss-wrapped stones
in wishing wells.

—Carol Curry

sparse august landscape, winds in the foreground

if eiderdown
grey in the skies
can smother dreaming
i may not find you.

because of this
do not conclude
i value loving
cold as my pillow.

because the winds
bend more than trees
in august landscapes
i may not hold you.

do not conclude
i leave behind
no warmth of leaning
since i am going.

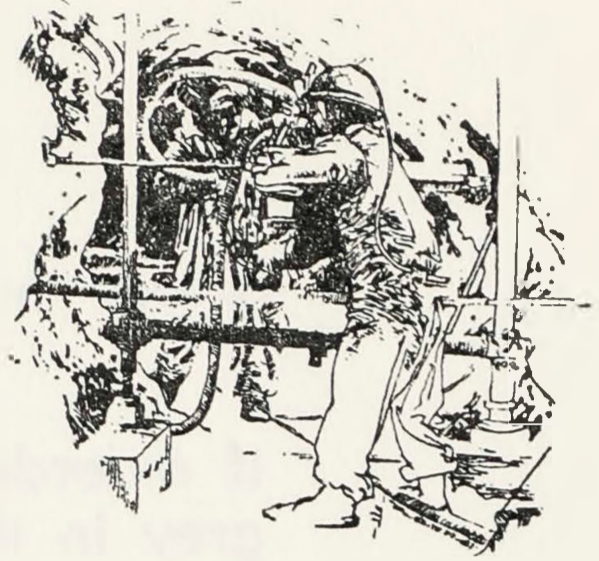
because sleet rain
drowning today
may blind your grey eyes
i shall not stay here.

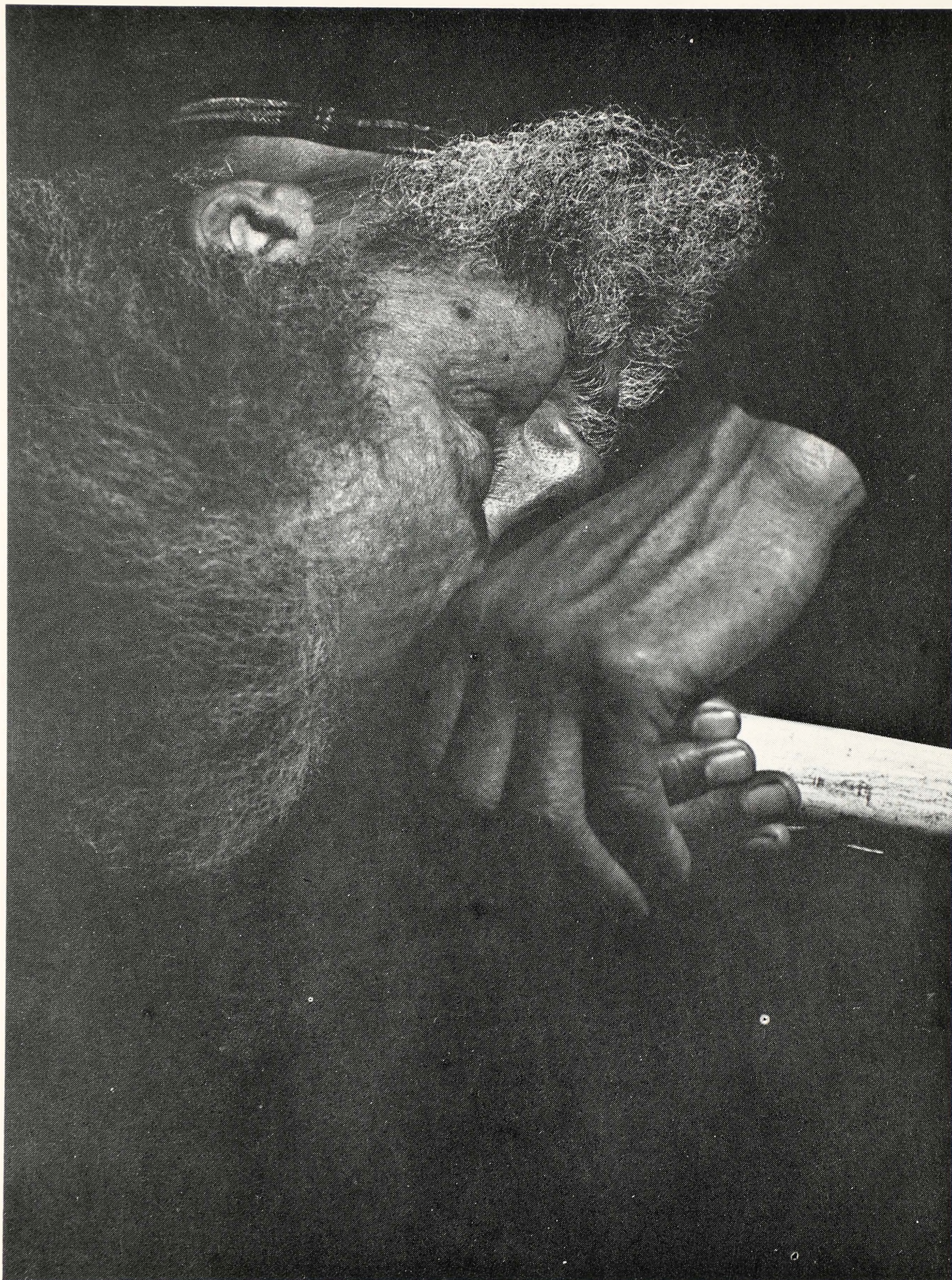
do not construe
splinters of ice
from allegories.
love is a reason.

—jill robinson

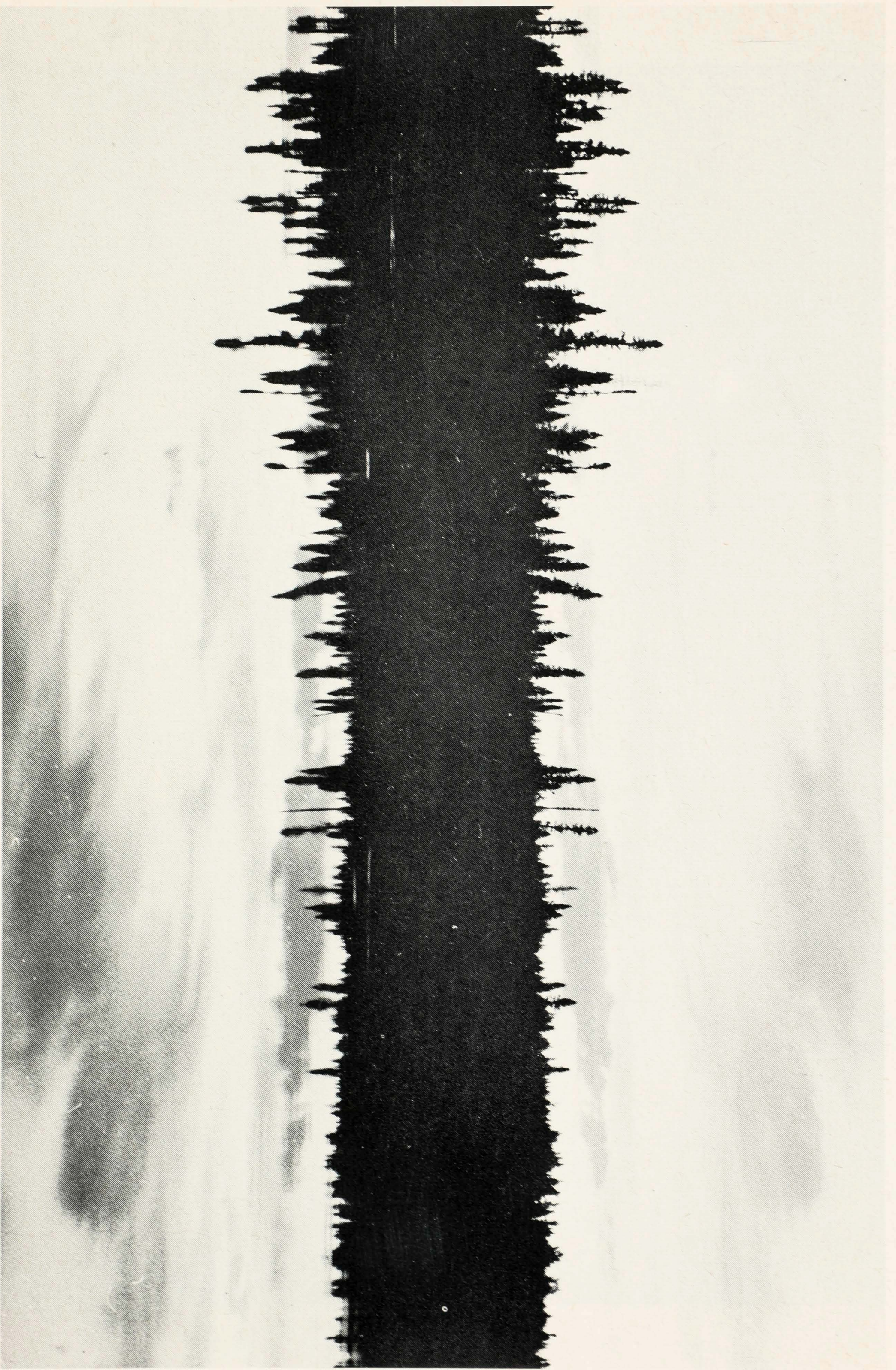
Silhouette of Farley

O
Fly
Those
Drift
Ways'
Madly
Blown
Stone
Caves
Where
The ore
Like ticks
From black
Broken guts
Gets picked
By creatures
Feigning men
The crusty skin
Of the dead earth
Lies torn and pained
From fat pukemongers
Starving for her dung
With a vicious hunger
Their burst brains sniff
And suck at the garbage of
Life as they rave like ants
Gone mad inside the furious
Chilling bowels of the earth
O in those drift ways' madly
Blown stone caves lies waste
Farley is a miner's paradise
Its silhouette stabs the sky with a jagged horror

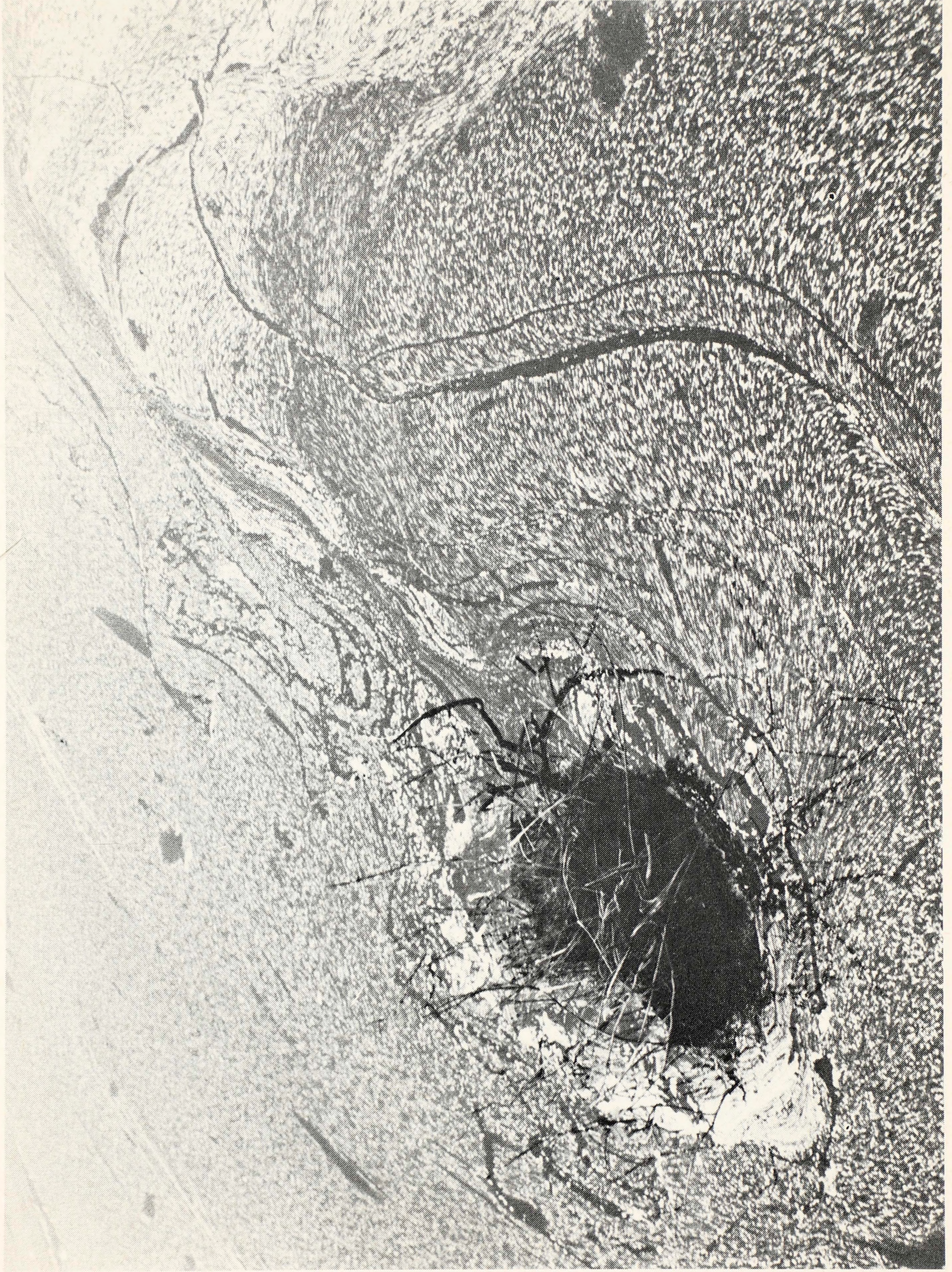




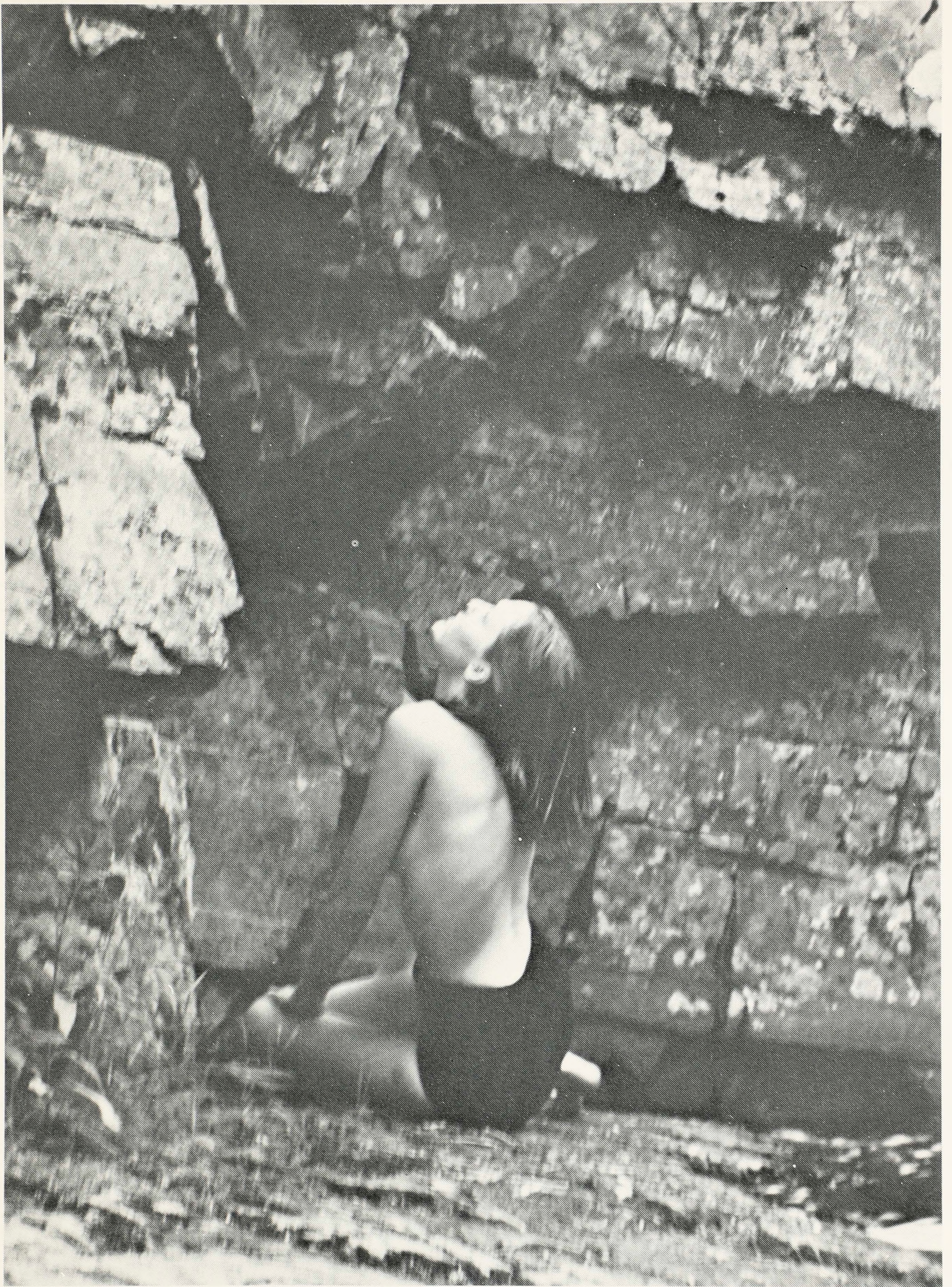
—Arnim Walter



—Ross Cameron



—Ross Cameron



—Mike Curry

Encounter

I saw white bread
 amber wine . . .
 there I found him.

I felt cool breezes
 warm suns
 grass . . .
 there I found him.

I heard small voices
 say
 "You're nice" . . .
 there I found him.

I sensed an open one
 who beckoned . . .
 there I found him.

I knew the painful stab
 of eyes . . .
 there I found him.

Darkness enveloped me.
 there
 in the darkness
 there
 I found him.

Alone suspended in silence
 alone . . .
 I found him.

And what then?

I loved him
 where I found him.

—Sister M. Doris Shaver, C.S.J.

an old man muttering
in his scarf
near the waxing face
in Stalin's tomb.

the pilgrimage
from Moscow market
to shrining temples
of the still Kremlin

his hands lined and soiled
by the late afternoon
clutching the red rope cording
thread from the oaken womb.

fish smells in
May Day's palace
sweaty smudges on
a dead man's glass

the blast
was sudden and splattering
an explosion of pigeons
shook the domes
drowning both
in cold grey clouds
finished now and dripping

a crowd
calmed and massed on
the sky line of pavement
then
broke and drifted
breezed
with the Russian city sweepers
the old man washed and gone

fruits and fish and trinklets
going out into the world from
holy sanding walls
for rubles and
an old man's touching
selling tears
wrapped in his mother's shawl.

years ago and living
the fables of his mother's lap
retelling the nest of crosses
the City's Story
and the crucifix in the hall.

in the locking sands
tanks grappled
spearing antlers.
smoke and canon
trumpeted the crumbling of
adobe prayers and
the tale of the hanging doll.

the old man
closed his stall
his place
in the market square
burying his name
with his mother's shawl
following the fables
to a coffin
and dead man's stare.

—James Kemp

O arched northland of tensed wonders
Your ice-eyed beauty
Captures the strong hearted
With the privilege
Of nesting in your hearth

O tenderland, uniquely north
Your fate is much discussed
By distant men who sit
And watch your primal lovers
slowly dying

Who sit and build
invisible, governing walls
Suborning your children without consent
You hum disgust
But your crowning skies forgive
Granting dictators safe journey south

O mighty land strike now
Show your true heart
Bear fruit again and mother us

Granny capital has heard your pleas
From men who sincerely dishonour you
Deceiving your innocent fire-watchers
How long will you allow it?
The tenders despair

O greatland, you are leached by white lies
Lip-serviced, not loved

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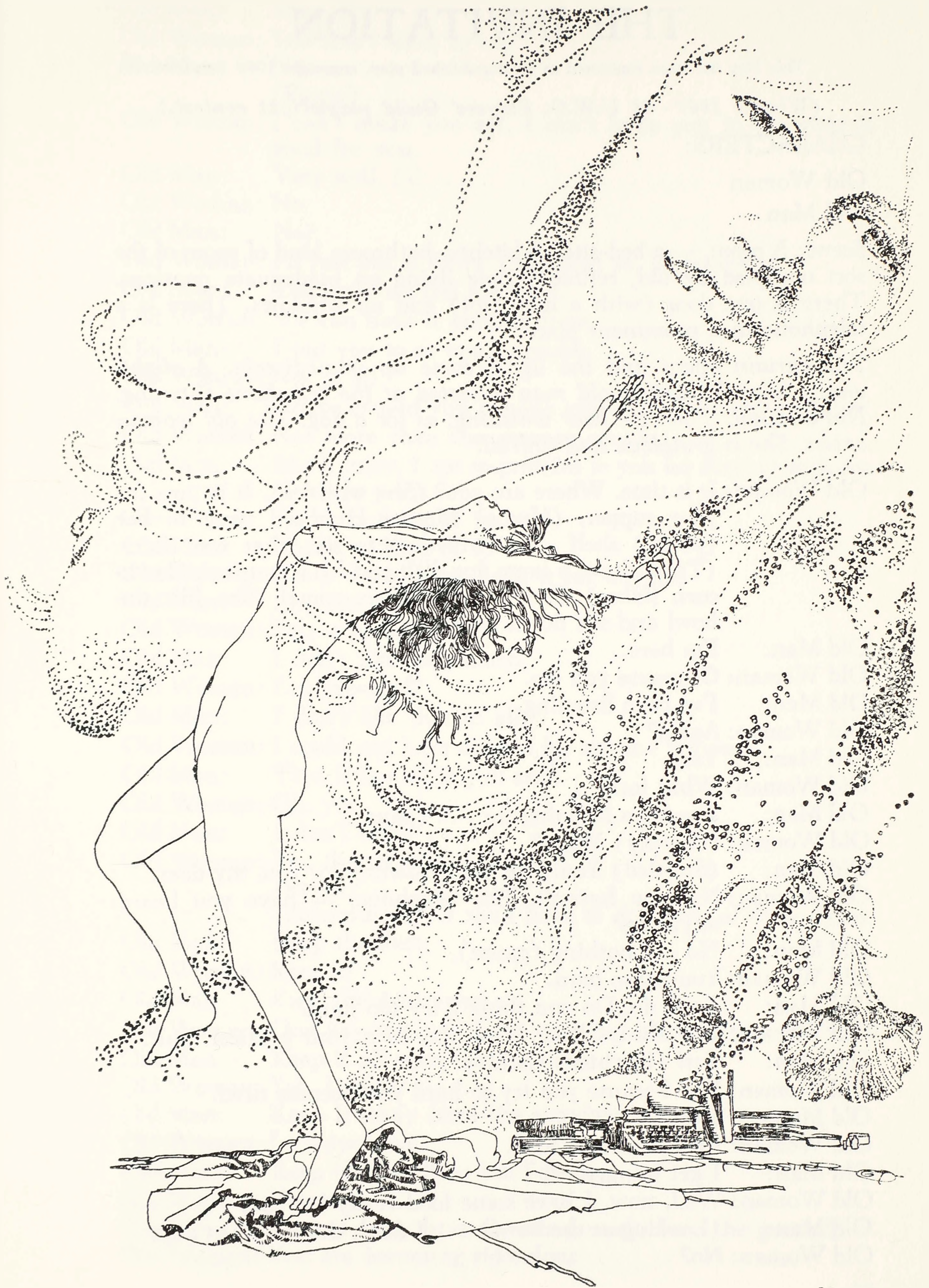


Flight Breath

Release,
concrete ropes,
scream straining
force to lift my body,
break the cords of green
and let my mind catch up
to ride man's steel dream.

Black painted height,
draw close my body,
touch the finger wings
and ease their knifing ways
through mists that give to greys
then hurl my body, soft and warm,
with one last flash of water light
into the sun, and leave my mind
to turn the earth-globe underfoot.

—Ray Sealey



THE INVITATION

This Play has been registered as an unpublished play, copyright 1966 Rex Deverell.

(Winner 1967 - 68 U.W.O. Players' Guild playwright contest.)

CHARACTERS:

Old Woman

Old Man

Scene: A room, — a bed-sitting-kitchen-bathroom kind of room of the sort occupied by old, retired people living on inadequate pensions. There is one door (with a mail slot) and no windows. There is a telephone in a prominent place.

The curtain opens and the lights come up immediately. A slight, weary, slightly curious old man is seated at the telephone listening. Not a sound. Then we hear whistling, as for a dog. The old woman enters. She is grotesque and unfrail.

Old Woman: It is time. Where are you? (She whistles). It is time for your supper. (Hums) Mother Hubbard went to her (pause) shelf . . . (whistles) to see what was there. (Takes down a large dog dish and food that is similar to corn flakes) Come, come, come, come! (She fills the bowl and sits down pensively).

Old Man: I'm here.

Old Woman: Of course you are.

Old Man: I've been listening.

Old Woman: Again?

Old Man: Yes.

Old Woman: What for?

Old Man: I've been listening for . . . (pause)

Old Woman: (Sharply) What?

Old Man: (Startled) You! I've been listening for you, my dear.

Old Woman: No, you haven't. The telephone, — have you heard anything?

Old Man: No . . . nothing (pause).

Old Woman: You try so hard.

Old Man: Yes I do. Do you think I try too hard?

Old Woman: You always have. That has been your greatest fault.

Old Man: Yes? (brightens visibly)

Old Woman: Yes. Because you try so hard you become tired.

Old Man: I do.

Old Woman: And you need food.

Old Man: I get hungry.

Old Woman: Well, now, I have some food ready for you.

Old Man: (Looking at the bowl) . . . I don't think I want any.

Old Woman: No?

Old Man: Must I?
 Old Woman: You don't want to eat?
 Old Man: No.
 (Pause)
 Old Woman: I can't make you eat. I can't force you to do what is good for you.
 Old Man: Very well, I'll . . .
 Old Woman: No.
 Old Man: No?
 Old Woman: I'll just put it away. (She does so, laboriously)
 Old Man: You make me feel ashamed.
 Old Woman: We can have it another time.
 Old Man: I put you to so much trouble.
 Old Woman: Not at all.
 Old Man: I have caused you trouble ever since we came together.
 Old Woman: Not more than the average couple.
 Old Man: Much more. I am so grateful to you for staying with me all these years.
 Old Woman: Think nothing of it.
 Old Man: Think nothing of it?
 Old Woman: No. I would have done it for anyone.
 Old Man: Anyone?
 Old Woman: Yes, anyone.
 Old Man: I don't like that much.
 Old Woman: You expected?
 Old Man: I don't like that at all.
 Old Woman: I could not have done it for anyone but you.
 Old Man: That is not what you said.
 Old Woman: Oh, yes.
 Old Man: I don't know . . .
 Old Woman: Yes, that is what I said.
 (Pause)
 (determinedly) I shall have to dust, one of these times.
 Old Man: Keep the dust.
 Old Woman: Keep it?
 Old Man: Keep the dust away.
 Old Woman: One day we shall have no more place to put the dust.
 Old Man: Keep it off everything.
 Old Woman: Yes, I shall.
 Old Man: Keep it away from the woodwork.
 Old Woman: I always have.
 Old Man: Keep it away from the flowers.
 Old Woman: Flowers?
 Old Man: Keep it away from the stone work, from the ground, —
 Old Woman: You are becoming ridiculous.

Old Man: Keep it awa- I'm becoming . . .

Old Woman: Ridiculous.

Old Man: I am. I do become silly, I do. I don't even understand what I'm saying, sometimes.

Old Woman: That is very true.

Old Man: Am I getting old?

Old Woman: Nonsense. You are as young as you ever were.

Old Man: You are trying to make me feel better.

Old Woman: No, I'm telling the truth.

Old Man: May I give orders as I always have?

Old Woman: As always.

Old Man: Even about dusting?

Old Woman: Even about dusting. Only be more responsible for what you are saying.

Old Man: It is time for *orders*. Are you ready?

Old Woman: Yes, I am.

Old Man: Today; or sometime soon, at any rate, you *must* dust the room . . .

Old Woman: Now is as good as anytime.

Old Man: Please, dear. I was saying?

Old Woman: Dust the room.

Old Man: Must I do it now?

Old Woman: Or sometime soon.

Old Man: What has to be dusted?

Old Woman: The furniture.

Old Man: Will you help me move it? I'm not as strong as I once was.

Old Woman: I will help.

Old Man: Then there is the china cabinet.

Old Woman: And the bookshelf.

Old Man: And the table.

Old Woman: That is furniture.

Old Man: Oh. But there are the pictures.

Old Woman: Yes, the pictures.

Old Man: And the telephone is collecting dust, and the . . .

Old Woman: Collect dust is the only thing that telephone does.

Old Man: I'm tired of giving orders.

Old Woman: Why do we have a telephone?

Old Man: We don't have to dust, right now.

Old Woman: That telephone has been here ever since we have been . . .

Old Man: I don't think I even want to dust anything very soon.

Old Woman: Dear, the telephone.

Old Man: We thought the telephone should stay, didn't we?

Old Woman: Years ago.

Old Man: I like having a telephone.

Old Woman: It never rings. A telephone should ring.
Old Man: I lift it up, sometimes, and listen into it.
Old Woman: And what do you hear?
Old Man: A buzzing noise!
Old Woman: Exactly, only a noise.
Old Man: It means a lot to have a buzzing noise. It means that the phone is . . . It means that maybe . . .
Old Woman: That phone has never rung in all the years we've been here.
Old Man: That is not long.
Old Woman: Do you remember when we moved to these rooms?
Old Man: Of course.
Old Woman: When?
Old Man: Of course I remember.
Old Woman: When?
Old Man: I remember the day we moved in. It was raining.
Old Woman: Was it?
Old Man: (Hesitates) I think it was. The sky was very cloudy and it was dark.
Old Woman: It was a sunny day.
Old Man: Yes, a sunny day with cloudy periods.
Old Woman: It was the sunniest day of winter.
Old Man: I think the phone should stay.
Old Woman: Perhaps the telephone company have lost it.
Old Man: Lose a telephone?
Old Woman: They do have a lot of telephones.
Old Man: They never lose one.
Old Woman: They have lost this one.
Old Man: That is true.
Old Woman: We've never used it.
Old Man: We could . . . Dear, (becoming excited) we could make a call on the telephone! Right now!
Old Woman: Well, who are we going to call?
Old Man: Anyone!
Old Woman: Who?
Old Man: Well there . . . no.
Old Woman: Who?
Old Man: He passed away a while back.
Old Woman: A long while back.
Old Man: It seems like yesterday.
Old Woman: Yes, — but it was really a blessing.
Old Man: He could have been my closest friend.
Old Woman: He suffered so much. It was, after all, better that he went.
Old Man: He might still be suffering today.
Old Woman: If he hadn't died. (Pause, depression)

Old Man: There is no one else to call.
 Old Woman: Yes, there is.
 Old Man: There is?
 Old Woman: The telephone company.
 Old Man: But why?
 Old Woman: To tell them about the phone they have forgotten.
 Old Man: Telephones are not forgotten.
 Old Woman: We have one, haven't we.
 Old Man: If we call them, they'll know.
 Old Woman: Yes, they will.
 Old Man: And we will not have a lost telephone.
 Old Woman: Exactly.
 Old Man: Dear, we won't *have* a telephone anymore.
 Old Woman: Did I say that?
 Old Man: No, I thought it.
 Old Woman: Why?
 Old Man: They'll come and take it away from us.
 Old Woman: That is possible.
 Old Man: It is likely.
 Old Woman: It is possible.
 Old Man: It is possible.
 Old Woman: We owe it to the telephone company.
 Old Man: No, please, no.
 Old Woman: I don't suppose it is honest. Is it honest to keep a lost telephone?
 Old Man: We don't know how it got here.
 Old Woman: I don't feel right about not letting the company know.
 Old Man: Who put it here?
 Old Woman: The company would know.
 Old Man: Why don't you want me to have a telephone?
 Old Woman: They might not take it out.
 Old Man: They would. I would if I were a telephone company.
 Old Woman: If you were a telephone company you wouldn't be here.
 Old Man: I just want . . . I would like . . . I wish that I could . . .
 May we keep the telephone?
 (Letters slip through the door)
 Old Woman: The mail has come.
 Old Man: (To himself) I wish we could keep the telephone.
 Old Woman: The mail. (She is suddenly gleeful).
 Old Man: Is there anything for me?
 Old Woman: It's all for you.
 Old Man: It's always for me.
 Old Woman: That is because you are so important. You are an important person.
 Old Man: Thank you.
 Old Woman: Three letters and a postcard. None of them are bills.
 Old Man: No bills?

Old Woman: That's what I said.
Old Man: Not even a telephone bill?
Old Woman: We never get telephone bills.
Old Man: You'd think we'd get bills.
Old Woman: Not for a lost telephone. Aren't you going to open your mail?
Old Man: Is it the same as usual?
Old Woman: How do you mean? As usual.
Old Man: Did you send me these letters?
Old Woman: That would be silly.
Old Man: You've done it before. Have they got anything written on them?
Old Woman: You would have to open them.
Old Man: They *could* be different.
Old Woman: Would I keep on joking you?
Old Man: Yes.
Old Woman: What would be the point . . .
Old Man: It could be different.
Old Woman: Of course, — here open them.
Old Man: It would be exciting if it were different.
Old Woman: Wouldn't it?
Old Man: Just think!
Old Woman: Just think.
Old Man: Somebody real writing to me.
Old Woman: Yes, — somebody real, not just me.
Old Man: I would be very happy.
Old Woman: Very happy indeed. (Hands him the letters).
Old Man: Three letters, all addressed to me.
Old Woman: And a postcard.
Old Man: Where is it?
Old Woman: Desert at the end.
Old Man: I think the writing is different.
Old Woman: Very different.
Old Man: They must be from somebody else. Isn't it wonderful. Somebody is still interested enough to send us letters.
Old Woman: Wonderful. Use the letter opener.
Old Man: Letter opener?
Old Woman: (Searching for it) The one we got yesterday.
Old Man: From the man at the door.
Old Woman: The man who kept saying, "Are you saved, Brother?"
Old Man: Was he a Jehovah's Witness?
Old Woman: No, just a tramp. (Finds the instrument. It is large and in the shape of a cross.) Here, open your letters.
Old Man: That's odd.
Old Woman: What?
Old Man: I didn't think it was a letter opener. I thought it might be for something else.

Old Woman: Nonsense. It's a letter opener. Use it, use it!

Old Man: Ah, yes, the letters. Are you ready?

Old Woman: I'm ready.

Old Man: (Opening the envelope) It works. It is a letter opener!

Old Woman: Of course.

Old Man: (Opening the second and third) It's very sharp, very quick!

Old Woman: Hurry, look at the letters. (Begins to cackle).

Old Man: The letters, — (unfolding them quickly) Nothing . . . it has nothing on it.

Old Woman: What's on the other one . . . the last one?

Old Man: Nothing.

Old Woman: But here is the postcard!

Old Man: The same. You told me . . .

Old Woman: No, I told you nothing.

Old Man: I thought they were from somebody.

Old Woman: They were! They were from me.

Old Man: Why?

Old Woman: You need adventure in your life.

Old Man: I don't need that kind of adventure.

Old Woman: You always wanted to be in the middle of exciting things.

Old Man: I don't need that kind of adventure! You have sent me blank letters every week for two years.

Old Woman: It's been the most exciting thing of the week.

Old Man: I don't think so.

Old Woman: What is it you are trying to tell me?

Old Man: I am simply saying . . . (pause).

Old Woman: What is it?

Old Man: I am . . .

Old Woman: Yes? You are . . .

Old Man: Trying to say that I just don't . . . I like fun, yes, to have a good time. I like that. But it is sometimes better if, — I mean, after two years, — I have some, — after after all, I am only human.

Old Woman: You know what you are saying?

Old Man: Yes, I think so. What I . . .

Old Woman: You are saying that you have no appreciation.

Old Man: No!

Old Woman: You are saying that you have no gratitude.

Old Man: No!

Old Woman: You are saying that after all these years . . .

Old Man: I am saying nothing of the . . .

Old Woman: Let me finish. You are really telling me that you prefer just to exist, quite apart from all I try to do for you.

Old Man: That is not . . .

Old Woman: If I didn't take care of you, where would you be? . . .

Old Man: No where. I know . . .

Old Woman: I have given myself to you.

Old Man: I know.

Old Woman: Unceasingly.

Old Man: Always.

Old Woman: Then how dare you! How dare you . . .
(Phone rings — The two stare at it blankly as it continues to ring)

Old Woman: It is the telephone.

Old Man: It is ringing. (Rings on)

Old Man: You see? It is ringing!

Old Woman: Well? Answer it.

Old Man: Answer it?

Old Woman: Answer the telephone.

Old Man: Yes . . . I will . . . Do you think I should? It might not be for us.

Old Woman: (Angrily) Who else?

Old Man: I don't know. It might be the wrong number. It might be the phone company.

Old Woman: You'd better answer.

Old Man: I will answer. Isn't this exciting? It could be anybody.

Old Woman: Anybody? Wait!

Old Man: Eh?

Old Woman: No. I had better.

Old Man: Would you?

Old Woman: Yes, I'll do it. (She takes the receiver) Yes? . . . (She frowns) Who is this? . . . Here . . . yes. Who is speaking, please? (To Old Man) It's for you.

Old Man: What?

Old Woman: For you, for you.

Old Man: No! . . . Hello. Yes? . . . yes, that's me! (Aside to Old Woman) Yes, it is for me! (Phone) What can I . . . no, I didn't know . . . Is it? . . . And you want me? . . . But I haven't, but I haven't been to one for a long ti . . . you know that? Oh (Aside to Old Woman) They know that! (Phone) . . . I'm afraid I'm not much good at an affair like that . . . (Aside) They know that too! . . . (To Old Woman) Somebody's invited me to a party.

Old Woman: Invited you!

Old Man: To a party!

Old Woman: Who is inviting you to a party?

Old Man: It's been a long time since anyone invited me to a party.

Old Woman: You're keeping them waiting. Tell him he's got the wrong person.

Old Man: I remember the first party I ever was invited to.

Old Woman: Hang up.

Old Man: It was a birthday party.

Old Woman: Cover the mouthpiece.

Old Man: It wasn't my birthday party . . . or was it? At any rate . . .

Old Woman: Hang up!

Old Man: What?

Old Woman: The phone.

Old Man: Oh, yes. (He almost hangs up. Gazes at the receiver and absent mindedly talks on.) I don't think I have had an invitation since.

Old Woman: You have had many. You have just forgotten.

Old Man: No, I haven't. I don't think I have. Not one.

Old Woman: You are pathetic. Put down the phone. } Together

Old Man: I remember that first party, very well }

Old Woman: Put down the phone.

Old Man: I don't think I was seven years old.

Old Woman: Only seven? (Humouring him, anxiously)

Old Man: Not quite.

Old Woman: I wasn't much older.

Old Man: (Surprised) You were older?

Old Woman: Don't you remember?

Old Man: I remember what you were wearing.

Old Woman: No.

Old Man: Yes. A crown made out of tinsel, just like I had. A big lady met me at the door.

Old Woman: Hello, little boy, what is your name?

Old Man: She put the crown on my head, and gave me a toy trumpet. I thought I was important.

Old Woman: I saw you march into the playroom.

Old Man: I wasn't the only king. Everybody else was a majesty too. I sat in a corner and blew my trumpet until it got soggy.

Old Woman: I saw you. Sad, all by yourself.

Old Man: That's when I met you.

Old Woman: I left my friends playing their games.

Old Man: I sat there, just like this, and I saw you coming across the room. See, I remember.

Old Woman: Looked so unhappy. (Advancing towards him) I knew I could be your friend.

Old Man: Hello.

Old Woman: I like you.

Old Man: What?

Old Woman: I like you. Why aren't you happy?

Old Man: I told you I didn't know, didn't I.

Old Woman: You did.

Old Man: What's your name?

Old Woman: Then I told you.
Old Man: I think you did. I can't quite remember what you said.
Old Woman: It doesn't matter.
Old Man: Perhaps it doesn't.
Old Woman: And we have been together ever since.
Old Man: That is very odd. I can't remember.
Old Woman: And it has been grand!
Old Man: Why were you so, — why did you choose me?
Old Woman: You don't need to remember anything. The important thing is that we found one another.
Old Man: Yes, that is the important thing. I never went to another party. I don't think anybody ever invited me.
Old Woman: We have had our own party.
Old Man: It has been all these years, — a sort of a party. But still, — what happened then?
Old Woman: When?
Old Man: When I asked you who you were.
Old Woman: That was long ago. How can I remember.
Old Man: You said I could not understand.
Old Woman: We were only seven years old.
Old Man: Was it later?
Old Woman: What?
Old Man: When I wanted to go mountain climbing.
Old Woman: Of course you couldn't understand!
Old Man: I wanted to. But I gave up. I think I gave in.
Old Woman: You are going to upset yourself.
Old Man: And now somebody has given me an invitation.
Old Woman: Already you are talking nonsense.
Old Man: You have been my own all these years.
Old Woman: I shall always be. What do you need with another party?
Old Man: I have to think about this very carefully. They may think I am the very person to have at their party. I thought I could go mountain climbing at one time.
Old Woman: This has nothing to do with the invitation!
(Growing more and more agitated).
Old Man: I thought it had.
Old Woman: You were sixty-six years old at the time.
Old Man: There are clouds at the top of mountains.
Old Woman: There are clouds in your head.
Old Man: It might not have been a high mountain.
Old Woman: I think it is time you went to bed.
Old Man: It is still mid afternoon.
Old Woman: It's night time:
Old Man: Don't try to fool me. Two things I know. It is three o'clock in the afternoon and I wanted to go mountain climbing.

Old Woman: You are being very, very stupid.
Old Man: Please help me, I become very confused.
Old Woman: I know. It's so difficult when one has so many thoughts.
Don't worry. Forget all about mountain climbing.
Old Man: Mountain climbing! That may have been my biggest choice.
Old Woman: That's right. Keep on. Don't say I didn't warn you.
Old Man: I might have even found the top of some mountain.
Old Woman: All by yourself?
Old Man: I would not have gone mountain climbing alone.
Old Woman: You would have left me. I had no interest in mountain climbing. I was worried for you. You were already a frail man.
Old Man: That is true. I knew you were right, I never thought about mountain climbing again, until just now.
Old Woman: And you will never have to think about it again.
Old Man: Why? Why . . . who are you?
Old Woman: You are an old, old man!
Old Man: Who are you?
Old Woman: Are you sure you know what you are saying?
Old Man: (Struggling) I have known who you are.
Old Woman: You are going mad. (She retreats from the old man towards the letter opener).
Old Man: And I think I know now.
Old Woman: Stop it! Stop this insanity!
Old Man: You have been with me all my life.
Old Woman: I'm warning you.
Old Man: All my li . . .
Old Woman: Don't go any further.
Old Man: All my . . . all my . . . (He understands)
Old Woman: Enough!
Old Man: Yes.
Old Woman: You know.
Old Man: I know. (She stabs him with the letter opener).
Old Man: No!
Old Woman: There, now you old fool, — see where you've gotten. (She laughs; then she stops as the old man struggles to the phone). What are you doing? Don't go to that phone. You won't get any help there.
Old Man: (Reaching the phone) I accept the . . .
Old Woman: No!
Old Man: Invitation.
(He falls to the floor. The Old Woman looks on helplessly).

(curtain falls)

FINIS

REX DEVERELL



