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Front Cover: Dream 1 by Lorraine M. Goldych
Back Cover: Untitled Photo by Nancy Fire

GREAT LAKE REVIEW
Fall 1982
Volume XV

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Lot's Wife

Fire fell like rain falling,
blasted down buildings, salted
stables and stores with seasonings of flame
and left nothing but a great charred plain
and a woman frozen to a pillar of salt,
her face ablaze,
her lips half parted to speak a word
of what she saw.

She thought of jewels lying coiled in a case,
a polished brooch on a chiffonier,
a gown, a hose and jewelled chain.
She watched briefly as the flames shot higher,
as barns and brothels fell
and saw a great writhing
as though a serpent turned and devoured itself,
and in that moment thought that all flesh
lived on the brink of fire,
and that fire preyed on fleshly ways,
on the wedding bed and supper table,
on field and feast and cradle
and saw in a handshake, a bitter grip,
saw man and beast toil and trouble themselves
with waking, eating, sleeping, saw them flame
and sputter out, and saw in fire
the restless grave, and, gaunt, dazed,
thought to warn them all,
and nearly turning, froze.

Jonathan Hazelton
Dark Thoughts of an Old Sundial

"I count only the hours that are bright,"* 
And I had counted on more bright hours,
But now I stand under an upstart tree,
The sun's face cut off from mine by leaves.
In younger days, I would turn with delight,
My face shining with character. I'm worn
out now by years, and no one comes to look.
I wonder what they have up their sleeves.
It's strange that none have noticed my mooning
here, although I'll grant there's little to see:
A tree with a lot of gall, and my stone
self that the kind rain washes and relieves.
But my gnomon's bent my judgement's not right,
And shadow has fallen over me.

*an old sundial inscription

Steven Patrick Cornish

Ernie

Walking through the city on my way to the office one morning, I noticed that
Ernie's crates were not set up as they usually were in the alley between Raphael's
Jeweler's and Stokely's Fine Cigars. I stopped in front of the empty alley and
wondered what had happened to him.

Ernie had a small business, selling apples, oranges, and bananas out of wooden
crates. Early every morning he went to the market and wheeled the fruit back in a
hand truck. He sat on an empty crate and deposited the money he received in a
cigar box by his worn-out shoes. He sold his fruit for less than the groceries did
and many people bought from him: businessmen and secretaries on their
lunchbreaks, housewives doing the weekly shopping, young travelers, and
schoolchildren eagerly clutching their pennies and dimes. He was known to
barter only with children, often selling an orange for a nickel, less than he had
paid.

Ernie was about sixty years old. He had a grey scraggly beard, yellowed teeth,
a bulbous nose, matted grey hair hanging over his ears, and a bald spot shining
like a beacon on top of his head. For as long as I can remember, he had sold fruit
there in that narrow alley year-around, rain, sleet, or sun. In the winter he
huddled over a tin trash-barrel, feeding a fire with wood and cardboard from his
empty crates and boxes. I suppose it was as good a place as any for him to be,
because Ernie had no home. Despite this, he was a jolly man and he loved
children. They swarmed around him, often neglecting to go to school so they
could hear his stories.

When I heard the rattling of metal shades being lifted by the area storekeepers,
I knew I had better hurry on to work. I glanced once more at the empty alley and
strolled through the bustling crowd toward my own daily grind. I thought of
Ernie sitting on his crate and watching the hundreds of pedestrians passing him
during the morning and evening rush hours. On the city streets, he had been as
reliable as a landmark.

He always smiled and said, "Good morning," to anyone who slowed down
long enough to see his ripe yellow bananas and shiny apples and oranges. "Fine
fruit here, just came in this morning," he would say. Ernie had no scale, so he
sold his fruit by the piece or by the dozen. His heavily calloused hands carefully
picked up each piece and placed it in a wrinkled brown bag for his customers. He
gave them a discount if they brought in their own bags, for he had few.

I walked along and wondered if Ernie had died or just retired.

In my office I glanced over some recent memos and shuffled through a stack of
reports. Then I sat back in my chair, put my feet on the desk top, and
remembered an incident when I was twelve years old. It had been a hot July
afternoon. My friend, Jules, and I were bored with midsummer and looking for
something to do. We had just bought some juicy apples from Ernie and were
walking away when Jules said, "Let's follow Ernie when he leaves the alley."

It was better than doing nothing, so we waited for 6:00 p.m. when Ernie broke
up the empty crates and threw the boards by his fire-barrel. He lifted the leftover
crate of fruit on his hand-truck and wheeled it down the street. We followed a
good distance behind.

"I hope he doesn't live too far away," I murmured to Jules. "My mom will kill
me if I'm really late for dinner."

"Don't worry about it. We're on an important mission."
Ernie walked down Main St. for a long way, then turned right toward the water. He stopped at a liquor store an came out with two gallon jugs of wine. He carefully moved the fruit aside and placed the jugs in the bottom of the crate. He grinned and moved on, entering a slum section of the city. The tenement walls were peeling paint, and windows were broken and spider-webbed. Glass and trash lay in the streets. Skinny cats slunk under porches and looked through spilled trash. Black and Chicano kids hung out on their sidewalks and stared at us as we passed. Occasionally Ernie tossed an orange to them. A black boy our age yelled out, "Honkies, go home, this ain't your playground!"

I turned to Jules and whispered, "Maybe we should turn back."

"Aw, watcha worried about? Don't forget — we're on a secret mission."

Ernie turned again, passing some corner trashdumps and warehouses. The odor of polluted water wafted toward us. He had no real shelter from the cold and no toilet.

We saw him go around a scapyard and head across a vacant lot, littered with rubble, by the river. The hand-truck bounced around behind him and every large bump bounced an apple out. Not once did Ernie turn around. He reached the river's edge and walked under the highway overpass. We hid behind a large concrete block twenty yards from the bridge and watched.

Ernie sat down on a wood crate and stared at the moving water. Gulls hovered over the water and squawked on the other side. Ernie reached into the pocket of his grimy grey coat and pulled a small bottle. He slowly twisted the cap off and began drinking the dark wine. When he finished the bottle, he tossed it into the sluggish brown water and watched it float away. Then he disappeared around the far side of the bridge abutment.

"Come on, let's get closer!" Jules and I ran towards the bridge. We reached it over the water and squawked on the other side. Ernie reached into the pocket of his grimy grey coat and pulled a small bottle. He slowly twisted the cap off and began drinking the dark wine. When he finished the bottle, he tossed it into the sluggish brown water and watched it float away. Then he disappeared around the far side of the bridge abutment.

"Come on, let's get closer!" Jules and I ran towards the bridge. We reached it and leaned against it, peering around the corner to where Ernie had been sitting. A fire-barrel was set in front of layers of cardboard lying on the ground. This must be his bed, I thought. A large piece of sheet metal stood on its side, providing a windbreak. The noise of the highway rumbled down through the concrete. I felt sorry for Ernie. I was surprised he could sleep with all that noise. He had no real shelter from the cold and no toilet.

He reappeared with another bum beside him, lanky with a mop of brown hair hanging over his eyes. Stubble covered his face and a few teeth were missing. Ernie said to him, "Sure was a fine day — this heat makes 'em buy fruit like crazy."

Jules pointed to the jug and asked, "Hey, how about giving us some of that stuff?"

"No way, sonny. You're too young to drink. Have an orange instead."

"Aw, I don't want no orange," Jules complained.

"Well, I'm not turnin ya into a drunk. Ernie frowned and said, "I'm one, but I don't know nothin' else."

"Hullo boys, what's up?" a voice bellowed from the vacant lot. We turned to see two more men coming over. They spotted Jules and me. The fat man grumbled, "Who are they, runaways?"

"No, just curious kids, wondrin' what we do," Ernie told him, "Why, drink wine a course!" the fat man shouted at us. They gathered around and drank the jug, reveling in the July twilight by the dirty river, telling jokes and laughing loudly. Soon the first jug floated down the river and the second one was opened. I nudged Jules in the side and said, "Hey, we better be going."

"I guess so," he replied.

"We've got to go now," I told Ernie.

"Thanks for comin' by, but don't tell yer folks. They wouldn't understand."


"I'll see ya boys tomorra, have fun," Ernie said. His friends shouted goodbyes as we left.

On the way home through the darkening tenement streets I said, "At least they're having a good time."

Jules eyed me suspiciously. "Maybe so, but I sure wouldn't want to live like that."

I had been scolded when I got home, but kept my mouth shut.

I looked up and noticed the clock on the wall. I walked out of the office and told my secretary, "I'm taking the afternoon off. I have some things to take care of."

"O.K. See you tomorrow."

I left the building and passed Ernie's empty alley space, then stopped in the nearest liquor store before walking in the direction of the dirty river.
The Internal Debate

The dreamer says, "Let your imagination flow like a river running its banks. The chatter and clamor is the sound of a brook rushing over rocks; a pause in a sentence is the whisper of wind. On the breeze the children's songs are heard harmoniously."

The intruder says, "Listen to reality. The children's songs are out of key. The trees are full of leaves and brown bark. Come to the reality of people being born every day and people dying."

The dreamer's reply, "See the interwoven images: The fire that burns in the fireplace becomes a great Bengal Tiger, ready to strike with its giant claws. It leaps out, not quite reaching you. The paw swats at the cage door."

The other replies, "People are sometimes full of open warmth and closed up anger. They'll talk about you behind your back. They'll be as sweet as peach melba to your face."

Judith Phillips

Camelot

A little boy and girl played in the sand
Digging a castle and moat where an armored knight
Saved a fair maiden from the dragon's bite
And jousted with a chivalrousness grand.
The boy was Arthur, Excalibur in hand.
The girl was Guinevere, whose main delight
Was Sir Launcelot in his armor bright.
King and Queen ruled the beach with a tanned command.
But the tide came and washed the castle away,
Eroding the beach where other children play,
Leaving sandy lumps where Camelot stood.
A man and woman stood on the beach one day
Wondering when Arthur and Guinevere turned gray
And when they'd regain Camelot -- if they could.

Christine Sweeney
To Frances and Bismarck, With Love

Bismarck met Frances that afternoon and asked her to marry him. She said yes. He was glad. They walked in the park hand in hand, like a girl and boy in love.

Frances was twenty-four but looked eighteen. Her hair and eyes are brown, her face bare without make-up. When Frances smiled she looked sad. When she listened she dreamed and when she dreamed she looked thoughtful.

Bismarck talked. Frances looked thoughtful. Bismarck was twenty-nine, almost thirty. "Marry now," his mother warned, "marrying at thirty looks dirty."

They paused by a fountain with water shooting up and falling down into the center. Bismarck wanted to kiss Frances. He did not. Bismarck wanted to love Frances but there was no exchange of love. Did Frances love him, Bismarck wondered. Bismarck did not ask. Frances did not answer.

The virgin was tired of being a virgin, the bachelor sick of giggly girls. Frances took off her shoes and waded her toes through the water. Bismarck sat next to Frances. He did not wade his feet with Frances. He brushed his straight brown hair with his fingers. His green eyes were calm.

Frances was slender. Bismarck was slim. They were both lonely. They both leaned backwards and smiled at each other.

Bismarck had not given Frances a ring. Perhaps he had not asked me, Frances worried. Perhaps she will forget I asked, Bismarck thought. Bismarck and Frances thought and forgot. Maybe they will both go their separate ways after all they both thought.

Bismarck decided to tell his mother first. She will be relieved. Mother Bismarck had been praying, she let Bismarck know. Then there were the fellows at work. They will shake his hand and wink at the office girls. The office girls will be excited because it was the thing to do.

Frances will tell her grandmother. Grandma will nap but Frances will tell grandma over again and again so grandma will not forget so often. Frances was not close to her boss nor with anyone at work. Who will give her away? Did she have any relatives? I will ask grandma Frances decided. Yes, she will ask grandma again and again. Something will come up, something always does.

Frances dreamed she was Mrs. Bismarck. She will be Mrs. Bismarck until she can remember Bismarck’s last name. Things will work out for themselves. She will get used to him, he to her.

Bismarck was a head taller than Frances. He lit a cigarette and blew rings of smoke for Frances to see. They were cooled by the mist of the fountain. They were both quiet. It will be easy. If they are both quiet, they will live in peace.

by Maria Sau Kuen Chan
A Class Date

I feast on well-prepared hors d'oeuvres,
The kind this type of gathering serves;
I'm practically all thumbs and nerves --
I'm not the date a queen deserves.

Her strut's a graceful, gallant glide;
The air around her's rarefied.
With handsome escorts by her side,
She takes the stairs in breathless stride.

The orchestra begins to play
A melody, which fades to grey
As she stops and turns and heads my way --
I'm at a loss for things to say.

I'm not sure where or how to stand,
Till she smiles and takes my hand.
...And the orchestra is just a band;
The ball's a school dance--nothing grand,
And my queen's a common girl, alas,
Becky Babish--English class.

Bill De Mott

Something in Common

I take a midnight bus ride:
rigid plastic seats
black & blue with graffiti
the silence
is too loud
faces--
black & white
common
indifferent
tired as the driver
on the endless bumps & turns
in the road . . . .
sleep awaits my nodding head
and worn body--
softness
no tears or sweat
just fantasy

& expression

Maxine S. Petry
The Beggar

Something moves by the column. It
Is the Beggar; he sits, smiling,
Counting his coins in dark corners.

His smile is secret; the grey
Skin of his forearms and face will move at
The sound of footsteps; his scars
Are old, the marks of trade.

Inside, the Singer has stopped. The Beggar
Knows the doors will open, and he
Will catch:
Coins like burnt moons;
A glimpse of silk.

The Singer will pass by, in cloth
As cold as silver, and she
Will keep her songs. He
Will keep his moans when she has gone.

The Beggar
Knows his songs are older;
He will watch her come again
With eyes that are the night.

El Mandigo

Algo se mueve por la columna, Es
El Mendigo; se sienta, sonriendo.
Contando sus monedas en esquinas oscuras.

Su sonrisa es secreta; la piel
Gris de sus brazos y cara se moverá al
Sonido de pisadas; sus cicatrices
Son viejas, las marcas de profesión.

Adentro, la Cantante se ha detenido. El Mendigo
Sabe que las puertas se abrirán, y el
Obtendrá:
Monedas como lunas quemadas;
Un vistazo de seda.

La Cantante pasará, en tela
Fria como la plata, y ella
Se quedará con sus canciones. El
Se quedará con sus gemidos cuando ella
Se ha ido. El Mendigo
Sabe -
El tiene las canciones mas antiguas;
Cuando ella venga otra vez, el verá
Con ojos que son de noche.

Melora Turco

The Lycanthrope

The one who is bitten by a wolf,
as the legends say, becomes a wolf.
The blossoming Wolfbane
and the full moon mark his coming
and burning out of the soul,
towards the chest, the pentagram;
the devil's star, glows like an ember.
We are familiar with the results
of such a legend: ransacked bodies
torn apart like bags of rubbish,
a beautiful woman wandering
through the washed-out dark.
We have seen, through the old leaves
of leather-bound books
and the twilight screams of TVs,
how the man who wasn't looking for evil
found it, how the fur materialized
like a vision, how the lips furled back
and hooked teeth grew.
But commercials brought time-outs
to our terrors and the TVs distanced
themselves with tubes of toothpaste,
padded bras and brand name girdles
that could be bought most anyplace.

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Popcorn and butter ground the sick taste
out of our mouths and we washed
the terror down with Pepsis, Cokes
and Dr. Peppers. In the snug consolation
of our own homes, we took heart
in the old adage that the hero
always wins and that sooner or later
the wild beast would be brought down,
that somewhere a priest had found
the remedy to terror, made silver
bullets, genuflected, prayed and blessed
the bullets and that a steady hand
would rise with a gun, take aim and send
the gleaming bit of heaven home.

And true to form we were not disappointed;
the wild thing clutched its chest
and toppled to the ground, and the body,
unhoused of its evil, faded back, by stages,
to the image of a common man. We rose
relieved for bed and flicked off
the TVs, thrilled to encounter,
however briefly, a terror and live,
but thinking back to that old fear of evil
rising from the darkness of men's hearts,
and knowing now what the tellers
of legends knew, might wish again
for so small a terror and one
that can be easily switched off.

Jonathan Hazelton
Dear Mr. Saite:

On January 8th, of this year, our client, Mr. Whelming, who, following extensive research in regard to the inherent quality of the various models available, went to your branch outlet, here in Riverside. In order to confirm or admonish his favorable attitude and opinion, the result of his research, of your product: your vacuum cleaner; your most recently developed piece of machinery. Mr. Whelming described to me the communication, the conversation, involved in and that which transpired at the time, at your outlet branch store, with a sales representative; your representative; representing your product; your most recently developed product; your most recent break-through in the ever so dynamic and competitive field of vacuum cleaner production. Production that involved the most brilliant, most comprehensive, most future conscious oriented design ever conceived of in the manufacturing of a vacuum cleaner.

It is our understanding that your product is so incredibly advanced that it requisites a perceptive and bright individual, such as my client, to even possibly be capable of comprehending and appreciating such uniqueness and
such utter required intellect necessary to produce a product such as your
model X924, commonly referred to, in your ad mediums, as the B-9, more
commonly portrayed and depicted as the model called "The Brain."

The aforementioned conversation, before tangential clarification was
deeded necessary for your understanding and desired empathy, that ensued
between your sales representative and our client, prior to my client's pur-
chase, which, indeed and of course, led to the purchase of your vacuum
cleaner, went as follows:

Sales Rep: Oh yes sir, our cleaner model, "The Brain" is unquestion-
ably the most advanced product ever conceived of.

Mr. Whelming: What appealed to me in particular was the fact that your
vacuum cleaner is, supposedly, capable of reaching every,
to quote your ads, "eency, beency bit of dust and dirt."

Sales Rep: That's true. All one needs to do is place the vacuum in the
center of the room, turn the cleaner's switch to the on
position, and every minute detail, excuse me, every min-
ute particle of dust and dirt will be absorbed by our
incredible machine.

Mr. Whelming: What about dust in corners? I hate moving furniture.

Sales Rep: No problem.

Mr. Whelming: What about the dirt on top of things? I hate having to
dust.

Sales Rep: No problem.

Mr. Whelming: What about its ability to get underneath things? I hate
having to move rugs and pull up carpeting.

Sales Rep: No problem.

Mr. Whelming: It is my understanding then, that your product is so
thorough, so comprehensive, and so incredibly ept, that I
will absorb, or rather, excuse me, the cleaner will absorb
all elements surrounding it.

Sales Rep: Yes sir. Effort will only be required to empty the bag.

Mr. Whelming proceeded to purchase the vacuum cleaner. My client, then
returned to his residence, that same day, with your product, with the sincere,
ambitious, and anticipatory intention and expectation of cleaning his
apartment.

The problem lies herein: We are not concerned with the fact that your
product may be, or might have been, defective, because, on the contrary, your
product is not defective, but rather, I'm afraid to inform you, unfortunately,
especially considering the fact that the nature of the problem most usually lies
in the fact that a (or the) product is defective, but, as said or previously
established, your product is not defective; your product is apparently, I
should say, most evidently, most clearly much too and overwhelmingly much
too, too EFFECTIVE.

This is what took place: On January 8th, the same above said day and date, my
client, Mr. Whelming, went to his apartment, plugged it in, the cleaner that
is, left the room for the purpose of watching his favorite television show, a
game show, enjoyed the show, returned to the room where the cleaner was
operating and became astonished and bereaved, if not embarrassed and
chagrined, to find, locate, and discover that the following had, somehow,
incredible as it may seem, disappeared from my client's apartment:

(1) All of Mr. Whelming's antique books, an estimated two-hundred-
fifty, were no longer on the shelves that held them.
(2) A dining room table, a couch, a stereo and stand, and two end
tables had disappeared.
(3) Twenty-five tropical fish, the water that sustained them, and the
tank that contained them were no longer in the room.
(4) The phone, two lamps, three cats, and one Aunt Verne were, as
well, missing from the room.

I'm afraid further complications arose when my client, who at the time was
most understandably and justifiably panic stricken, ran towards the cleaner in
order to, or rather in attempt to, shut it off in order to terminate the cleaner's
activities. In his attempt the following occurred: Mr. Whelming's left leg was
sucked into and through the vacuum tube, where it was then mauled and
deposited into the plastic transparent receptive cleaner bag. As if this wasn't
enough of a traumatic experience, lying in shock as he watched his shredded
leg mingle with the dust and dirt in the bag, Mr. Whelming, attempting to roll over, get up, and run like hell, was further attacked when the nozzle, or vacuum hose, crawled up and sucked its way to my client's mouth causing my client to actually and personally witness the following: My client's liver, pancreas, intestines, and other vital organs described, and to be referred to in future correspondence as this poor individual's guts, were, in addition to everything else, drawn into and through the vacuum cleaner hose.

Once again, while experiencing the epitome of physical and emotional discomfort, my client utilized everything in his capacity to regain consciousness in order to attempt to shut off your cleaner model X924, commonly and by consensus referred to, as well as pictured as, "The Brain." At this point the nozzle, the receptive part of the cleaner, withdrew its hold upon my client's mouth and slowly made its way in a direction downward, towards the floor, painfully extracting my client's chest hairs on the way, and terminating its meandering and maneuvering at a location on the body previously established and designated as the groin, the crotch, the penis or "nest" area, found between the very upper portions of the legs, which of course, at this point, my client no longer possessed.

Please be advised that this office, in behalf of Mr. Whelming, is filing suit against you, against your cleaner model X924, "The Brain," in and for the sum of $10,000,000. for physical and punitive damages sustained. Please be further advised that unless we hear from you within three days upon receipt of this letter, for the purpose of pre-trial settlement, we will proceed with the filing of the summons and complaint in the Riverside Superior Court.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,
SADDO, MASLOW & CHISZM

By: Michael B. Maslow, Atty

MBM/phm

P.S. We would highly recommend the immediate termination of the production and sales of your vacuum cleaner model X924. (Unless, of course, modification could result in a less thorough, less comprehensive, and more selective vacuum system.)
Midnight Express

A rabbit,  
trying to get to the other side,  
apauses to talk to the grill of  
an oncoming VW.

Kurt Knight

Epitaph For A River

Cousin Cye and I, and friends  
Followed Bronx River to where it ends,  
Or at least to where the viewer  
Sees less river and more sewer.

Monique Pauling

The heat came up in waves  
From the pavement,  
But there were ball players  
And girl watchers in the park.  
No one moved at first,  
But a crowd gathered  
Farther up the block,  
And two men ran  
Through the park with a gun.  
The man had fallen on his bike,  
And lay in a driveway  
Holding his stomach,  
Eyes squeezed shut,  
Wringing, moaning,  
Blood seeped into his clothes  
And ran down the slope;  
A boy elbowed his way  
Through the crowd,  
Wrestled the bike from the grip  
Of the man's legs,  
Wheeled it away.  
The crowd drifted away.  
The blood dried on the hot cement.  
The ambulance came, screaming.

Monique Pauling
The Tapestry

The rain is still coming down. It has been all afternoon and now it is well into evening, promising a thick foggy night. Lydia has been keeping watch by the window most of the day. It is difficult for her to see anything now, but still she watches.

Clarissa is working the tapestry, one meticulous stitch after another. Her legs and the floor around her are draped with huge unfinished tapestry, colours that drip and pool from her small, fastidious hands.

Why don't you come now and sit down, Lydia? Clarissa rarely looks up from the tapestry. How can you see anymore? There is such a guardedness in the way she pronounces "see", that Lydia flinches and turns around.

I wonder if he'll be able to get through. The rain's so much worse than it was this morning. Lydia turns back to the window and strains to see through the downpour. Her dress has faded violet flowers that have turned to white in places. It is very tight in the bust.

I hate it when it gets like this. Why on God's earth we ever moved way out here is beyond me. An erratic scraping of twigs against the eaves is the only response Lydia gets.

Anyway, I'm sure he'll be able to get through. Wasn't it like this one other time? Snowing, I think - - wasn't it snowing? But he still made it through. Lydia's talk is breathy and quick and she dances back and forth while she speaks. Not that I have any idea what I'll say to him when he gets here. She laughs. I always think of something though, don't I?

For a moment, the click of Clarissa's needle becomes audible above the pounding rain. Lydia takes a few distracted steps towards Clarissa and stops to consider the tapestry. How's it coming? She leans forward and pulls back a strand of Clarissa's long hair which hangs over her face and the tapestry. Clarissa shakes the hair back across her face. Okay, don't be so touchy. I wanted to look at the cloth, not at you. She wanders back to the window. Looks like it needs more green in that one spot anyway.

Lydia strikes a theatrical pose. This time next year I might be famous. Lydia Baker--soloist for the American Ballet Theatre. Well, I might. He even thinks so. She does a little twirl and her skirt flairs out around her. Remember when I used to take dance lessons? I was always better than anyone else in the class. They used to say I had real potential -- I could do great things if I just worked hard at it. She lifts one leg straight out behind her and pivots slowly on the other. There is a self-conscious grace to her movements. That was before anything happened to you, wasn't it? It must have been, because I had to stop classes and we moved here. I don't remember that very well, do you?

Do you remember, Clarissa?

Why don't you fix us some tea? Clarissa's voice is soft and expressionless. Some tea would be nice, don't you think?

Lydia pours the orange liquid into thin white cups. She works with two fingers, as though she fears burning herself or staining her hands. Do you want sugar? Her voice is sharper than usual and Clarissa does not answer.
Sugar, Clarissa--do you want sugar?

No Lydia.

Don't say I didn't ask then. It's not my fault, you know. I can hardly be my fault that you don't want any sugar. The rain is coming down harder than ever and a distant shock of thunder sends a shudder through the house. Lydia's eyes are wide and dark.

I still practice every day, don't I? Even if I can't take classes right now. I can still work out. He told me last time that I'm beautiful when I work out. But he does encourage me. He said he was sure I could fit right back in as soon as I feel ready. She stares out the window into the gray collage of movement.

God, I'm bored! How come you never talk to me? Not that I expect it after all this time. Are you almost finished with that? You know, I'm no art critic--but it seems to me you're doing that wrong. It looks all blotchy and funny. I just think maybe some butterflies or something might be nice. There's so many damn many flowers you can't tell which is which after awhile.

Lydia dances in front of the window and looks out, her arms extended upward in a pirouette. A faint reflection stares back at her in the dark glass and she smiles.

I wish he'd get here. I wish there was some way he could let us know whether or not he was coming. How did I let you talk me into living without a telephone? We haven't even got a telephone! What if something should happen to you? How could I take care of you then? How could I get any help? Lydia's voice is high-pitched and tremulous.

Nothing will go wrong, Lydia.

Again the click of Clarissa's needle can be heard above the wind and rain. Her black hair falls straight and dark about her face. Beside her, the tea has gotten cold.

Lydia begins to dance again--snatches from some classical ballet. With thin, muscular legs, she pushes herself through the improvised, memorized routine, then stops.

Last time he said I took good care of you. He said I should be proud of that. He said it wasn't everybody who'd stay way out here and take care of you the way I do. Look what I've given up for you--I could have had a brilliant career by now. I could have had a good man and a nice house. I'm not getting any younger, Clarissa. What do you think of that?

I appreciate all you've done.

When I was with him last time, it wasn't like this at all. Lydia's voice is very soft and she sways a little. It was sunny and warm and he took me for a long walk--up to the ridge that runs behind this house. Did you know there's a pond up there? There were all kinds of little birds dancing on top of it. It was the prettiest thing. He picked me a daisy and asked me why I didn't just come away with him right then. The sun was shining on his face--he was just beautiful. For a moment I didn't remember why I couldn't go with him. I almost said yes, you know that? Then I remembered you and the tapestry and I said I'd have to wait--that maybe next time it would be done. Lydia brushes her hands through her hair. She sighs. I don't know what to say to him anymore--questions and questions like I'm supposed to admit to something. But what can I admit to? All I want to do is dance.

Lydia takes a few high-kicking steps and begins to whirl around the room faster and faster, laughing. Clarissa looks up briefly. Look, Clarissa, this one's for you. Lydia shrieks with laughter, whirling faster. Get up and dance! Come on, get up and dance with me! She spins around Clarissa's chair and trips over the tapestry, collapsing to the floor. The room smells like tea and mildew.

Lydia, still breathless, fingers the tapestry. How come there's so much red in that one spot? Right there in that one spot you just did. Doesn't that look funny to you? I mean here's the whole rest of that part blue and green and then a big patch of red. Don't you think that's funny? Hadn't you better stop and look?--maybe that's not how it's supposed to be.

Clarissa keeps her eyes fixed on the tapestry. Her voice is steady and patient. That's how it's supposed to be.

There is a dusky silence in the room; the rain has finally let up but the wind is still furious. A light is on in one corner and the shadows are long and dark. Clarissa has to bend very close to the tapestry in order to see. Lydia is stroking the cloth thoughtfully.

I never did like too much red. There's just something wrong with so much of it in one place. It spoils things. Like with your face, Clarissa--just like your face. Lydia tips her head and looks up through Clarissa's hair, reaches up her hand to touch. Clarissa pulls back and turns her head. Lydia shudders.

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I don't think about it very often, at least I try not to, and it isn't quite so noticeable as it used to be. It may go away altogether in time. I asked him about that once, but he didn't answer. I think it will, though. It's not my fault, Clarissa--how could it possibly be? She leans back on her hands then jumps up and goes to the window.

Did I tell you about the dress I had? I dreamed you were pregnant and somehow it was my baby, but even in the dream it didn't make sense. I kept thinking--how can a woman get her own sister pregnant? And I told you I thought we should get rid of it but you said no because someone had to finish the tapestry. She shakes her head and laughs. Can you believe that? You've got me dreaming about that damn tapestry!

The rain has caused the window to fog over and Lydia traces patterns on it with her finger. Abstract curved and crossing lines become butterflies with huge round wings. She dances back and forth, painting winged creatures on the window, their feathery horns long and beat. The butterflies flock together and swarm across the glass. Lydia links wings and tails, horns and stick-like bodies one with another. Her arm works gracefully in wide arcs, covering the window with butterflies. For several concentrated moments she paints until until a final wing completely clears the window. Lydia looks out through the butterflies.

I remember how it happened, she begins slowly. You had asked me to pick you up from work one evening and a terrible storm was coming up. You know how I hate driving in a storm. I kept thinking--what if it gets so bad that I can't make it and she's stuck in the store all night? So I left right away to
get you. I was an hour early. Lydia stares out the window for several moments. I went in to find you -- I wanted you to come home with me right away -- but you weren't in your usual place. I asked one of the other girls where you were -- she said you'd gone in to the back, that you'd be out in a few minutes. It was ridiculous, I know, but you know how stores always bother me -- I didn't want to wait. I went into the back to get you and I found you. Lydia's voice rises. Do you remember what I saw? You in your red dress with all that thick black hair -- you standing in the dark corner with your arms around the man I loved. I couldn't think. I remember grabbing you and pulling you away -- out into my car. The rain was pouring down -- you screaming and you just stitching away -- trying to keep it from tearing. Well then it didn't! He'll be here soon and I'll explain how nothing is really my fault and he'll take me away from here.

Clarissa's voice is almost a whisper. The tapestry isn't finished yet.

Lydia turns, her eyebrows arched haughtily. What does it matter to me? I'll be famous by the time you finish that.

The tapestry has to be finished.

Lydia stands and the rain continues to patter. It has gotten colder in the small room.

Clarissa is still bent over the tapestry, seemingly oblivious to Lydia's chatter.

Red flowers form beneath her fingers.

It is silent. Lydia, seated on the floor with her knees drawn up against her chest, considers the window. It has begun to fog over again and the lines of her tracings faintly reappear. A hundred butterflies, with the rain beating behind them, seem to flutter against the window. Lydia stares at them, vaguely smiling.

I hope he'll be able to get through. The only things I enjoy anymore are his visits. At least he treats me like a person instead of a houseplant. She sighs and twists her body into a contorted position. He lets me tell him about the purpose I have in life. She moves through a complicated series of stretch exercises, then lies back on the floor, staring at the ceiling.

My purpose in life is to stop the pain in the world. That probably sounds ridiculous, doesn't it -- but I really think I've figured it out. It's all the screaming -- I can hear the screaming that's going on and on behind everything -- like God being born and dying and giving birth all in the same instant -- and my body is like an instrument -- a flute or something -- that God can scream through and that makes him feel better for awhile. That's all there really is, you know; that scream -- whether you hear it or you don't. And I hear it so loud sometimes I can't do anything but dance, then God stops hurting for awhile. It's the only thing I can do to keep it from driving me crazy. And I thought, maybe somehow, if people saw me or if I could teach them -- well, somehow -- they could learn how to stop it from driving them crazy too. She pauses with a wry smile. But you didn't know I had such an important mission.

Lydia draws herself upright. It's the same with you and that tapestry, isn't it? You probably hear it all the time and you keep pouring it into that tapestry. Don't you hear it, Clarissa? Lydia gets up and goes over to Clarissa, draping herself across the back of the chair. You must hear it better than any of us, don't you? It must be horrible, with your face like it is and all that terrible screaming. Horrible, horrible, isn't it? God looking down on you and screaming and screaming and you just stitching away -- trying to keep it from making you crazy. Lydia grabs Clarissa's face in both hands and forces it up towards her. Clarissa struggles to pull away but Lydia is unrelenting. At least let me look. I forget -- and I can't afford to forget. She stares at Clarissa's face until her own contorts with revulsion and she backs away. I'm sorry.

Lydia turns quickly back to the window and her voice resumes its nervous cheeriness. I wonder if he'll be able to get through. God, how the weather's turned! You'd hardly believe it was the same day it was this morning. She laughs. I can't think of what to say to him. I'd tell him he could take me back this time, except there's no way I could leave you up here all alone. He said I should be proud of how good I am to you. And the tapestry will be done soon and I can go. I'm young yet -- I can still wait.

She dances in front of the window, an abstract, distracted little dance. Do you want me to tell you about something, Clarissa? I'll tell you about one time when he took me into town. I wore my blue dress, do you remember the one? He told me I was beautiful and he gave me that fine silver chain. I wore it around for months, but then I lost it somehow. Don't mention it though, it's the only thing I have to show for all the things I have to show for. And I'm sorry.

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tapestry. Things are so much more beautiful when you're out in the sun. So much faster too. I bet you'd finish it in no time out in the sun. Maybe he'd even take both of us for a drive -- way out somewhere where it's warm. That would be a treat, wouldn't it? -- the three of us together. She dances slowly in front of the window and for a moment, in the strange shadows of the room, she is very, very beautiful.

Maybe I'll get you a new dress -- a blue one -- so that you can come see me when I'm famous. I know you don't like to go out in public, but you'll probably be better by then. I'll have my private car come and pick you up. You can sit in your own balcony box. I'll have everything arranged.

Lydia hums a few bars from "Clair de Lune" and begins to dance again. Clarissa continues to stitch. It is quite cold in the room now, but there is sweat on Lydia's forehead.

It happened when we were children, didn't it? I remember -- there was a terrible storm and you and I were playing in Grandfather's attic. We were playing with an old tool set and I got frightened of the thunder and started to cry. You know how storms always bothered me. You called me a baby and said you wished I wasn't your sister. I got angry -- Don't say that to me! I screamed at you, and you told me if I didn't stop screaming you would go downstairs and leave me up there by myself. You threatened to run down and lock me up there by myself. You threatened to run down and lock me up there and not tell anyone where I was. You ran to the door -- I tried to catch you but you were bigger and faster. Just as you slipped out the door, you turned for a last look. Please understand -- I was scared to death. When I threw it at you -- whatever I threw -- something hard and heavy -- I wasn't thinking. I never meant to ruin you like that. I'm so sorry, Clarissa. It's all --

That never happened, Lydia. Clarissa's voice is cold and harsh.

Then tell me what did happen! I need to know, Clarissa -- it's making me crazy. Lydia wavers back and forth, speaking quickly. Maybe you don't remember either. Is that it? You don't remember?

The wind has a softer voice now, muffled by the fog and the straight slow rain. A draft slips in around the edges of the window. It is damp and misty in the room.

Lydia dances a few steps, graceful and sad. You're never going to be beautiful, are you? She laughs. How can I say that? Soon, Clarissa, maybe soon. She kneels down beside Clarissa's chair and gently touches the tapestry. Maybe if you could change it just a little. I don't think there were supposed to be so many red flowers. Green butterflies is what it needs. Maybe I could help you -- we could fill this whole corner with green butterflies -- we could finish before he comes. It would go so quickly. Then I could be ready to leave when he comes and you would have a finished tapestry. She begins to cry quietly. That's what we'll do. We'll fill it all in with green butterflies and we can be finished when he comes and I can show him all the green. Lydia hugs the tapestry against her face, stroking it like a live thing. All that green -- and he'll remember how much he loves my eyes.

Cynthia Talbot