


1966

et cetera

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ET CETERA - 66

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literary Ronald Rollins
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Marilyn Putz
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first place poem

Afterward, A Bell Must Ring

In fifty five years from this December
There shall be a spreading of veils,
The bird of Quiet will travel what were
And a Hand will carry a bell.

The Hand will be seen over all the white,
If-then there be eyes to see,
But even then there'll be no night
And the Hand shall contain a key.

Over all the earth the white will rest
Regaining the radiance in each its folds,
Until each has grown to be a crest
Gently rowing, rowing out the cold.

After all darkness has been squeezed through
And freed to go where it may,
Then the Hand shall take its cue
And the Hand shall begin the way.

--Beverly Hart

second place poem

I.

Dawn and dusk flashed by
slicing their measured ways through time
like glittering knives in a circus act,
or an actor's lines,
or a hint of truth through a lie.

But the toll is twelve,
not twenty-four
there is no distinction,
only trite repetition
of the dozen doomed disciples gone before.

--Roger D. Jarris

third place poem

Eighth Street

Once I knew smoke and rain, a consummation,
Heavy goodbye. There was the pavement
Stained with grimy puddles. Faded
Ink-run papers blown against the curb
Into deltas of street dirt, litter paper
Gutter grime desolation.

Come gray dusk we find the grass rain-damp,
Soft and cool, smelling sweet.
Trinkling creek tumbles over pebbles;
It makes the only comment on our silence.
Our bodies clasped together
We sleep dimly.

This time around, this time, oh, you.
I wish words could cry tears of delight
And embrace you. You're precise and strong,
You're like the rain and polished tables and beer.
Your world works, not nice or stale,
No show, but breathes, willing.

You'll give me agony but I'm tough.
We could find a stream, at life pace, real,
Always renewing, murmuring
But never too weary.

--Arline Roush

A Turtle's Lament

Give me the life of the butterfly
The short lithe life of the butterfly.

My lot it will be to play on the wind
Play and court with the sweet little wind.

Let me know only flowers and honey
Know the joy that comes from the honey.

Then will I gladly die having known love
It's time to die after we've known love
Time to die before we forget love.

Give me the life of the butterfly
The short lucky life of the butterfly.

--Johnna Lea

He let me hold his hand once,
But just as I felt his warmth,
He took his hand away suddenly
As if by touching, I had read his soul.

Every moment since then
Has been quite empty without him.
Before, I could reach out, and he was there,
But now, one more hand is empty.

--SAH

first place short story

VIOLETS

--Dave Garten

"Estell go water your damn violets," shouted Julia, slamming her pen down on the desk.

Without replying the old woman set the ash tray back on the desk and stuffed her dust cloth in the pocket of her apron. Her badly-worn houseshoes hung loosely on her feet and scraped monotonously across the floor as she walked out of the room, closing the door softly behind her.

"Meddlesome creature," Julia said to herself as she nervously lit a cigarette. Hastily addressing an envelope, she folded the letter she had just written and opened the drawer, searching for a stamp.

"Oh where are they," she said, rummaging through some papers. "Estell," she shouted, unable to find them, "Estell!"

"Did you call Julia?" asked Estell standing in the doorway.

"Estell, where are my stamps?" she asked, inhaling deeply from the cigarette and snorting out jets of smoke from her nostrils.

"I haven't seen them," replied Estell, brushing tears from her eyes and smoothing her white hair with her hand.

"You must have moved them. You're always pilfering around in here -- cleaning, changing and rearranging my things. I need a stamp Estell and I'd appreciate it if

you'd please tell me where you put them!"

"I think I might have one," said Estell. "You can have it if you'd like."

Trembling with rage Julia stood up and followed Estell into her room.

"I have had it up to here," said Julia, slashing her finger horizontally across her throat. "When I married Mark I didn't know I was getting a package deal. I don't care if you are his mother -- do you have any idea what he would say if my old lady moved in!"

"I . . . I," Estell began, then her voice faltered.

"You what?" snapped Julia. She had long since abandoned any attempt to spare Estell's feelings. "I have asked you repeatedly to leave my things alone. How would you like it if I came in here and . . ."

Suddenly her eyes fell on the flower stand that held Estell's violets. They were her favorite flower and she grew them in old coffee cans which she had painted yellow. They were in bloom now and Estell tended them with the love and reverence a mother might give her first child.

"Oh what lovely little purple blooms," said Julia, walking over to the flower stand.

"These are very special to you, aren't they?" she asked, drumming her long fingernails on one of the cans. Hesitantly Estell nodded.

"And you wouldn't like it if someone bothered them, would you Estell?"

Smiling sweetly Julia pinched off one of the petals, held it to her lips and blew it into the air.

"Oh," whimpered the old woman as she watched the petal fall to the floor.

Then, as if driven by some savage fury, Julia kicked the legs of the stand, sending cans, dirt and flowers crashing to the floor.

"Oh Estell," she said in mock compassion, "you've knocked over your flowers. Really dear, you should be more careful."

Trembling with fear Estell stood still, wringing her apron in her hands. Her eyes surveyed the destruction but she remained silent. Even tears would not come.

"Mark will be home soon," said Julia. "Hurry and clean up this mess and I won't tell him about your clumsy little accident."

Smugly she turned and flounced out of the room. She knew that Estell would not mention the episode.

Glancing at her watch she hurried to the mirror to comb her hair and straighten her clothes. Then she returned to the desk to make a last search for her stamps.

"Oh how foolish of me," she said, laughing at her absent-mindedness. "Of course, they're still in my purse."

"Then the smile faded from her face and her brows contracted. "Maybe I was a bit harsh with Estell. No, no I wasn't. I had to impress the point upon her. She simply must learn what is expected of her. I must be firm!"

Then, leaning forward on the desk she cradled her head in her folded arms and sobbed audibly. Her head was still lowered when her husband came home.

"Whats the matter?" he asked as she glanced up with a startled look.

"Oh, well . . . I, ah . . . I have a headache."

"Where's Mamma?"

"She's in her room. I don't think she feels too well today."

"Julia, you haven't argued?"

"Why no," she laughed, her fingers nervously playing with the buttons on her blouse.

"You have haven't you?" he returned. "I know you have. Julia why can't you leave her alone. She'll be gone soon enough. Can't you let her live out her last days without being tormented."

"Why Mark darling. What awful things to say. Your mother is a bit difficult sometimes but I make every effort to make things as pleasant for her as possible."

"Don't lie to me! I can see the hurt in poor Mamma's eyes everytime I look at her. She's never happy like she used to be and it's your fault. I know it is!"

"Poor Mamma," she laughed. "That's the story of your life. Whose apron strings are you going to hang on to when she cashes in? Not mine lover, I'm not the motherly type."

"Shut your vile mouth," he whispered, raising his hand as if about to strike her.

"If you only knew what it was like," she said, getting up from the desk and walking over to the window. "If you could be here every day and listen to those dirty old motheaten shoes scrubbing across the floor, going from room to room, cleaning things over and over and over again. Mark I can't stand it any longer. She's driving me out of my mind!"

"I don't want to hear any more," said Mark. "I'm going in to see Mamma."

Without looking at her he walked past Julia and entered his mother's room.

"Hello Mamma," he said, trying to add a cheery note to his voice.

Then his eyes moved over the room. He stared at the overturned stand and then looked at his mother for some explanation.

"They're pretty, aren't they," she said gesturing toward the violets she had spread out on her apron. "They were pretty but now the pretty little petals are torn and ragged."

Not looking at him she rocked back and forth in her rocking chair picking up each flower, touching it lightly and then replacing it in her lap. Her hand slid into her pocket and clutched a medicine bottle that contained digitalis which her doctor has prescribed for her heart condition.

"Mark," she said calmly, still clutching the concealed bottle, "will you get me a glass of water."

"Yes, Mamma," he answered, still bewildered by the scene before him. "I'll be right back."

She watched him with unchanging expression as he left the room. Then her eyes fell to her lap and she started to rock again.

"Thank you," she said when he returned. "I'd like to be alone now if you don't mind."

"Sure Mamma," he said, "I'll call you for dinner."

"Mark."

"Yes Mamma?"

"When I die will you put some pretty little violets on my grave?"

"Don't talk nonsense Mamma."

"No. Promise me," she begged, her face drawn with concern.

"All right," he smiled, "I promise."

As he closed the door the room grew dim except for the last rays of the sun which filtered through the drawn drapes. Somewhere in the distance chapel bells were ringing and the old woman smiled as she picked up each flower and made a bouquet in her hand.

Then, rising, she picked up the glass of water and walked across the room, seating herself on the bed. Without hesitation she opened the medicine bottle and dumped contents into her mouth, gulping it down with the water.

Still holding her bouquet she lay back on the bed and folded her hands over her breast. She whispered an inaudible prayer and then closed her eyes, smiling, waiting.

MOVING LIPS OF SILENCE

the sounds of silence

slide

like dry snow on bricks

before an easy wind

from lips

that do not speak .

lips that move

but say nothing .

laying alms

on the

Altars of Darkness

on the steps

of the

Temple of Ignorance .

the moving lips

of silence

lips of bigotry

and dark alleys—

alleys of narrow minds

and empty hearts .

hearts of nothingness

lives of death .

silence

lightly on the bricks

illusive

cold

blowing free

melt with the warmth

of a true word

RS

THREE MAIDS

Like hungered poets who must vindicate
Poetry to hungry poets, the three
Maids go quietly to their beds and speak
In silent, sober tones to themselves; each
Recites the callow prayer of recompense.
The rhythm of the night, the nightly chore
That must be measured in adagios,
Repeats itself in adamantine score.
When morning shows its musky face outside,
They smile and stretch their whitened arms as if
To show appreciation to their love;
And then arise to make the beds, safely
Leaving the secret between the green sheets
And the spoor of their souls on the bedspreads.

SLM

YELLOW

Brightly cheering
In the Sunday
Choir,
As a spark of
Hope
Waiting at the
End of the lonely
Road
For a blind
Old woman.
Waiting,
Waiting for the
Deserted child.

--Beverly Hart

dusk walked
soft
 easy
over green hills
and bent
to kiss
a blade of grass
leaving
sweet and dew
 and peace

watching a neon
i missed it
got no kiss
 felt no dew
sweet
 soft
 easy
i missed it
 and found no peace

neon spit
 and sputtered
 at me
with
 red
 green
 blue
 yellow
pearls

i missed dawn
 and now dusk
having only
colored pearls
 and darkness
to speak
to me
 in my silence

C. M.



Dan Wilson

A LOVE POEM

Down by the river where the preacher baptizes,
Down in the water where the little fishes swim,
There he led her in the moonlight,
There he did her in.

— Johnna Lea

GRASS

Blowing gently,
As if a whispering
Voice
Softly speaking
To a contented
Audience.

—Beverly Hart

Earline Sizemore



Earline Sizemore

V.

Two lonely lovers,
parallel in time and space,
exhausting their unhappy linear lives
in an endless idiot's race toward the horizon,
knowing only brief, hot, unexpected moments of
happiness
when, by chance, their rigid bodies copulate
at the switches.

—Roger D. Jarvis



HURT

Walking alone,
Deserted
By everyone.
Like a
Drying brook,
Slowly passing
Into the
Bitter past.

—Beverly Hart

Bill Currey

Rats out of walls

come

Raging

Stomping

Driving

at my Head.

Crawling in and

out and

in and

out.

holes

too small but

always squeezing

in and

out. God!

No hope there is

with inout rats?

Dead faint

No Rats

Stairwells--red!

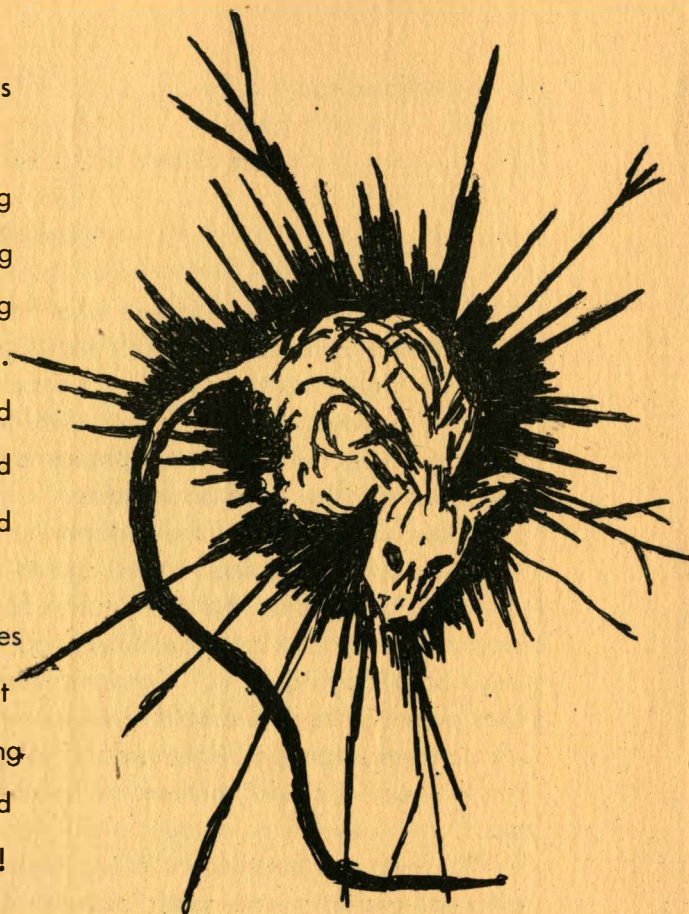
up down

up down

Climbing. Falling

Reaching never top

Climbing Falling



Sheets white.

Barred cells.

Angel white.

NO.

Hat. Woman.

Nurse!

Where?

here.

Life.

second place short story . . .

THE GRAY VOICES

--Arline Roush

Catherine tried to imagine what Paris was like; at the same time part of her mind was deciding whether to throw the old blue sweater into the suitcase. The blue was vaguely connected in her mind with Renoir. She was a little confused when the telephone rang. Still carrying the sweater, she went downstairs.

When she answered the telephone her grandmother's voice said, "Catherine? Your dad or mother at home?"

"Hi, Grandma. No, huh-uh. They went over to Union, to see that Hereford bull, you know . . . Thinking about buying . . ." Grandma had a prickly voice that made Catherine afraid to say very much. Not really afraid--reluctant, a better word. When she was a little girl Catherine could not find the boldness to say "Grandma."

"I'spect you heard that Ethel Blessing died yesterday afternoon eighty-one years old the fun'ral's Monday. Your dad and them used to when they was kids go up there . . . Say, listen, Catherine, you all need some eggs down your way, don't you?"

"Uh-hum, and we need milk, too?"

"Well, why don't you come out, Catherine? You ought to come see us--why, you leave--when?"

"Monday morning," said Catherine.

"So soon! Well, you better come on out, now . . ."

For a little while after Grandma had said goodbye, Catherine stood at the screen door that faced southwest,

the hayfield and the big hill with the pine trees at the top and the tower. The long-armed carrier of electric power lines became in her mind a gangling, spindly Eiffel Tower. How comical!

She tried to fix the images of the afternoon in her mind, to remember exactly how everything looked, especially the sky. Talismanic . . . At odd moments like this Catherine found herself thinking like a character out of a book.

Why, shy Catherine? To study of course. That was a good all-purpose answer. In the back of her mind must be a more beautiful reason, probably a poetic one, but vague, like Catherine's poems.

The day was getting along now and the sunlight was a bit old and tarnished. Catherine decided to go see her grandparents. She ought to; no telling when she would see them again. She thought perhaps she would not be coming back, ever. She admitted it. She knew she would not come back. But she couldn't tell anyone yet.

She studied the red flowered pattern of the linoleum. Suddenly she let her head flop down between her knees. She fished her tennis shoes from under the rockers chair and put them on slowly. It would be a warm evening, probably. No need for the sweater. She left it lying on the chair. She found the keys to the pick-up truck on the mantel, in an ash-tray.

Catherine drove a little fast for the rough gravel road. She had rolled down the windows on both sides: it was hot; her legs below her shorts stuck to the seat. At least there was wind blowing in her face, and in the truck she was riding higher up. It was a good way to drive.

The truck rattled across a wooden bridge. A bittern started up from a patch of day-lillies, but Catherine could

not hear its cry above the whine of the truck engine. Often, on her way to the pond, Catherine would be startled by the sad sharp cry of the bittern that waded sometimes in the cool, dark green water of the creek . . . Maybe this was the same bird . . .

Catherine tried to make every image of this late afternoon stay sharp in her mind. She imagined tiny pictures, retinal images, that would be stored in her brain, images that she could take with her to Paris. She tried to notice everything and remember everything.

When she reached Upper Flats she noticed that the Roods had finished their haying; she smelled the dry faint dusty sweetness. She remembered herself, a tomboy, taking a pitchfork too heavy for her and helping with the haycocks, or just romping, like some little dog, in the scratchy, scrinkly, dusty hay.

Yes, she had been a real tomboy . . . She would always jump up and go with Grandpa to gather the eggs--afraid of the roosters--marveling at the light bulbs Grandpa put in some of the hens' nest and wondering if a light bulb could fool an old hen. She always went out to the barn to watch the milking; she carried her tin cup along. There was Daisy, the gold-orange jersey cow, and there was red temperamental Gertrude . . .

It was milking time now, most places. Rood and the other dairy farmers around hadn't gone to the governor's time. To a cow it was just milking time; you couldn't expect a cow to understand the principle behind the saving of daylight.

Catherine herself remembered DST and decided to drive a little more slowly, enjoying the fields, the occasional descents into cool hollows where it was already

evening, but all too soon she came to the forks of the road. There was the

OAK GROVE
BAPTIST CHURCH
1868

Then the grove of persimmon trees and Grandpa's potato field. Finally the house Grandpa had built, white clapboards, green trim. The home where Catherine's father and Uncle John and Aunt Catherine had grown up.

Catherine drove up the lane and stopped the truck in the shade of the white oak tree by the granary. She went up the little bank to the back porch of the house. It was like coming home: she would remember how the porch was with its smooth old gray boards: the grapevines off at the side: the screen door with its whine and muffled band: she stood on the porch and saw how the old light slanted across the hillside pasture above the barn. She had come home for a little while: before she was born . . . her father had lived here. She remembered the brown photograph--her father, about thirteen, sitting on this porch. His hair was tousled, light; he was barefoot and his overalls legs were rolled up; he had the same half-squint in the sunlight Catherine had noticed many times and found herself imitating sometimes.

Grandma came to the door, opened it, and shooed her in, saying, "Hello, how are you, honey? Come on in. Supper's almost ready." Old common talk. Catherine was ill at ease with the old common talk. She tried.

She sat on a stool by the refrigerator while Grandma got supper. When Grandma talked, her voice was a little like old hinges, it was a strong voice, and a smiling one. Sometimes Grandma went around her kitchen whistling.

Her hair wasn't very gray; she had a kinky permanent in it now. Grandma reminded her somehow of a geranium, and of petunias, and chrysanthemums. She was a strong kind of person, yet often very sentimental. Catherine watched her stir the gravy in the skillet.

Grandpa's footsteps on the porch were slow and heavy; he was tall, but now he walked with a little stoop in his shoulders. He wore suspenders! Catherine thought, he is seventy now--more than seventy.

"Well, hullo!" he said. "Who we got here? Granddaughter, come to visit!"

Catherine felt as bashful as when she was a little girl, trying to think of something to say besides, "Hi." She had the same flattered but faintly miserable feeling when her father was talking to her. It was as if her family had told her when she was a little girl--but they hadn't--that little children should be seen and not heard.

During supper Grandma would ask questions or Grandpa would reminisce, and Catherine didn't have to originate any of the talk. That was better. She made a little joke--now they didn't have to prop her up on Sears and Monkey Ward catalogues, so she could sit high enough to reach the table.

"So you're going Monday--All ready to go? Packed up and anxious to leave, I bet," said Grandma.

"Oh--yes--I--oh--I guess so," Catherine would say, feeling shy and a bit stupid. She wondered whether to take the blue sweater; she was confused. She tried to fasten on something common and natural to say. "It doesn't seem like summer was very long at all," she volunteered.

"Seems like no time at all the grand-kids is grown up, doesn't it," said Grandpa. "Pass the beans, Mom?"

Grandma gave the dish to Catherine and she handed it to Grandpa.

"France, over there in Europe," he said. "Your dad was there, you know. During the war."

"Of course she knows, Pop," said Grandma. Then she added, "Course it's different now."

Of course it's different now, Catherine thought. It's different from those pictures by Renoir and Utrillo. Not Zola's Paris. Probably not even like those scenes in Irma la Douce. Not like in books.

Catherine nodded and smiled while they talked. She said to herself it was funny how parts of their conversations didn't connect.

Grandpa began: "Your daddy says your milk cow ought to come fresh in a couple of weeks . . ."

Grandma, at the same time began: "I want you to take this recipe down to . . ."

And both of them . . . Then you ought to have a good calf to your mom--it shows how I told him to take that other shortening to the stock sale at Kroger's . . .

After supper they sat on the front porch: Grandpa in the rocker, Grandma in the porch swing, Catherine on the steps. Catherine rubbed her finger over the copper pennies embedded in the concrete of the steps. The arbor vitae smelled like evening. Once, Catherine moved a little to let Rex, the old cow-dog, come slowly up the steps and onto the porch. Rex went up to Grandpa, sniffed his hand, signed, and rested his muzzle on Grandpa's knee.

Grandma moved a little in the swing; the chains cracked. The petunias in the flower box were odd fragile silhouettes. "I guess we won't be seeing you for a while,"

Grandma said to Catherine. "But, you're all excited and ready to go, imagine."

Catherine felt a tightness in her throat. This morning she had packed her little French grammar in her suitcase; at that moment she felt ready to go. "I . . . Grandma . . . I hate to leave home of course . . ." She felt sick shyness again. She couldn't say it to them. Not what she felt the most.

But the quiet evening was how she wanted to feel. Out on the porch in the cool gray light Grandma and Grandpa talked and Catherine listened. Their shapes grew darker, their outlines dimmer, the voices grayer.

Over across the creek, over at the bottom of the hill, was a great dark elm tree; down by the roots of the tree was a spring where the horse and the cows drank. There in the dark, over there was a whip-poor-will. You nearly saw a whip-poor-will . . . No whip-poor-will in Paris . . .

The quiet gray voices were saying, Back before the Depression . . . and here in this house . . . people get old like us . . . the children grow up and go away . . . it all goes to show . . . And like it says in the Bible . . . that was after Aunt Fanny died . . . chickens haven't hardly . . .

Catherine sitting there on the steps heard also the wind in the branches of the old oak tree down by the granary.

The gray voices would talk on and sigh; the words were tired gray words. The words were as old as evenings when the whip-poor-wills stop calling. When the tightness in your throat comes loose in little moans--alone, alone, alone.

Catherine wanted to be a little girl, out there in the new evening, her feet wet in the dewy grass. Catching

lightening bugs. Hunting for the cricket in the grass-- she never could find it. The lights in the window far away. This evening is now, forever for the little girl in the wet grass.

Suddenly car headlights came over the hill. Like some nocturnal animal with gleaming eyes the car came down the road; for a second the dark porch was lit in the headlight glare; the car passed by.

Grandpa yawned, stretched, said, "Kind of in a hurry. Wonder where he was headed for . . ."

They sat without talking perhaps one minute more. The whip-poor-will had stopped. The evening had been disturbed. Catherine knew it was time to leave.

"Oh, don't have to rush off," said Grandma.

"Stay awhile," Grandpa said.

"No, no, I have to go . . ." Catherine said, mildly, entering the old common ritual of goodnight.

Grandma went back into the kitchen and turned on the light. "Don't want you to go off and forget the eggs," she said.

Catherine followed her into the kitchen that smelled like milk, eggs, apple butter.

Grandpa called, "Give her some of that milk to take down, too, Mom . . . Put it in that there big jug on the table . . ."

Driving back, Catherine was a little cold, but she left the window down.

She wanted the night wind to blow on her face. Once, up ahead she saw two gleaming red eyes, glowing rubies. Then, the truck lights showed a gray 'possum, frightened but scurrying to some destination on the other side of the road.

BLIND TO LOVE

Afraid,
Running through
Briar fences,
Only to be
Hurt painfully.

--Beverly Hart

black shadows cover brightness
Gray is now but slowly Blacker.

fear ascending---joy nomore
life is Ending death prevails.

Soul is dead still life remains
Hope ungone but slowly leaving.

tear unfallen but cries Inside
tear my Body from my form.

crow at down makes day unending
hope now gone---Black is All.

--Marcia Hamilton

third place short story

ONE BLOCK UP AND THREE BLOCKS BACK

I was sittin' on a cabbage crate standin' on the curb. Wonderin' why the streetlights kept lookin' at me--an' grinnin'. So I got up stepped in the gutter an' got my feet wet--hacked me off.

Walked up the street met myself comin' back. Knew there was somethin' wrong so I said, "Hello me, what say we try goin' the same direction"--an' me said, "What for we don't know where we're goin' anyway"--so I sat back down on the cabbage crate put my legs together an' tried to look like a lady. But that didn't work so I crossed my legs an' put my elbow on my knees an' tried lookin' like "The Thinker" an' that didn't work either.

Then I looked up an' saw the shadow of dead me an' asked him where he was goin', an' he said, "Nowhere, I done been." I said, "Oh", an' he went away an' left me alone.

Now lets start all over from the top an' try that again. But that didn't work either so I decided to cry awhile. Next thing I knew I was runnin' bat outa hell for nowhere which is right next door to somewhere.

I ran down streets an' up alleys an' clawed at brick walls an' sat on a fire hydrant an' none of it helped--I was still cryin' an' my tears ran down my pants an' into the street where they was consumed by terrible deep cracks that carried them all the way down to hell where they tried to put out the fire--but couldn't do it.

I backed up against a concrete wall an' the streetlights was bendin' over lookin' at me an' laughin' to see a mushroom cry.

I tried runnin' again but all these people was yellin' at me an' I fell over a garbage can an' said, "scuse me." But all those people screamin' at me an' streelights laughin' at me was drivin' me ape. So I stopped off in a barbershop an' ordered a pink lemonade an' the parrot behind the bar said, "sorry no pinks." So I spit on him an' he turned pink.

Another block up an' three blocks back an' I was sure I wasn't gettin' nowhere and nobody'd tell me how to get to somewhere so I kept runnin' an' cryin' an' fallin' over more garbage cans an' sayin', "scuse me."

I stopped this lady in the rest room an' told her I was "Blue Boy", but she didn't believe me an' ran away screamin'.

I tried walkin' backwards an' that was fine till I fumped into me comin' backwards too an' I said, "Where the hell you been," an' he said, "Nowhere just like you." So I tipped my orange an' walked on wishin' somebody'd tell me how to get to somewhere but me kept gettin' in my way so I decided to sit awhile but everything was blue cold so I decided to fly instead--but that didn't work--just set the streetlights to laughin' again.

I tried walkin' sideways, but I fumped into dead me an' he said, "Where you been" an' I said, "All over nowhere lookin' for somewhere which is supposed to be right next door but there just isn't any door they're all pickels." He said, "You better hurry cause the gutter's runnin'

black with good roses." Roses hell--it looked like pink molasses to me. I bent down to take a look an' fell in an' was tumblin' down through gutters and subways that had red an' white striped candy canes all over the walls. I reached out to grab one an' it turned out to be a door-knob, so I opened it an' asked if I was somewhere an' somebody said, "No son you is still nowhere, try another candy cane."

So I tried another candy cane an' it turned out to be another laughin' streetlight an' I was back on my cabbage crate wonderin' how to get to somewhere.

My feet was still hurtin' and my ass was sore. Don't ask me why--Me crawled up, and said he couldn't sit either, asked me what I was doin'. I shot him a moon, an' threw him a piece of "bread" an' started off lookin' for somewhere.

One block up an' three blocks back an' I knew I wasn't gettin' nowhere, let alone somewhere--so I tried walkin' in circles, but I tripped over my head and fell on my feet an' the streetlights started alughin' again an' the pavement began breakin' in waves on the curb.

I got seasick an' started cryin' again. Mushrooms cry a lot.

Everything began goin' in circles around my feet an' I stumbled into a big spider web an' was lookin' into two big bright yellow eyes. He said, "Come in," and I said, "I ain't no fly," and he said, "Oh." So I tipped my orange an' ran on. Fell over a garbage can an' said, "scuse me."

Saw a bill runnin' down an alley tried to catch it but ran into a laughin' streetlight an' fell in the gutter. Mush-

rooms spend a lot of time in gutters. 'Bout a thousand bills came out of a manhole an' ran over me singin' "You Haven't Got It Yet" an' left me all green an' still poor. Decided to cry some more but my elbows was gettin' wet an' it didn't help anyways.

I tried climbin' a streetlight to catch a glimpse of somewhere but he was laughin' so hard I fell back into the nowhere gutter--got up--all wet an' hopped off lookin' for a sleep to garbage can in. Couldn't find one--kept runnin' gettin' tired an' sick of being scared. Saw dead me floatin' black an' big at me. Lost my stomach on the sidewalk an' stood there cryin'. Scare outa my ass runnin' for hell, hopin' to find it an' get some rest. Couldn't find hell so looked for somewhere couldn't find that either. Guess cryin' mushrooms are doomed to gutters of nowhere. But don't like to quit kept runnin' stumblin' crates cans poles signs bleedin' shins misty eyes can't see where I'm goin'. Can't go straight no matter how hard.

Keep goin' in circles of nowhere. Where out how in kept runnin'.

Ran into a cop who tipped his hat an' asked if he could help me home. Spit on him an' he turned pink. Home home home hell is home an' I can't even find that.

Gave up somewhere started out lookin' for hell. Looked down a manhole an' yelled, "How do I get to hell,"--- answered, "One block up and three blocks back.

Tried it, didn't work, still nowhere.

Stepped into a pickle walked up a cat. Yelled, "How do I get to hell," answered, "Dis is da place."

Stepped in a room with cherry wallpaper an' a char-treuse rug. Sat on a Metracal can an' contemplated my navel.

Death looked up from her bed all pure an' white an' said, "Come lie with me and rest."

Tap on my shoulder, it was dead me shakin' his head an' lookin' real sad.

But I gotta find hell she can take me can't find somewhere can't stand nowhere any longer.

He looked again shook his head an' floated out sayin', "See you soon," and stainin' the rug with his tears.

I walked over an' crawled right in. She made love to me soft an' sweet. Her body was slender an' pale--I knew she was death.

Everything went white and my world turned around. The laughin' streetlights were gone an' she said, "I knew you would come, I've been waiting."

burning holes in paper cups
in a quiet place
and wondering .

burning more holes
with sad eyes
and wondering
and being sick
at me .

and burning more holes in paper cups
hands on face
and to hell with it all .

warm wind
and all those God damned holes
in a paper cup .

soft lights
pretty faces
and all those God damned holes
in a paper cup .

turning round on a blue-green world
no way to plug them

~~no~~ way to stop .

and all those God damned holes
in a paper cup

--C.M.

