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The Strayed Reveller, No. 3

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I.

THE STRAYED TRAVELLER

MAY 1969
Request

May I be forever poor of script

Lest some great Master thesis tear apart my literary droppings to reveal the entrails of what I have eaten.
Greeze

See have you heard this
make a reptile in the wind
taking no beans
nor bought by jealousies.

See he steal the varnish vase
in empty room within
and leaves nothing but restless noise
and dust under beds.

See burning the thrill
on the neck of the sun
eaten the burst
of dawn and dusk.

See struck by vandals of dream
out of the chalk of evening rain
the fiery hatches
of voices shining.

See baked in summer rock
salty river
and wet hair
hard miles before water.

See juggler of phrases written
white words of bankrupt ghosts
and horses riding
in parenthesis.

See have the man no notion
but between the rain
and the rained on
stalks the screamer.
See galloping man
prince of mountain mist
and siezing stone
the lizard's heart rejoicing sand.

See the coming of a time here
each crystal smile in glass window
see a dummy
and a bull.

* * *

The children are fed
with lies and false causes
the mind of these words
being peace,
but the flesh burns with hate
for freedom's sake
barriers of barbed wire
have risen
to protect statues of
the beloved war gods.
I feel the wet hair on my neck
 it is long
The chair is cold against my bare legs sitting in
my chair in my room at 12:50
 with my underwear on—I hope that no one
bothers me especially the Pope,
I was going to put on army jacket
 who knows why?
Because it lays there on the bed, so hopeless in
expectation of a war?
certainly not because I am cold...
On top of the jacket is a pair of green pants and
beside them is a tattered blue sweatshirt with
specks of white paint adorning the front...
sitting in my chair in my room at 12:55
 with my leg shaking spasmodically beneath the
desk on which rests my mechanical pencil,
pecking out the key of my existence, a code of
letters forever (unless they are erased) em-
bedded on a fold of paper pulp carefully
pressed...
does this sheet of paper have a number? does God
keep track of every single sheet of paper ever
made? I doubt it. he has other more important
things to do, like talk to George Washington or
Abigail Van Buren (was that her name?)

my army jacket's now ready----
it shouts! it moves forward for the attack!
it quickly sucks in and anesthetizes the flower-
ed pillow! it paralyzes it with one deafening
blow of its tentacles! it is satisfied at last
and returns to its cage on the pants....
sitting in my chair in my room at 1:00
 how time flies....and lays eggs....causes
dysentery....and is blamed for a lot of things
it never did.
"The Opoe is here," he says to me.
"You must mean the Pope is here," I retort.
"What I probably meant was the Pier is hope!"
"Probably," was my only possible answer.
William Eastlake does us at least one favor in Portrait of an Artist with Twenty-six Horses in his choice of the title. We can all start off feeling back-patty and warm with our secret selves, having identified a literary allusion.

That done, however, he is seldom so kind again. We quickly establish that there is this reservation Indian, see, who weaves rugs and paints and is called Son of the Man with Twenty-six Horses. Twenty-six Horses, for short. And he has a friend named Ring, a non-Indian but nice anyway, who spends the better part of the novel sinking into quicksand and remembering "about ten separate incidents that you remember" that compose each life. In Ring's telling of these episodes, Eastlake provides diversion of pleasing variety--a wild ride down a river by Ralph Clearboy, a cowboy-Indian readers may remember from Castle Keep, and Morgan Beltone, a rodeo clown, aboard a white Lincoln; an ancient medicine man going off to meet his ancestors with a magic red bullet in his medicine bundle; two German refugees from Albuquerque botching up their revenge on a former Nazi and becoming doomed therefore to wander forever in search of the missing piece of a Navajo pot. Tender, funny incidents, probably significant enough within themselves, but sandwiched between passages fairly sudden with Meaning and Significance, they simply don't hang together.

Which would be all right, except that about ten separate incidents do not each life make, but Eastlake seems to think they do and his laboring to prove it is like giving birth to broken crockery.

The problem with this novel is not that Eastlake hasn't the ability to create characters and situations that are genuinely moving. He does. Similarly, his manipulation of dialogue and time sequence can stand up to most of, say, Heller's. It isn't even that the novel is so fraught with (ahem) messages that takes on the shape of a bulletin board. The trouble
lies in Eastlake’s tendency to deflate almost every sequenc by pausing, clearing his literary throat, and laying the truth on us. It becomes tiresome, especially in a writer who has both the talent and subtlety to suggest his thoughts within the dramatic framework of the novel. For example, after the beautifully developed Nazi episode, Ring must tell Twenty-six Horses:

"Those city people when they come back, they’ll never find the rest of that pot and that’s fine because they’ll need a reason for living now that there’s no revenge, and there’s no better reason for living than to be searching for something that can never quite ever and completely be found, discovered for certain, without reservation, never quite....their piece of pot will never be joined, but that’s the whole joy."

It is as if Eastlake decided some little morsel might somehow be beyond us in the comic narrative that preceded it and chose therefore to spell it out, stopping only of rubrics and italics.
Stooping, groaning hard hour--
A cockroach crawls across the wall.
Thoughts, a dime a dozen,
Recounting the faces
Through the faded smells of beer.
Who is gone today?
I had not thought death had undone so many.
So many--

Two stools down, a sallow young man
Smooths his hair, pays his bill and leaves.
I would follow him, but I'm sure he's expected.
The screen door swings shut on a half broken spring.
I hope too much, for these hot humid days.
He disappears into the bright sun. I sit
In the stone gray light waiting
For my thoughts to close up.
Once upon a time on a Thursday in the summer 1982, J.T. Choice called Poor Eric Already into his office. "Stop fooling with that novel of yours, Poor Eric," he rumbled as the lad shuffled diffidently in. "It'll never get any better anyway and certainly that parsley won't help." Then he rustled through some official looking papers on his teak-topped desk and, selecting a page, resettled his horn-rimmed glasses and continued: "Alright, you've beaten the armadillo one time around in a straight race. Now we want you to try something worthwhile. You are to steal an industrial secret." He paused significantly.

"Please, sir, what's an industrial secret?" querrated Eric, in what seemed to him too piping-shrill a voice.

"Alright, Already--" J.T. paused again, giggled softly, then went on: "Outside the HIPP reservation, in the realworld, people make things not because they need them or want them, but to sell for money. These people are called 'manufacturers.' The making of things for money is called 'industry.' It is very noble. Once in a while some manufacturer chances on a cheap way of making his product more attractive to the buying public. This may consist in making razor blades blue or in putting little green, ostensibly harmless, crystals in otherwise white soap powder. In such cases the additional decoration is said to be the manifestation of a new secret process, and is an amazing discovery, the culmination of years of research in the buyers' behalf."

J.T., adjusted the lie of the collar of his yellow sportshirt over the lapels and yoke of his Brook's Bros. blue-blazer, gave his lodge pin a cursory buff with his sleeve, then leaned forward over the desk with conspiratorial confidence.

"Now nothing is so important to manufacturers as the buying public's interest--I forgot that
when I seemingly implied that manufacturers make things primarily for money—so when one of them has a secret, all the others want to know what it is so they can pass the benefits of it on to their customers too. It is the public interest. Therefore it is patriotic and righteous. If you want to get un-HIPP you'll have to learn to be patriotic and righteous. We want you to steal an industrial secret."

"Right J.T.," barked Eric, trying to sound patriotic at least, as he brushed the last spiggle of green from his tummy. A little irritated, J.T. Choice bent down and flicked off a particle that had floated over onto the gleaming toe of his black-and-white wing-tips.

"Proctal and Gamber, of Flushing, New York, has been manufacturing to military specifications a product which, when it is made available to the civilian market in time for this fall's football season, will be known as the 'Junketting Johnny.' It is a traveller's convenience developed under a Defense Department contract, and consists of a folding aluminum tripod surmounted by a seat available in thirteen decorator colors from which is suspended a disposable vinyl-receptacle—a Baggy kind of thing, don't you know."

"Now the trouble is, Klutch Papers of Passaic has got wind of all this, and, strictly on their own are rushing a tool-up for something they're calling a 'Johnny a-Go-Go.' The crux, baby, is this: They've got tartan bags for theirs—a choice of four clans at a quarter a dozen plus tax retail—plus some nifty psychedelic prints, whereas the best P. & G. can get up for the money is sort of a translucent white affair, pretty enough when you first put it on but—you know—potentially offensive to motherhood and men of the cloth."

Eric, though glazed of eye from practicing his mouth breathing, nevertheless managed a nod of comprehension, and contemplatively scratched his middle. J.T. went on.
"What you're to do, Poor Eric, is to fly to Passaic, infiltrate the Klutch Paper operation, and find out how those interloping bastards can turn out those goddam colored bags at competitive prices. If you want to win any Get-Well Credits you'll have to do it and get back before the armadillo, released from Albuquerque this very hour, arrives on reservation territory."

So it was that Eric quickly drew his street clothes and band-aid from HIPP supply, was donkey-carted to the airport by a fellow HIPP trusty, boarded a Transvestia ACDC-9, and was soon winging his way east, the pudgy hand of the black-uniformed stewardess resting reassuringly on his thigh.

Everything went swimmingly for awhile, till just after the luxurious purple airplane had tipped through a lazy half-circle to afford travellers a lingering glance below at Gary, Indiana. Then, suddenly, the intercom thocked on, and a voice recalling that of the immortal Kenny Baker exclaimed "Hi, There! This is your Captain speaking. Two fellows have apparently been stowed away here in the co-pilot's uniform, and they're ordering us to fly straight on to Fire Island, where, they assure me, humane treatment and refreshments await us. I'm going to knuckle under rather than to endanger the aircraft and you passengers."

"Pshaw!" thought Eric. "Now I'll never learn the Klutch Paper Secret and get back to the reservation in time." But he was wrong. "I'll fix this, honey" whispered the stewardess, and, popping down off his knee, waddled officiously back along the aisle of the tipping airplane to the controls of the videotape machine. A moment later she was back, smiling broadly, standing by Eric's side with the squat assurance of a fireplug, while credits for Cornel Wilde and Merle Oberon (accompanied by the mortal strains of the Chopin "Polonaise") hit the VidiVuer screens in Song to Remember. Within minutes the hijackers, evidently moved, had changed course to mystic mountain, Connecticut, whereat Lenny and the N.Y. Phil. were scheduled for an
all-Milhaud program, and where, through the intercessions of Penultimate Peter, Eric would meet Ultimate Fred, who would solve all his problems, Johnny-bag-wise.

Spring is a time for:

Rebirth from agonies of winter;

Fresh air and rain;

Broken hearts of winter romances;

Mud and flowers;

Rebirth of hopes, old dreams, faith

Around the fallen.

New love waiting in place of the old

Outgrown, forgotten.
Haiku in Four Beats

Fall leaves life and heat
Of summer, changes all with
Colors of slow death.

Winter kills life with
ice sculptures, beauty
In death caught still.

Spring breaks binds of ice
To paint life green,
And set loose bees.

Summer is life in
Agonies of heat and love
Bound to simmer.
Either Shaping UPthoughts on Old Cheerful Letters or Friendshipping Out

Cheering-UP letters mess someone UP if the split-ends aren't cut off.
Letters grow long like hair on the head of a girl who has decided not to tease a style anymore.

Ah......but manytimes I have wanted to talk.
Talk?
Love to go there sometime, but where is it?
Sounds like a wonderful place;
no soliciting for flippant confusion;
know the embrace of hassle to interesting.

Enter resting: the feelingprettylousy
time is at your disposal,
built from boredom
when reading isn't a substitute for experiencing.

Put your hands UP against friendship.
(the material frisk)
Now slowly turn around.
Please gags me. I mumble to be just shy of friendship.
Friendship will want anything to be reality containing the whatelse of thoughts and their shadows of trying merely to keep UP, being not exactly sure how to do it.

From these letters I safecrack secret expressions to live them down in haste or transcend their codes of cult, so that love, out of kindness, might make its birthday suit arrest just to console a dream gesture without warrant; which is very just, since time is always just UP.
After Gentleman Crown came on campus to lead them, they stormed the administration building. They held it for two days while we sat idly by. But, as a wag said, we arose like Christ on the third day, rammed through their barricades and racked them up.

My men began to push their way through the jumble of desks and chairs inside the main door. While I stood watching them, the dean of the college, a wizened little man scurried up behind me. He was worried. He knew that when Nixon sent even out-of-shape reserves to a campus, the dean's job was in jeopardy. But when the president sent actives (paratroopers at that), the dean was in real trouble.

"Lieutenant Morrow," he said, "don't you let any of them get away, especially not that black anarchist Crown."

"Yes, Mr. Lincoln," I said. "You've told me that before."

"You federal troops are so cocky."

"Write your congressman," I said. I pointed to the college security officers outside the door. "You just keep your boys out of the way."

He began his favorite harangue. "I told the governor there'd be trouble. There was no need to send in you paratroopers. We can handle our own problems in this state. But that Nixon just wouldn't listen."

My men had cleared a path. "If the federal government could just keep its nose out--"

I cut him off. "I've heard that before," I said. I walked away, leading my men.

For some reason, they hadn't vandalized the building. The corridors were empty. We hesitated, unsure where they were. Lincoln was at my elbow again. "They must be on the second floor," he said. "They're probably in my office; damn them."

"Okay," I said, "we'll get them. But I told you to stay back." We walked down the hall, our
combat boots making an eerie clatter on the tile. At the stair case I glanced out the window at the t.v. equipment, the long line of local cops, and behind them the milling crowd of two thousand.

We climbed the stairs to the second floor. The thick oak doors to Lincoln's suite of offices were closed. I knew we couldn't shoot the lock--too dangerous, but the doors would be hard to break down. I called my first sergeant.

"Peters," I said, "be hunting for some kind of battering ram while I try to persuade them to come out."

Peter's black face grinned. "Persuade?" he laughed. I had to smile, too.

"This is Lieutenant Morrow," I said. "Now we want you..."

The doors opened. From inside came a loud voice: "Save your breath!"

Peters joined me, and we stepped to the doorway. Half of them sat, but the other half stood, tense. In the center of the group, Crown, his blue beret at a rakish angle, lolled in indifference. I looked hard at him; he stared back with open curiosity.

Peters and I kept our rifles pointed at the floor. "No need for trouble," I said. "Just line up against the far wall with your hands on your heads."

None of them moved. Then Crown spat on the carpet, got up, and walked to the wall. The others followed him.

As they moved toward the wall, I caught a blur of movement. A kid had slipped from behind a filing cabinet and was coming at us. Peters and I pivoted to meet him. He had a beaker of clear liquid in his hand.

"Get back," I said. I snapped the safety off my gun. His eyes were wild. Peters stepped confidently in front of me. But when the kid feinted at him with the beaker, he jumped back, grunting in alarm.
"Jay?" Crown was walking toward the boy. "Drop the acid," he said.

It was as if Crown had snapped the boy out of a trance. He dropped the beaker. He looked down and began to tremble. Peters slipped behind him, jerked his arm up into a hammerlock, and man-handled him toward the wall. The rest of Peters' squad, eight of them, entered the room to search them.

I knew I would have to watch Peters. The boy yelped, and I saw Peters had tightened his hammerlock.

"Peters," I said, and he eased his grip.

The boy tried to talk. "Shut up, rich kid," Peters said.

Peters' words--rich kid--awoke a dark memory. As the men searched them, I thought of Lance, the banker's son. All that winter I'd trained for him, developing a left jab, a punch never used in fifth grade fights. After school I perfected it, banging it into a burlap bag full of rags. Then one May morning I took him. The first hard left reddened his nose, the second sent a spatter of blood onto his white shirt. Then a flurry of punches, and he was down, with me astraddle him, sending one fist after another into his nose.

"They're all clean," Peters said. "Want to cuff them?"

"What?" I said, snapping back. "I said want to cuff them?"

"Definitely," said Lincoln, who had wormed his way into the scene again.

I stifled my own objections. "Get those cuffs that cop offered to loan us," I said. I wanted to think about Lance again. It was a pleasing thought.

Peters pushed through the men, found the officer out in the hall, and brought back a cardboard box. He ripped it open and dumped the cuffs out on Lincoln's desk.

"Where are the keys?" I said.

"He didn't give me any."

"Well go get them," I said. One of them began to giggle.
"Shut your mouth," I said.

In a moment Peters was back again. "You ain't gonna believe this," he said. "That cop said to tell you he left the keys at the station."

Our "prisoners" broke into peals of laughter. Even my own men were tittering.

"Shut up," Peters hollered. He hit the boy nearest him with a short, murderous kidney punch.

"Hold your goon back, man," Crown said.

I kept back a smile and ignored Crown. "Turn around," I said to them. "Now listen. I want you to go out of here in single file. There's a mob out there ready to tear you up, so stay in line."

"Those are our friends out there," a black boy said. "You're the ones had better stay in line."

"Friends, your ass," I said.

I turned to Peters and gave him the instructions to pass to the rest of the men. "Have a line of men on both sides of them," I said, "with three or four men in front to clear a path through the crowd. And let's keep them moving fast."

Peters nodded. "Yeah," he said, "if they ever get us stopped, it's gonna be bad."

We herded them out of Lincoln's office and down the hall. Crown was last in line, flanked by Peters and me.

"Many rednecks down there?" he asked as we walked.

"Enough."

"Any of us out there?"

"Keep walking."

"You clowns were expecting trouble from us, weren't you?"

"Shut up," I said.

"Do you know what you're doing?"

I didn't answer. I mulled over why he was trying to make conversation. But then we were going out the main door into the crowd, and there was no more time to think.

Lieutenant West's platoon joined my men, and we pushed our way through the people toward the police vans. I looked at the people. There were men from
town in sweaty sport shirts, angry white students, and a smattering of farmers. Pieces of cardboard bobbed over the sea of faces with signs of ANARCHISTS SUCK, KILL CROWN, and WHITE POWER. Huge Wallace pictures leered at us, like some hayseed Big Brother.

We were doing all right. There were curses, a few eggs, but most of their attention seemed to have focused across the campus where some of Crown's sympathizers were brawling with the locals and cops.

But as the head of the line reached the van, two of them stopped and sat down on the ground. It took four men to haul their passively resisting carcasses to the wagon. The crowd grew braver as we stalled.

I heard the voice, shrill with rage, before I ever saw the face. The kid burst through the crowd and charged us. I stepped forward to meet him, and Peters hustled Crown on. He pulled up in front of me and waved a length of pipe. He wobbled, quite drunk.

"Get back." I was loose now.

"Nigger lovin' bastard!" he squealed and rushed at me. Instead of meeting him head on, I side-stepped him and rammed the rifle butt into his solar plexus. He let out a loud "ooof", clawed at the air in front of him, staggered back a step, and fell.

I back-pedalled away, ready for another one. They were too stunned to react until I was safe with the rest of my men. I got a better look at the boy as he lay twitching on the ground. He was probably not sixteen, brave on whiskey and blind with brainwashed hate. I felt something, a rare twinge of remorse, perhaps, but it was faint.

I watched my men loading the prisoners into the truck. One boy was making a feeble effort to get away, giving Peters an excuse to kick him squarely in the butt.

"Peters," I said.

He turned and smirked at me. "What is it, Lieu­tenant?" he said.

"Nothing."

In a minute more they were all in the truck, except for Crown. I had orders to bring him personally. Peters and I took Crown over to my Jeep.
Peters got in the front seat beside my driver Billy. Crown climbed into the back. I looked around; the job was over.

"Hey. Hey you there." I turned and saw a local cop striding toward me.

"That was my cousin you hit," he said, trying to stare me down.

I said nothing, sizing him up. He was young—green. Probably not six months ago he'd been stealing watermelons and chasing girls. But now he was a stud, a bull, looking forward to a long career of graft and abusing the black citizenry.

When I didn't answer, he grew jittery. "Well, what you got to say?"

"Nothing."

He could not hold my gaze anymore. He looked down. "My cousin's a good boy. You mighta busted something inside him."

I shrugged.

"He gonna be a good man pretty soon. A good Southern man."

"Robert E. Lee's laughing his ass off right now," I said.

His face reddened. "I want you to say you sorry." I tried to keep a straight face but had to smile.

"Why you Federal son bitch, I ought to give you a good whuppin'." He began to ease his hand back to his hip pocket.

"Take your hand away from that blackjack, or you'll get the same thing your cousin did."

He put his hands in front of him. The color had left his face. He was beaten and he knew it.

"What you done still wasn't right," he protested.

"Right?" I sneered. "What the hell is right? You use cattle prods on unarmed Negroes, and you're right. Now this time you've got a blackjack in your pocket and a pistol in your holster. But I've got a rifle right here in my hand. So it looks like I'm right, boy."

He stepped back. He was shaking with humiliation. "Now beat it," I said. "Your nerve is gone."

He turned and skulked away. But I wanted to twist the knife; I knew he would do it to me. "Tell
your cousin a good ol' South Carolina boy says hey," I called to him. "Us Southerners gotta stick together."

He did not look back.

Billy was excited. "Man, Lieutenant," he exclaimed, "you sure put that guy down."

"Just take us to the jail," I said.

Crown was looking at me. When Peters began talking to Billy, he slid a little closer to me. "I've been watching you, Morrow," he said quietly.

"How 'bout that!"

"I watched you use that rifle. You've layed out a lot of guys, haven't you?"

I said nothing, thinking of people.

Crown changed his tack when I didn't respond.

"What's your specialty in the army?"

"Weapons," I said. "Small arms mainly."

"Did you see much combat in Vietnam?"

"Too much," I said.

"Where'd you go to college?"

"Clemson."

"Made good grades, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Are you married?"

I shook my head. Then I realized that Crown was pulling information out of me, that he'd caught me with my guard down. "What are you?" I said. "A personnel man?"

Crown chuckled. "Just interested," he said. "I wanted to find out something about you."

I looked out at the sky. The day had been muggy and overcast, but now the clouds were darkening in the south.

"Where's your home in South Carolina, Morrow?"

I was careful now. "Charleston," I said.

"What's your old man do for a living?"

I hesitated, as always tempted to lie. But I didn't. "He works on the docks," I said.

"Perfect," Crown said. "Some sociologist would have a field day with you."

"What do you mean?"

"You were poor, so you overcompensated. You studied hard not 'cause you liked to learn, but because
you were on the make. You're not married. You've seen combat." He sighed. "Yeah, Morrow, you're just the kind of man I'm going to need."

"Need for what?"

"I'll tell you something, Morrow," he said. "We're living in revolutionary times. There's a big storm coming."

"I guess you mean a race war."

"Aw, come off it," he said. "I mean a power struggle, pure and simple."

"Count me out of your revolution," I said. "I've seen enough of your 'army' today."

"Those titty-babies," he snorted. "Why they wouldn't even make good cannon fodder."

He was riled, and I almost liked him. "Well, who do you plan to use, then?" I said.

"Men like me and you."

"Don't compare me with you," I said. "You don't know me." Suddenly I didn't want to talk anymore and looked out at the downtown traffic. Ten minutes more, and we'd be at the jail.

He wouldn't let it drop, though. "I know you, Morrow," he said. "And I think you know me."

I looked at him. "You're damn right I know you," I said. "I know your talk about justice and freedom is a front. You want power."

"Don't you?"

His words had struck home. I couldn't answer him.

He put a hand on my shoulder. "I'm not going to bug you anymore," he said. "But think about something. You're an out, just like me. You just think about all the in people you know. It's those cats we're going after one of these days."

I looked away. I didn't want to think about what he'd said, but I couldn't help it. Too many people--people I knew with money, with class, people who'd made me feel like dirt--were in my mind. I thought of the boys I'd gone to college with drawing fat salaries married to rich girls. I thought of the paunchy politicians and generals too proud to admit their mistakes which kept my friends and me in meaningless bloodletting.
We stopped in front of the jail, and then a cop motioned us to pull around back. A cluster of officers, lawyers, and newsmen were waiting there. Billy parked the jeep, and we all got out. A few officers were holding the newsmen back. Crown and I stood together for a moment.

"Here, Morrow," Crown said, handing me a card, "you contact me when you get out of the army."

I took the card. "We understand each other, don't we, Crown?" I asked, more a statement of fact than a question.

"Damn right," he said. "We're two of a kind--mean sonbitches."

Two cops and Crown's lawyer came to take him into the jail. He and I looked at each other and said nothing. Then, almost spontaneously, we shook hands. They led him off. Just as he entered the door of the jail, he turned and hollered back, "Morrow--see you."

Even though our job was over, we couldn't start the long drive back to Fort Benning until we'd received authority to do so. We'd been dispatched to the town by a presidential order and would have to be dismissed by one.

I looked at my watch: six o'clock. We hadn't eaten since noon. Peters and Billy left me to join the rest of our platoon, who were mingling with Lieutenant West's men.

I was glad to be alone for the first time all day. But I didn't get to be. A reporter, a man about my age, walked up to me. "You're the one who brutalized the local boy today aren't you?"

"No," Already I could tell he was some ultra-liberal, shot through with humanitarianism and non-violence.

He checked his notebook. "You are Lieutenant Curt Morrow?"

"Yes."

"Then why'd you deny hitting the boy?"

"I never denied hitting him," I said. "You certainly did." He was filled with self-righteous rage.
"You better get your facts straight," I said.
"I defended myself against some punk. That's all."
For a moment I thought he was going to jump me.
"Maybe you haven't heard. They took that boy to
the hospital. You cracked the bottom of his breast-
bone. He may have internal injuries, too. You
should be real pleased."
I shrugged.
"My god," he cried, "what kind of man are you?
You may have ruined a boy's future."
Peters, my foul-mouthed defender, walked up be-
hind the reporter and dropped a ham-like hand on
his shoulder. "You better get yo' butt home, sonny
boy," he said, "and quit pesterin' my friend."
The reporter turned, scared now, and twisted a-
way from Peters. "You can't tell me to do that," he
said.
"G'wan," Peters growled. The reporter left,
looking over his shoulder.
"Thanks, Peters," I said. The whole scene seem-
ed comic as long as I could blank out the report-
er's words.
Peters and I sat down on the hood of the jeep.
I punched him softly on the arm. "Just think," I
said, trying to laugh it off, "I might have ruined
that kid's future. And he could be president."
"Or most likely a pimp," Peters said.
As we sat there saying nothing, I felt a close-
ness to this black man who'd been with me almost
two years, who was so like me in many ways. I had
come to know his troubles--a paltry education, a
broken home, an unhappy marriage. I could tell he
was feeling low, too.
"Hurricane coming," he said to no one in parti-
cular. "Storm warnings on the coast."
"Let it blow," I said. "We don't give a damn,
don't we?"
"Nah." He drummed his fingers on the jeep.
"Curt," he said, using my given name for the first
time, "you're a smart man. You been to college. I
want you to tell me something."
"What is it?" I said.
"There's guys married. Married to good women, not just some old punch. And they're home with their wife and kids eatin' supper right now. They're happy. And we're here tired and dirty, got no place to go, nobody caring 'bout us. Why is that, Curt? I want to know why."

I thought about it as I had many times before. "I don't know," I said. "It's a regular goddamned mystery."

I took Crown's card from my pocket and tried to read it. It was too dark. A streak of lightning zigzagged over the jailhouse roof. We were in for a real blow. I put Crown's address back in my pocket. It was a place a man like me could turn to, a port for the coming storm.

* * * *

I

Some levity that made me trust my lot
Would yield the south— for prize, and also guile,
Delightful in itself, from thence this plot;
I thought that I could seize her extended smile.

My grasp was much too slow, however kind,
As miracles in numbers can express
A zero unattainable to the mind,
My foot showed itself wondrous not to progress.

Beside her wink my cunning stands naive.
Concerning art, an artist might well see
What future scholars never will believe;
A horribly bold, frigid pageantry.

I loiter among cold glooms that trace
The silhouette of an absent woman's face.
II

For faded good I only can feel shame,
No longer shall I give you gentle care;
My heart needs pleasure of another name,
Of slave and master, deafness and despair;

Imagine us as in the dreams of sleep
Aslant, like marionettes threads make to go;
I see that you are kind enough to weep—
Behind your head the drapes begin to glow—

I must have something painful, for the years
Have rusted every sweetness from your eyes;
Only if they became a spring of tears
Would any pleasant warmth in me arise;

Only if I can hurt you till you moan,
Will soothing love relieve my breast of stone.

In The Middle

Climb into the cool, X-marked circle,
into the tunnel of silence
on pistol days,
And there revolving like a gun,
Abraxas on a stage
shooting holes in the sundown.

Awaken early by birds,
after mind-rot and sleep,
four trains staring at the wind
are building trestles in your eyes,
to clearly cross and see yourself
mirrored in the dawn.
(freeze)

Norther's comin'.
Better close the house.
Better wrap your head,
Before the ice does,
And it choked. From
The freeze-

Colder than the claw
The slick wind slides across the trees,
The freeze--
And it's cryin'.

Gravures Coloriées

I

Too snow ground
spreading out in
white strand power lines
reaching--
reaching out--
what a way to start a world.

II

the gold miming sky,
it's oblique shades,
seeks the earth.
lost in the darkness
the pine tree grovels
under the stars.

not until i had seen
the shades of people,
not as sad, slip through my mind
did i remember you.
but even on your birthday
the impression was too soft to grasp.
A sing bare room
With worn wood floors
We sit, two figures
Listening to the end of the song.
It's something
I just made up for fun and now it's gone.

Opus 18
I

One vision, window looking out;
A flickering gaslamp, its yellow eye
stuttering in the fog.
Late afternoon--
Just a trace of frost, a little snow
on the fog-bound trees.
Who were the violent men
Imploring me for another dispensation,
Sun,
No, no sun. Softness sits too well upon the
earth,
foh.
What rounder dyped me into ice this morning--
Binding up the trees like old men.
A sad flute voice told me to just let it happen.
Just let--
it happened.
Just let it expel an epitaph,
Ice and then the epitaph.
Words meaning an imitation of death.
Words, a thread of reality.
(how I spent the night in a kid-lined john):

we all stood in line
weighted with impatient
kidney aching coincidence
for relief funding ceramic idols
while flesh flicked
in the night blanked drive-in
with its mating call anxiousness
...its shuttle trips.
Sigmund says there are no antecedents
to intuition
no phallure so distinct as straw-
speared paper cups
between frigid knees
in spite of
zealous freshmen and the cold.
A Prophecy: Blood Like a River

Blood like a River was sent forth over me,
plunging every sin to the bottom of the sea
Shaping the body against the nature of men
Sending a new creature that now dwells within

This Blood like a River cannot destroy but will save
Prophets of old saw this blood that Christ freely gave
Reaching out like a flood every soul to empower
And to those in its grasp has become a strong tower

This Blood like a River will give peace of mind
Bringing each day thoughts that are kind
Running smoothly along, everything in control
For the heart of this river thinks only of your soul

This Blood like a River is the mercy of God
Springing forth from the life of sorrow he trod
Though scourged, spit upon, heart broken, he died
Love sent this river to always abide

This Blood like a River from Calvary was sent
To cover every sin of those that repent
The high billow waves are submissive and meek
For the chiefest of sinners have plunged to the deep

This Blood like a River is hungry to find
Some soul to engulf in its Gloryland Climb
The sound of the river I hear loud and clear
There is salvation for all that plunge here.
contributors: JOCLYN MURFF/cover/we like Josie!

MIKE OWENS/request/when not living in III Unit composes himself with Sandstone Rubrics.

JACK BARTLETT/greeze/in the middle/ decently exposes himself as the last Renaissance Man.

withey
alexander rodewald

GRIFF HUMPHRIES/wet hair/Griff's grandfather--ask him about it.

WALTER TAPP/freeze/Opus 18/is a 17 year old high school student and I don't know where he goes to school.

LARRY KOLVOORD/war gods/Larry discovered and named the Kolvoordi Gorge.

TARZAN SUGGS/eric/long known for snuggling stories over Intentional Datelines.

JACKIE SAUNDERS/a time/never had her poems published anywhere before ever.

JOE SECREST/shaping UP/probably doesn't appreciate having this poem in here since he wrote it for someone else.

PATE WARNER/afternoon & twilight/Pate makes 3 copies of everything.
Pate makes 3 copies of everything.
Pate makes 3 copies of everything.
D.S. is probably better known in Austin, Texas because he's scarce around here.

W.S. is a shut-in, only coming out for maypole dances.

DAVID LEWIS is poet of sorts and oblider out of dictum.

BIG MAMA/prophecy/"the spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."/ Isaiah 61.

SUSAN RADIG, typist, muse, and Placator of Wounded Sensibility

*the strayed reveller*

may 1969