

# The Day Dreams

A Portrait of the Poet as a Young Trumpeter



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## **The Day Dreams**

### **Finding an Apartment**

This morning is hard to remember. Awoke mid-morning to dress, make bed, and guess I began practicing trumpet and writing. At one point visited Harvard housing but without luck in finding an apartment. Agonized over whether I wanted to take energy and trouble to call ads in the newspaper. Kept putting it off, writing and practicing until mid-afternoon. Trumpet was difficult, frustrating to have so little control, no inspiration. But then I improvised beginning with my new low fart notes, lower than low F#, and built an exciting improv around short phrases from tunes I know. Thoughts of Cassandra begin to fade while warmth for Liz Larkin grows steadily. Crazy to have feelings for people you never see. Called Michael Hardy and agreed to drop by American Science & Engineering with his key to Ronnie's apartment.

Finally called one ad about house with four energetic, creative, thinking, so on and so forth people. When a woman answered I asked about the room in their apartment and she pointedly corrected me by saying "in our home." This kind of talk makes me withdraw, so to put a quick end to the conversation I mentioned my trumpet. She writes songs, plays piano,

etc. so my playing wasn't such a drawback although we'd have to schedule times for me to practice. Schedule, I thought, I don't want to live there. Then there was a complicated treatise on the purpose of communal living, relationships between house members, individuality and sharing, until I felt sick. So I just said I thought she should look for someone more committed to group living. She laughed and we hung up.

Over at Am. Sci. & Eng. the black and white switchboard operators were pretty and joking with each other in girl fashion so that some of the men around were beginning to feel uptight and paranoid. They paged Michael Hardy for me and I wandered around waiting, looked at the company bulletin board, browsed a pile of Institute of Contemporary Dance brochures, smelled ditto machine fluid and watched two men repair some kind of roller, then settled with staring out the window onto Mass. Ave. Everybody shirt, ties, dresses, me in blue jeans with a hole for each cheek. Kept thinking maybe Cassandra would pass and I'd step out of the building and wouldn't that be circular since I parted from her here last time we were in love. Things rarely work that way and if they did she'd just act like a nut and say O my God, O my God. My god too.

Michael took a long time and each time the elevator bell rang I was sure it was him. People looked at me, women attracted the way people chained to their

desks are attracted to the seemingly free, avant-garde. Finally Michael arrived with Henry Atlas of ICD and another bearded fellow. Henry said to me I know you from somewhere but I greeted him distantly. This seemed to make him shy and he didn't say goodbye going out. They are building a new theater with city funds and want Michael to do the lighting.

Michael and I stood by the corner of two walls in the lobby and he said I looked well except for a little sadness around my eyes. I responded that I am well but I spend a lot of time alone now. He wanted to know what's up with Liz and me but I haven't seen her in two months. Nothing's up, everything's down. He said what I need is a beautiful woman in my life. I said I had too many beautiful women in and out of my life and I think the switchboard operators overheard that one. Michael thinks that my problems with Liz are like his with Rylin and secretly I agree but I wouldn't tell him that. Instead I said maybe there are some parallels. Michael responded that there were parallels with everybody. That seemed true too.

He mentioned his short-lived "affair" with Debbie Kunitz, that she had come over for dinner one night but nothing had happened. I didn't let him know that I knew the details from the Kunitz side. He honestly admitted though that he was attracted to her. I said her energy was much too much for me and together we made fun

of the Kunitz energy. I told him Ronnie was the calmest member of the family and that he should spend an evening with the entire clan at once some time.

Michael said City Dance Theater performed Sunday night and they tried to reach me. I was at Stan Stafford's gig at Pooh's Pub and they were terrific. Michael has great admiration for Stan. He told me that City Dance Theater has a lot of work in schools this year at \$50 a performer per day. Carol, Raymond, Tom, Stan and Steve are performing. God knows they have the two best musicians in town working with them and I am envious.

Only Scott played Sunday night who Michael says misses me a lot. This touches me. I told Michael to tell Scott I'd soon be in touch and want to play music with him often. Michael wanted to know what I do with myself these days but looked bored with my explanation of my writing so I cut it short. Tom will be in Boston for quite a while it seems and Carol too so regardless of Rylin's plans it looks like City Dance Theater will exist, which cheered me. We shook hands, Michael and I, and he said to stay very happy.

Outside, trying not to waste energy looking at all the pretty women, I hurried home. Mustered courage to call for an apartment, the work phone number which turned out to be Massachusetts Halfway House. The fellow, Bob, sounded easy going and intelligent and

down to earth, and I took an immediate liking to him. He spoke not too fast and made no immediate demands, said only that the apartment was small, he had shopping to do after work, why don't I drop by around 7, 152 Pearl St. Although I liked him I imagined the apartment dingy and small so I wasn't overexcited.

I passed the hours until 7 by playing trumpet and reading Ruby's folder of early writing. Suffice it to say her work is clear, imaginative, funny and strong. I was ashamed of my own heavy handed, confusing and narcissistic work. There were short stories, one painful to read about an old couple, Abe and Martha, who hate each other and watch tv over tv dinners day in, day out, until they receive a prank phone call saying they've won a trip to Bermuda. It changes their lives until they arrive at the airport and there are no tickets so they go home and slump back in front of the tv which they had left on. Some bittersweet poems—here's a short one, as succinct as any haiku—

A good day as opposed to a bad day,

And—ahhh—I think there's a raisin in this cookie!

Below it the grease stain from a cookie. Even her scribbles and doodles were hilarious and amazing for their clarity. Writing seems to come easy to her.

Finally it was almost 7 and I put on my raincoat. A short way up Mass. Ave. a black bummed out guy with a cast on his right arm, I've seen him around Central

Square, asked me for spare change. While I dug for a quarter he asked me how I was. Not bad, and how are you. Alright. When I left I heard him ask the girl going the other way, any spare change? Bought a crappy cheese danish in bagel shop under new and friendlier if not better management upstairs from Autre Chose and coming out a white bummed out tangle-bearded guy caught my eye with his so I nodded in greeting. He perked up and asked Yeah? with hope in his face. I toughened and said Yeah what? and he said Oh nothing, nothing, very confused and embarrassed and I passed on. It began to rain harder. In front of city hall workers were protesting that the company they were striking was paying police to harass strikers and the city government was condoning it. I believed them having seen what criminals Cambridge police can be.

152 Pearl St. was a dark house camouflaged by a row of large sycamores, with a narrow, dark, dirty entrance. I could see I wasn't going to like it here but I rang anyway. Bob came downstairs, a tall, thin and flexible, blonde young guy about my age, clean shaven, dressed casually. I liked his look and manner right away and also the way he moved, with rhythm, not stiffly.

I followed him upstairs, he said his cat seemed scared of me and I thought of all the people, usually women who would eventually be lovers, who on first showing me their homes were surprised at how



immediately the cat was attracted to me. I remembered this of Liz's cats especially and thought maybe it's a good sign that Bob's cat is afraid of me. I thought to tell him how I scared a cat into the street to its death one night in Nova Scotia but refrained. Why sound crazier than I actually am?

The apartment was larger, cleaner and more comfortable than I'd imagined and I was being won over quickly. What would be my room had the most incredible view of the Boston skyline I've ever seen, even from a bridge. The room was small and simple, two small windows, but two not one, and partially furnished. Bob's large tool chest, a single bed strewn with clothes, a small throw rug, motel-like plastic curtains, a sagged easy chair. The kitchen was clean and roomy, good use of space, would be nice to read or play chess at the kitchen table. Bob's room was large and he kept it simple, just a single bed, couple of chairs and lamps, bookcase, stereo, and his guitar. A small study was adjacent.

Bob reminded me of at least three people. In the slightly feminine way he walked and held a cigarette he recalled Peter Heaney. In his smile, thin lips drawn across teeth, slightly naughty gleam in eyes, of Marc Jeffers' Aunt Muriel. In his build and the way he parted his hair down the middle, of my brother David. All reasonably good associations. He showed me around

and then offered a beer in the kitchen. He sat at the table and I leaned with my ass against the counter.

Bob works in the office at Mass. Halfway but hopes to become a counselor there. He also organizes tenants in Cambridgeport and belongs to the Cambridge Co-op. Lived in apartment since Sept., before that lived on Florence St. near Stop & Shop, originally from upstate NY, went to Harper College for four years, psychology and sociology, Binghamton. He was easy going about his politics and made no attempt to know or judge mine.

He also seemed easy to live with, not complicated, just take care of the apartment, no heavy raps or needs. I wanted him to get a feel for me so I talked too much, kept up too much intensity and since I've been isolated a few days a lot of my confusions showed. I was also getting drunk on the beer. He seemed pleased when I said I felt good about the place and about him and to corroborate I gave him a couple of examples of people I didn't feel good about while searching for apartments. One was the woman on the telephone this afternoon. But it all made me sound too cynical. The only time Bob showed himself opinionated was in describing someone who had come to look who was an electronic musician. It seemed a little heavy to him so he turned the guy away.

While discussing my trumpet playing (his girlfriend played flute when they lived together but he never

heard her do anything but scales—she was in N.E. Conservancy of Music) we got to talking about nightspots around Boston—1369 Club, Inman Square Men’s Club, etc. Turned him on to Stan later this week at Pooh’s. We talked about housing politics, landlords who leave their buildings empty for the tax breaks, squatters in NYC, etc.

Yet for all the good conversation and my feeling for him he was unwilling to make any commitment until tomorrow night. While we talked someone else called about the apartment and Bob asked if I would mind if he described it to them. This led to stories from both of us about the cutthroat competition for apartments in the Boston area. When I left we shook hands and I said I hoped to see him again. I was sure about what I wanted but he was still unsure and wanted to see other people.

I bought a chocolate ice cream cone and returned to Ronnie’s place in the rain. I was so excited and anxious about the apartment, it seemed so unbearable that I might be disappointed again, that I just went to bed, at nine o’clock. At about eleven thirty Ruby called to say hello, making an effort to befriend me. We talked awhile, about our weekends, I talked mostly about myself, and I felt Ruby getting depressed on the other end. Somehow this wasn’t the conversation she had wanted. Let down by all the talking I do about myself and the trivial events of my lonely life, she signed off

and said to keep in touch. I felt bad for Ruby who had put herself out and realized I wasn't who she had imagined, that without Ronnie the bond between us was not strong, that probably we wouldn't have the intense friendship she has with Ronnie even though Ronnie and she are lovers and Ronnie and I are friends.

## Small Successes

In the little magical house my family grew up in at 24 Evelyn Lane full of people and animals, dogs, cats and birds. It seems I'm responsible for the animals and two large muscular black short-haired handsome dogs are stampeding around the house agitated with anticipation while I fetch their leashes. Nature must have her way in them and I sympathize completely as I rarely do with a fellow creature.

Once outside on their short leashes, the one is calm and satisfied but the other, Chaos, lives up to her name pulling with her strong neck in any direction but mine. And she has trouble choosing a spot to pee, letting a little out in the middle of the street but saving some to squat on the strip of grass near the curb. Tired of the battle we arrive in front of the house again where Chaos makes a terrific struggle upon realizing we're going inside. A house member comes out to the sidewalk and informs me that there is a special leash for Chaos, longer and made of rubber hose.

I awake in the dark of five in the morning and hurry to the bathroom to pee. Then half a glass of lemonade and back to bed, flip on jazz radio for a minute or two, of course I'm up early having gone to bed at nine o'clock. Energetic with anticipation of Bob White's decision about apartment, interspersed with

thoughts of Cassandra Szymborska and Liz Larkin. Soon though I fall asleep again for three or four hours to dream forgotten dreams.

Awake in the daylight, lounge in bed, then up to dress and brush gums that bleed, and out in the cool morning, benevolent clouds, to buy a fat notebook for my new writing project. A hundred feet in front of me on Mass. Ave., coming toward me, I am attracted strongly by a blonde girl with glasses, lively she seems, breasts bouncing fleshily with her gait. We approach one another, I'm looking at her when the guy she is holding hands with accosts me excitedly in a foreign accent, missing the articles. Whether it is excitement or the language barrier that gives him trouble he stammers out that he knows me, from Ottawa, remember? I showed him a special route from Ottawa to Quebec City through the northern forest.

He does look familiar, his voice even more familiar, yes, in the Ottawa youth hostel, converted jail, one evening by rows of bunk beds. Eyes rove from him to the woman, stunning beauty, self-assured, joyous energy, aware of the power of her beauty but not at all obnoxious about it. Remarkable coincidence to meet here, he was with a guy in Ottawa, himself a perfect specimen as well. Israeli visiting Boston, next New York, Philadelphia, Wash. D.C., Florida. Boston is my home. My home. Looking for an apartment, think I've found

one, of what interest could that be to him. She asks if I know of a grocery store and I give them lousy directions, too amazed by her to think, then he shakes my right hand with his left hand so he won't have to let go of her, like athletes.

Rejecting Harvard Coop, who wants a college notebook, not me, and it's crowded, go to Woolworth's, more my temperament, buy a Herald Square notebook, I like the name, 137 pages. Then hurry home through morning shade Harvard yard to write in it. Check Harvard housing office so God doesn't think I'm too confident.

Cook up a rice and vegetable meal and wolf it down before noon listening to Keith Jarrett solo concerts. Piano like an orchestra in intensity and fullness of sound, his meditative aura powerfully felt when music stops, you realize what a journey it's been, but variety of musical content, everything in the same key or mode and constant rhythm combination of folk rock, jazz and classical roots, a little disappointing, melodies not distinct enough. Still, an incredible performance for one man improvising. Practice trumpet, less resistance, coming a bit easier now, Arban exercises.

Now down Mass. Ave. to Central Square unemployment office. My favorite office, workers pleasant and unassuming, not intimidating or superior. Take my card to white-haired man who looks severe

with a red face like he's about to explode with anger or annoyance, but who I've always liked for his formal respect for unemployed. When adjusting he calls us Mister or Miss and politely offers a seat. Conservative, business-like, follows the book, but respectful. His line is shortest of three because other unemployed fear his looks.

I receive one check instead of two after last week's windfall but I'm grateful for this easy money and do not, never, complain. Cross the street to bank alongside a meter maid, cars halt for us. The bank teller, she's in a good mood joking with her buddy and I like her intelligent smile which I rarely get to see.

Then take my dough to army navy surplus store where there's a sale on down jackets. Spend fifty dollars after trying it on, look in mirror, green coat, perfect fit. The old man who runs store is ecstatic about this sale and treats me like a king. There's a little sack in one coat pocket you can stuff the jacket into. We both get a laugh at this. But I am picky about army pants and don't buy so he soon loses interest in me. I want green not tan, because the material is softer and thicker. He insists they're both the same. Feel them I say. They come from the same manufacturer says he.

Hurry back wondering if I'll bump into Cassandra. My energy too high for one room, at least two hours before Bob White calls. Play trumpet but blow my lip



out. Settle down to read George Eliot's Middlemarch, her flowing sentences and sharp observations, but characters of first chapter not overly interesting. Fall asleep.

The phone ringing wakes me. It's Bob White, remember me? You came to see my apartment yesterday. O yes I perk up. Well, just calling to tell you the room's yours if you still want it. I sure do. Come over around seven to make arrangements. Happy as a bird whose new nest I let loose an hour of mad joyous trumpet passers on street listen a little startled.

Dark again at seven thirty but a clear sky and crescent moon. To make 63 dollars for Bob White need change for a five. Buy jelly cookie I don't want in crummy bagel store and throw it away half eaten. Approach the same homeless man with long beard but cross street before reaching him. Tonight he stands motionless before a lamp post at a gas station. Pass one of the few working men's bars in Cambridge, wood paneled, could find it in any town from here to Arizona. Pearl Street and again the dark house, it is young pin oaks shadowing the front, my new home. Bob White's rumble on stairs to my ring at the bell.

Opening the door, easy smile and greeting. I await his lead at bottom of the stairs. It doesn't matter to him who goes first. The apartment still smells of a burnt pot handle. I tell him how excited I was all day and he says

that's good. Quick look around and then exact same positions as last night, he seated at kitchen table, me standing ass against the counter.

Tonight we converse about his job, how useful office skills are, good paying jobs. Also, I will be away until Oct. 10. He gives me keys in exchange for three twenties and three ones. So as not to hold us in obligatory conversation I begin to leave perhaps a little too fast but he makes room for all my eccentricities. On staircase we talk about New York and New Yorkers and I make the usual flurry of exaggerated comments about that city. He offers to help me move my belongings in, says to feel free to enter the apartment whenever I arrive back, it is my home. Downstairs I try out the front door key.

On the way back to Ronnie's I stop at Hundred Flowers Bookstore and become engrossed in a collection of Virginia Woolf's book reviews. Never have book reviews been so concise or interesting to read, or for that matter, written with such compassion for the writers, yet honest. Her prose is rich but flows easily. If you give her voice its own speed her ideas enter without hardship, without removing the eyes from the page to ponder her meaning.

The bookstore is a meditative place but people needn't speak in library whispers and there are seats and benches and tables to sit and a small restaurant

upstairs. In one favorable review she quotes the writer as suggesting that women attain an emotional purity rarely found in men but men have a more developed sense of honor. It is lucky if generalizations such as this work half the time.

I was pooped when I arrived home, having rushed down Mass. Ave. yet again, and lay down on the bed beginning to daydream of Liz when the phone rang. I must have slept for I answered groggily and didn't immediately recognize Cassandra's voice that goes every which way.

To avoid speaking and thereby revealing my true feelings about her affair with Ramona, I got her talking and talking about her new theater company which is developing rapidly. She described many of the members, a magician and fire or sword eater, a big black guy who can play all the father image types, two or three white ingenues whatever they are, etc. It took a long time and then I almost equaled her enthusiasm in describing my new apartment and my work on trumpet and this enthusiasm further concealed my distance from her.

She said she was going to come over but it's so late, but when I didn't encourage her, a pregnant silence, she didn't press the issue. Cassandra offered to take me to Boston University's employment office to find a ghost writing job and also thought that perhaps I might play for her theater group sometime. Gave her my

new address and phone number and said I'd be in touch when I returned from NY.

I could feel both her love, in her way, and her slight bewilderment at the kind of conversation we had had, not unfriendly but not the conversation of two lovers. When we hung up I felt we'd taken a step out of our past as lovers into our future as friends.

## **Boston to New York**

Wake up early again this morning lay stretched out in bed about an hour the last of my mornings in Ronnie's apartment. Thinking of Cassandra trying to sort out my feelings for her, protecting myself from becoming involved with someone who keeps more than one lover, but why should I feel anger, what is anger? The garbage truck collecting at seven thirty recalls early mornings in New York where I'll be tonight one way or another. Finally rise, dress in clean clothes for the journey into an alt-neu world from this that has been serene and solitary once I began to enjoy my aloneness. Shower listening to Bach first partita for violin but not really hearing.

A cloudless cool day outdoors on my way to bookstore for steno notebook for poetry. Ruby's work inspires me to continue poetry as well as this project. Green-tinted pages, particular about width between lines. At cash register black guy behind me sings navy theme song falsetto. Back home I wanted to eat vegetables but instead succumb to remaining fig newtons and milk. Begin to write, take a break to eat yogurt, run over to Elsa's to return David's Arban book, she her polite tentative self invites me to breakfast with her man friend but to my own surprise I say I am in the middle of some work and hurry home.

Wanted to be on road by noon but nearly noon now and still must practice trumpet. Decent practice, good Round Midnight adhering to tune but filling notes with personality and reaching high F and F sharp easily by lowering shoulders and pushing air up from stomach. David's instruction has already increased control in higher registers. Then pack pack that has been unpacked over a week now, make NEW YORK sign and as about to leave, while doing dishes last thing, phone rings, it's Lee Dickinson.

Lee's world has come tumbling down. Her roommate moving out this month, Lee has no one to share apartment with for October and no money to carry rent, landlady wants to move her daughter in with Lee in November. Lee wants to know if I'll be her roommate for Oct. but I am already established. Besides all these problems Lee is meeting with parents tonight to work out fucked up relationship. I know how those encounters can make you feel you're insane and alone in the world so I try to support her. Over phone she sounds like a little girl. Suggest that perhaps Rylin and Michael will live there and she can live at Ronnie's.

After I explain to her how it would work she perks up to call Michael, says she'll get back to me to tell how it works out but I respond I'll be gone within the hour. Good luck, hang up. Finishing dishes I realize she needs someone to talk to, that's why she wanted to get back to

me, feel bad and annoyed with myself for insensitivity. So call her back, thing with Michael and Rylin unsure but possible and I good luck her again, Lee has lived without me all her life, as have all women, she and all women can take care of themselves without my help.

Hoist pack and cross Harvard yard and square to catch Watertown bus. Autos on Watertown Square as I walk to highway are rude and aggressive. Then down to the highway, cars whiz by but I'm confident of a lift. Soon a red Volkswagen pulls up behind me. The driver's fingers are thin and sensitive. He is well dressed in a tasteful wool suit, sunglasses, close shaven and short oiled hair, a neat moustache. Going to Hartford.

The Volkswagen is too cramped for us to sit in silence so I ask where he lives, Cambridge, what he does, studies socio-biology at Harvard and he offers that he is on the way to Hartford for his mother's funeral. She is dying of cancer. Throughout our conversation, although he originally speaks of her as dead, he uses the present tense thereafter making me think that either he hasn't yet accepted her death or that he expects her to die while he's in Hartford and therefore anticipates a funeral.

It seems he wants to talk so I try to give him my ear. Cancer made his mother a stranger to her family, gray skin tightly drawn over bones, frothing mouth and bulging eyes, absolutely no energy, just a strange body.

This was not their mother and wife and the rest of the family ran to the photo albums and left her alone in the bed. Russell however insisted that although she was dumb and inert, she was alive and could comprehend, and was terrified alone and dying and emotionally abandoned. One night sitting vigil by her Russell decided to try to communicate and she answered by blinking her eyes. He showed the rest of the family and a communication was established that put everyone more at ease so that now the sons and husband alternate keeping all night vigils and are even unafraid to hold and hug her ravaged body.

The story opened my eyes to the extraordinary person I was traveling with. As he smoked a joint and mentioned his years in Haight-Ashbury I could easily picture him with the long hair and beard he had probably shed to enter the academic world. Then we grew safely distant from the subject and discussed death more philosophically. The usual inconclusive wondering about life after death, self-conscious identity or nothingness. I begin to see death as the last great experience, final changes, last realizations, to go forward with curiosity. All this said with a safe distance from death and little contact with the dying.

Russell's ancestors until one generation ago were Connecticut tobacco farmers since before the Revolution. Highway we traveled cut right across the



very land in the valley outside Hartford his family once farmed. Sold when his grandfather died. Russell born in 1941, Congregationalists who he says slyly forgive we Catholics for looking down on Protestants through veils of ignorance. We discuss the Latin Catholic mass and intricate Buddhist chants as heard from Swami Satchidinanda, a man who has bitten off more followers than he can chew. When he lets me off in Hartford I look into his face and realize that he goes on to his mother's death and his family's reaction. He looks worried so I try to encourage him but feel quite inadequate, much as I did earlier with Lee.

Hungry, so I hike away from the highway into the city to find only a Dunkin' Donuts where waitress serves up jelly donut, glazed donut and milk for me. Middle aged woman smokes cig next to me and glances over now and then. Crowded, my big pack makes me two people. Next door buy a cream puff pastry so now my stomach is upset. Business district streets full of well-dressed men and women going home from work, five o'clock. Climb a hill and crawl through bushes on my knees, branches snapping, onto the highway.

Another red Volkswagen stops for me and the red-haired and bearded driver introduces self, offers bite of apple and toke of joint one of which I accept and the other refuse, apple will counteract effects of pastry. This fellow is an advertising copywriter, skittish and not

centered as I imagine people in advertising and sales must be, always flipping the station finder on the radio. At 17 he ran away from home in Lynn, Mass. with a dollar twenty-five, a year and a half on the road fed and cared for by people, until he landed in L.A. and began writing copy.

He created the slogan Solo Suzuki. Debating whether to break its enigmatic charm I finally ask what the saying means to him. Independent guy riding motorcycle down highway alone. Do I like it he asks. According to him it is interesting to write ads for sports equipment, public interest groups, etc., because it takes imagination, boring to write for soaps and detergents, underwear, lingerie. For rest of ride my critical senses are attuned to radio ads.

Almost dark now so hitch to train station with high school boy driving big family car. We speak of football and baseball both of which he plays. When I exhibit knowledge of defensive linebacker as one of the more fun positions (which he plays) he takes me all the way to the train station. The boy seems a little small and soft for football but he says he's stronger than he looks.

I'm right on the money because the train pulls into the station as I step onto platform. Express to New York. In my too bright car a guy who looks like Kurt Vonnegut snoozes, college type reads book, gay black holds tape recorder close to his ear, heavy black lady sits

behind me, our conductor looks dapper and cosmopolitan sitting and chatting with passengers. Towns turn into city and I am impressed with pueblo-like dwellings of millions of anonymous residents of the Bronx. Mortar, cement and brick, sumac and weeds, crumbling cement, decay, it is an ancient city already. Immense city.

At 125<sup>th</sup> St. I choose not to brave the night stares of blacks against my white face and continue to Grand Central Station. Upstairs to concourse, open pack and put on sweater. Man smoking cigar reads newspaper nearby. The big clock, Vanderbilt Avenue, turn toward 42<sup>nd</sup> St. As I walk west I grow more uncomfortable with increase in sexual street business, gays and drunks. Begin to take care where I lay my eyes.

Excitement infectious, cheap pizza joints, dirty movies, stop in telephone booth to call Marc and warn him I'm coming, busy signal. Allied Chemical building news, Ford vetoes HEW bill, watch big shy guy check out pretty Asian girl's flat blue jean ass, gay guy from train walking with his buddy gossiping, roar of bus noxious fumes, newspaper stand slams shut, black dude dressed in pimp outfit, broad brimmed hat slick slacks shoes, Doberman pincher tightly reigned in with heavy chain in right hand, glamorous make up stockings high heels and short dress sexy woman on left arm, her vacant proud

look. I gotta laugh, it's a scream, and me and my backpack one more character in the parade.

Descend to subway, token, gray and dirty hot uptown express. I am on an interesting car. Many black men reading newspapers, little white girl at front train window, flatfooted mother seated across from me, next to her black woman absorbed in her thoughts occasionally peeks at neighbor's newspaper. Mother and daughter hold hands getting off, mother is smiling with this contact. Change at 96<sup>th</sup>, off at 103<sup>rd</sup>, up into night, crescent moon hanging over the city like a Muslim country, up street to Marc's apartment, ambulance out front.

Jesse answers door in long unruly brown beard that makes him like a rabbi or Mr. Natural. We immediately trade good natured insults and Marc joins in and the joking talk begins each explaining his situation in life in a jumbled way, laughing and yelling, hitting one another, insulting all in fun. Phones ring, I talk and read paper at same time, flaunting perhaps too much how comfortable I expect to be in Marc's home.

Jesse and I discuss love and faithfulness our old fashioned ways and then we all go out for a walk down Broadway buying cigarettes, soda, bananas, girl watching, still talking furiously. Marilyn, the English girl I invited to New York, who I met in Montreal, arrived after I left for Boston so Marc as well as he could given his

work and being sick showed her and her son around. Feel guilty about forgetting her, she only came to New York because she thought I'd be here.

Jesse and Marc are both struggling without jobs. They are bored and looking for weed. We walk up to Columbia and I suggest a game of pool. I am wild, dancing around, scaring the student workers. But the pool game is fun and ends too soon when the pool hall closes. Tired, and I think all three of us a little depressed we walk home, buy ice cream. Jesse and I walk ahead talking while Marc straggles behind.

Finally we calm down. Jesse watches t.v. after fixing the set and falls asleep on the couch. I read the Voice looking for trumpeters and movies, lying on Marc's bed. Marc lies down to draw a little. Then we sit in the kitchen and eat leftover meat loaf and discuss art. I say it's a process, you either do it every day regardless of the outcome, fame or money, or you don't. Marc wants to be Michelangelo in one day but understands what I mean by art as process because it's true of every discipline, in his case law. He looks forward to learning whatever law comes his way and letting that carry him along.

We set up for chess. My unorthodox opening puts me in trouble later and although I sneakily checkmate Marc, he has thoroughly trounced me. Even so, with

typical self-admiration I consider my play brilliant and we tease each other about the game until I go to sleep.

## Chance Encounters

Dark morning, first one awake. Settle to write, doubtful about worth of this project but persevering, sometimes what I think while writing are worst pieces turn out to be most interesting. Today I must do as I please and enjoy New York following nobody's whims but my own. Toward finish of work Marc and Jesse groggily awake and we mill around kitchen and Marc's bedroom, Marc sorting out law firm rejections, Jesse sleepily staring into space, Bob filling his face with food. We plan to play music this afternoon but in meantime I don yellow raincoat head for Columbia to learn of Peter Heaney's whereabouts.

Cold uncomfortable drizzle. Let chance encounters shape day instead of chafing under Marc's hectic schedule. Who will I meet on street? At campus undergraduate men and women living college adventure. The faces of a few of them smiling to themselves perhaps about a night of love making, new or even first lover. Marble library, elevator up with two intellectuals talking around their complaints about a man they work with. Guess the right floor, approach office, through doorway sitting at Peter's old desk is Rich Tichborne.

Surprised and a little saddened to find him stuck in this musty institution. He greets me warmly and with

his characteristic guilelessness, Rich the most open, least egotistical, played fewest head games, gentlest and kindest of all my acquaintances from Columbia. In all four years at school I never had such a close look at Rich's heavy set self, round face and for the first time see his gray, slightly harder and stronger than I remembered, eyes.

He on his side of counter, me on mine, we talk. Rich taking year of biochemistry courses to try again for medical school, for free because he works for Columbia. Peter got him the job of course. Rich is married to Marge. Peter married Lorraine this past summer and now lives in Washington, D.C. painting, Lorraine architecture student at Catholic University. We praise Peter's painting, his imagination, sensitivity with paints and colors, eye for detail and ability to draw likenesses.

Rich tells me of his time in Pittsburgh and countryside, how he was bored and wondering what to do with rest of life, so he's attempting medical school again. So many of my friends, people my age, grappling with the problem of a life's work. Why did he marry? It's a contract. After living together a long while you decide either to fuck around or be faithful and the contract symbolizes faithfulness.

We call the roll of all those we knew in college, people scattered from Europe to the west coast. I tell Rich of my good luck in Boston leaving out much detail.



We trade addresses and numbers and he promises he'll be in touch in four or five weeks when he's in Boston visiting Maura and Jerry Masefield. He wants me to say hello to Ronnie Kunitz for him. I'm surprised that they knew each other but had forgotten colloquium our last semester in college. Rich's friendly openness brings out the same in me.

Rush home knowing Marc upset how long I've been away. He's cool and untalkative but I can't take it seriously and I share my experience with him. He melts and we talk of old Columbia friends too. Jesse listens slightly amused but also a little awed by strength of attachments from college.

We call Joya and pick her up to play music at her father's apartment where there's a piano. Weather has Jesse in bad mood but Joya's presence soon cheers us, her uncontrolled laugh, she is much like her name. I like her independence but also warmth, sense of humor, one of few people who can prove my gullibility time and time again by scolding with a straight face and then laughing at me for taking her seriously.

Traffic is awful but I'm comfortable in back seat cracking jokes, feel happier with Marc now that I've had time on my own. For the first time Joya engages me in conversation, this makes her less remote and I like her even better. She is ill with swine flu, some new strain

that supposedly can be fatal. Vaccinations imminent nationwide. Or is she kidding me again?

Joya's father's apartment house on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. and 40<sup>th</sup> St. looks like an office building from the outside. The domed lobby gives way upstairs to long hallways of endless pink metal doors with the ding-dongs in the center, apartments A to P, Q or R, dormitory look. Her father's apartment has a view of the East River and a Con. Ed. plant, smokestacks spewing white clouds and far below, 25 stories below, a large parking lot filled with blue Con. Ed. service trucks.

All the buildings around this scraper are low and we can see a few blocks over to midtown office canyons. The tall buildings so close together, old and new designs, make a powerful scene. The whole bathroom including the toilet is lined with a furry carpet, reminds me of cars of Canadians upholstered with soft orange synthetic fur. Strange aesthetic.

Jesse and I play a tune and when Marc arrives from struggles to park his car and is shy to play we cajole him until he sits at piano. Joya laughs nearby. Jesse provides good solid rhythm and leadership. Marc does some nice Monk-like sparse riffs. My energy is low and with it my technique is sloppy but my ideas keep me interested in our folk guitar-jazz trumpet-easy listening piano menage.

Joya's cousin Maria arrives with Chinese food. New York girl with red nail polish, red knee socks and a blue jean dress. Office secretary in cosmetics industry, has ambitions. We all kid around hysterically interspersed with Marc and I doing bluesy duets and then while Marc and Joya hug I play Lover Man not so well but the intention was there. To Joya's dissatisfaction Marc breaks embrace at end of song, like it's a movie. Much slapstick with the five of us and then we depart leaving the two women behind.

We drive home having enjoyed ourselves. Jesse straightens up while Marc and I set up chess board once again and I soundly trounce him. Denise and Paula's Danny are here. Danny short and frail with long black hair in pony tail and a very heavy shave each morning. He always seemed a curious mate for Paula who is so big and heavy. Opposites attract.

Danny paints animated cartoon blocks for a Disney production. We discuss Bambi playing at the Olympia and what an old-time theater the Olympia is. In working class neighborhood theaters everywhere, New York or the one where I saw a kung fu western in Ottawa, it is acceptable for the audience to talk during the movie, like at home watching t.v. It is unacceptable for the intellectuals to shush them.

To Jesse's utter delight Denise is moving out to Danny's today, she even takes the toothpaste, and we

help her move. I step in dog diarrhea while loading the car, Jesse gets a belly laugh at that. With all hands helping the move isn't painful and we return home after driving the car one block for pizza and cigarettes.

I call Stephen Wilbur to get Larry's number and we have a bland conversation but so he doesn't feel I called him just to find Larry I promise to visit while I'm downtown tonight. Marc falls asleep while Jesse and I chat about finding life's work, that theme again, and then I take my leave to wander the Village.

I'm tired but glad to be out on my own in the city. I observe two transvestites on the train downtown, they are a tame pair compared to most, not brandishing their bodies. Early in my travels in the Village I pass the Vanguard where Betty Carter is singing and think to look for Larry there. Descend the narrow stairway and hear her voice. The room is crowded but one look at Betty singing causes me to pay five bucks and remain. She emanates light and love and interprets her tunes with her whole self. She is an actress as well as a singer and loves to entertain. Our applause bathes her and gives her impetus to belt out the next up-tempo tune or sing ballad.

It doesn't matter to me that I have to stand. Betty wears all black, like a Viet Cong outfit almost, tied at her waist and her hair is not neat. She is gutsy and loves audiences and the musicians she works with. She puts

herself right out front and experiments, improvises, this being the trait I admire most in performers I admire. Her energy flows unimpeded out of her into her song, she twists her body to get the words out with the feeling she wants. Watching her I feel akin to her, feel that I am getting close to as individual an approach to my music. Something happens to corroborate this feeling. After the set while we applaud she comes off stage and walks past me and as I applaud she takes a bow to me and passes on.

During break look around, audience mostly white. While daydreaming, figuring out what to do with my lonesome self in another crowded nightclub, someone nearby says she knows me. It's Peter's old friend Claudia sitting at next table with guy in white turtleneck sweater and cool pretty girl smoking cigs. Didn't we play chess together? It takes me a second to recall. Yes, one night on Washington Heights she needed a place to stay. We passed the time playing chess, we don't remember who won. Claudia, thin, with hair in a bun. When I ask her if she still likes New York she says she'd like a house on Long Island with a lawn. She wasn't invited to Peter's wedding but is glad that he found someone. It is hard to find things to talk about and I fall into conversation about music with her male friend who plays bass.

But it's Claudia I'm curious about. She worked as assistant to fashion designer until she was laid off when

her boss was fired. Her husband who makes films, two with her in them, now has a job making commercials and is into being a good provider. I remember how little respect Peter had for this guy and how it caused the disintegration of his friendship with Claudia. Our conversation dwindles more naturally this time and the next set begins. I am buzzing pleasantly.

Betty's trio does a couple of numbers, piano player plays a little too fast at the cost of nuance, the bass player does a couple of solid solos. Betty reappears in slick gown exposing one shoulder and does a less together but still amazing set. I am glad to see she experiences gradations in quality, there's hope for me. I hurry out at the end touching Claudia goodbye but failing to see her. Climb stairs absorbed in thought about music and hear nearby Is that him? I think it's him. It's Julie Halpern, Geri Burns and Janie Goodman waiting in line for the next performance.

Julie comes outside with me, she glows like a full moon. We hug happy to see each other and hurriedly trade addresses so we can get together this weekend. Subway arrives as I enter platform and emerging later at 103<sup>rd</sup> St. I see by the sky it will be cloudy again tomorrow. I am still amazed at how glad I am to see Julie, given her association with Liz Larkin, and go home to bed filled with thoughts of her and Betty Carter.

## East Side West Side

Alone in Marc's apartment, make tea and start to write, difficult to escape clutches of almighty I. Then practice trumpet very poorly, exercises go badly and no inspired singing. Nice quiet frustrating morning. Ken calls during writing and we agree to meet on East Side at his apartment late this afternoon. He sounds interested in my writing project always having taken self-analysis seriously. His voice is monotone and his energy low and I wonder if all is well with him and Susan.

Broadway is lively this afternoon, crowded with people shopping as I walk down to 79<sup>th</sup> St. for the crosstown bus. On the way meet Miriam her short hair takes a second to recognize. Kiss her cheek, hands on shoulders. She's with woman roommate, tall strong Aryan type, little Jewish Miriam. Some unhappiness in Miriam's face, not so haughtily self-confident, confused about what to do with her life now that she's out of school. Comfort her by saying the first couple of years are always difficult, then you straighten out and fly right. Small comfort to her in the midst.

I give her Marc's phone number because she owes him money. The honor system, feel funny about doing Marc's dirty work but he really needs the dough. Least you can do for a buddy. Talk about Boston, Ronnie, Miriam has recently seen Debbie Kunitz, says grandly

She's really become a woman. Have to smile to myself, Miriam measuring another woman's womanhood. Not too cynical though. Me measuring Miriam's maturity. Miriam wants to go, breaks off conversation a little abruptly, much false smiles.

Continue along Broadway, women of every race and shade of color white to black, pink to brown. Absorbed with usual random thoughts of people past and present and potentially future, stores passing, Zabar's is still there, vaguely trying to figure direction writing should take, when one of the Emerson brothers catches my eye. Pulling a laundry cart, dressed in blue blazer and white sweater, real ivy league, woolly hair dandruff snowy on shoulders, big black face and head, nose high in the air.

Hesitatingly we stop and square off. His eyes search the air for my name, after a few seconds I help him out. Can't remember which brother he is, him or his twin. Asks me what field I'm in. What field am I in? Give him the standard line about playing trumpet for a dance company. I never tell him it's only Sunday nights for rehearsals and better musicians than me play when there's money involved.

He's mightily impressed, suddenly after all these years of ignoring the provincial awkward clown, I'm worth talking to. Add to this his own hard time getting work as a freelance writer. Gently I say that it takes



time, for all of us. If it's no comfort to him it gives me at least a sense of comradery with fellow struggling artists. But it is dangerous for me to think of myself as an artist. I worked in a movie theater selling popcorn. He doesn't know Larry Wilbur although once I saw them speaking and they always said hello. Not much else to say but I offer my hand and our eyes meet with mutual respect.

At back of bus through Central Park, nature inching over highway walls, brushed back by whoosh of passing buses. Woman with three children gets on at Museum of Natural History, kids' faces painted with red and blue grease paint. Feel sorry for the woman, three children to lug on and off bus, all her energy given over to the task. Gets dog doo on her fingers from baby stroller. Kids have personalities with a pH of 7, chubby faces, New York middle class, recalls my after-school counselor days on the East Side. Gentle young black couple, comfortable together, share t.v. guide crossword puzzle. I watch faces of people as they step to sidewalk. One tall laughing black woman, easy going and great, probably somebody's housecleaner.

Ken is not home when I arrive at his building courtyard. Get a dime in ice cream parlor by buying ice cream cone, kid dip. Little big for a kid, jokes the scooper. Yeah, I'm a real big kid so watch what you say to me, I joke. He and the girl he works with have been getting on one another's nerves so she gangs up on him

in fun. I know Ken's shopping at Daitch and sure enough while I lean against lamppost on corner he emerges, waves to me. Watch him cross street with his brooding face.

No emotional greeting, just two old friends quite used to each other. Upstairs drink beer and talk about life. Ken has been quiet for two weeks now, reading science fiction. Things with Susan good. He talks a little about his family, how he begins to like his father, his quiet contentment amidst storm wife and daughter create. I don't have much to say about my family, haven't been in touch for a long time, far away in Boston free of obligations. Ken tells funny story about friend of Susan's who doesn't like him because he's not communicative enough. Susan went to bathroom and they sat together for three minutes in stony silence. Ken enjoyed it.

Susan buzzes up. I'm nervous about seeing her but when she enters she takes proper perspective. After hello she and Ken briefly discuss day's events. Grooming, as David Meredith once called it. Ken whips up a salad, Susan mixes vodka and apple juice, we talk about our families and then Ken and I team up to tell the story of living together on 111<sup>th</sup> St. Susan is bored but politely hears us out. We are entertaining ourselves. It is soon dark and I must head uptown to Leslie Carson's party. Susan and Ken groom some more, then they walk me to

bus stop on Madison Ave. Ken is bored and obnoxious to Susan but she handles it reasonably well. Ken's love for her waxes and wanes while hers is fairly constant for him.

Instead of going straight to Leslie's, go to Marc's along Riverside and walk back to 110<sup>th</sup> and Amsterdam. Leslie is knocked a loop when she sees me at door, Marc kept my visit a secret. She looks good, parting her hair to the side a little, in soft red shirt, glowing in role of hostess. Takes me into room to meet guests. Leslie sits with me but she is too preoccupied with being hostess to talk in depth. I soon wander into her empty bedroom and settle in her big easy chair for the duration. She is concerned as hostess about my self-ostracization but feels obliged to mingle with her other friends. School chum of hers comes in and asks me questions about myself. He keeps up the questions just so we can talk and I'm content indulging him with stories from my trip to Canada, being out in the weather and world. All that land, sky and time is now mine.

Eventually Leslie finds time to sit with me. I start asking her the interesting questions, the things I really want to know. Does she have a boyfriend? I childishly put it that way on purpose so it's not too threatening. She prefers the word lover, no she doesn't but she did almost have a woman lover. I could tell that Leslie was really in love, passionately, sexually and otherwise, but

was burned because the other woman wanted to continue her relationship with her boyfriend. I said to Leslie that I thought it was beautiful that she had her feelings for this person right out front fearlessly and I hoped she'd continue to be so open. This encouraged her by the glow that came to her face.

The remainder of the evening we were forced to listen to Leslie sing those old, used up, dull folk song strums, same old interpretations. I encouraged Leslie to see Betty Carter sing but she took it personally as criticism. Leslie kissed and hugged me warmly at the door when I left early, sexual desire obvious but not intruding. Home I went alone, very tired, to dream.

I am traveling on a Greyhound bus, perhaps with a large group. It is night and we get off at the restaurant/terminal. After the bus leaves I realize I've left my trumpet in it's green carrying sling on the bus rack and a sick feeling follows. Then frenetically I begin trying everything to retrieve it or catch up to the bus as other travelers look on.

I am to catch a ferry to St. John, Newfoundland and arrive on the dock in plenty of time. The ferry is painted a bright green, just a small boat, could carry only six or seven cars, the gang plank of corrugated iron. But as I sit there the gang plank is withdrawn and the ferry slips away from the dock. Just as I'm about to dive into the water and swim to overtake the boat a girl comes to

my side and says it's the ferry to Port aux Basques, not St. John, don't worry.

## Sketch Sunday

A long hot shower. Then help Marc in drizzle change a flat on 112<sup>th</sup> St. He gets feeling of accomplishment from this but I am anxious to do the day's writing. Tea, and cook up breakfast of fried eggs, homey but I'm not too communicative whereas Marc would like more warmth and conversation. Finish writing while Marc lies in bed, reads newspaper and watches Barbara Stanwyck flick on t.v.

While we sit together talking, Marli, lover of Steffi's brother arrives, short buxom tanned California girl, very talkative and active. I brood and finish reading paper on toilet. Take my leave of them after giving keys to attractive Marli, go downtown.

Downtown wander toward Julie Halpern's apartment. Ring Larry Wilbur's buzzer on Fifth Ave. but he's out. St. Mark's Place cleaner than a few years ago, less drugs. Browse a bookstore and to Julie's. Dark Village apartment building. Search two floors for her apartment but no numbers on doors. Guy putting key in lock mumbles doesn't know her.

Hurry over to Tin Palace to catch afternoon jazz quartet. Good Ornette Coleman-like tunes but improvisations have little to do with the tunes, only the drummer is sensitive to fellow players. Afterwards talk to waitress, ask her how she liked the music, not much,

not her kind. I suggest Betty Carter, she gives me some names. Brooklyn accent. Back to Julie's and this time she's home.

Greets me with kiss on lips as usual which at first I thought she was testing me but now realize it's just her way. Her apartment small but cozy, feeling of her quiet life coming together here. She had been writing in her diary when I arrived. Her yellow parrot and gray cat. She talks to cat like Liz does. Liz Larkin's best friend. We talk about our plans. Touch on Liz but don't really discuss her as much as I had wanted. Julie looks good and is quieter, more coherent with me alone than I've seen her with Liz. We eat tuna fish and play cards. Liz Larkin's best friend, habits. Drink brandy, eat raisins and almonds.

I'm going to movies does she want to come. We see 3 Days of Condor, mediocre entertainment, bad script, and Clockmaker, interesting but incomplete. Julie has trouble with theater worker about jumping from movie to movie, four cinemas in one. Enjoy watching with her, feel comfortable being totally involved in film, not paying much attention to her.

She has offered I can stay at her place tonight. We walk back beneath waxing moon telling cop stories. Back home more cards then I break it off to go to sleep. We sleep separately although it is clear Julie wouldn't mind sleeping together. In the night I am tempted but refrain, plenty of time another time if it develops. Don't want

involvement with anyone who talks to cats, plays cards, smokes cigs, watches t.v. in bed, again.



## Ken and Susan

Marc's apartment always gloomy in the morning, especially cloudy New York fall monsoon, little sunlight reaches down between canyons to the third floor. Wake up to a pretty Marli in dark tight fitting to her nice figure and bust clothes and a black scarf around her neck, proud of her good taste in dress as I am proud of my baggy comfortable pants, organizing her day skipping from bedroom to bathroom to living room where I lie on the floor. When she passes she flashes a big meaningless, I take it California, smile.

Marc's voice says something to me from the other room, announces the time. I arise to pack since I told Ken I'd meet him on the East Side before noon. The three men, Jesse, Marc and I are now up and about and we congregate in the kitchen where Marli is trying to boil two eggs for herself but when she cracks them open they are still soft. Because it's not her kitchen she says.

Marli is amused by insulting banter between Marc, Jesse and me which she believes is New York humor. I am surprised that she likes it and test her a little which she takes good-naturedly. I want to leave and stay at Ken's although his and Susan's apartment is small. Jesse has said he enjoyed my visit more than any before and makes me feel welcome as long as I want. His satisfaction is the result of my acceptance of position

as guest in his and Marc's home and conduct that becomes that position. Rather than expecting to be catered to and egoistically flaunting my sense of ownership, I participated in household, did dishes, cooked one meal, etc. The wanderer must bow low and follow customs of country he is in.

Marli and I get to talking about her and she is pleased to receive the attention. She's lived in Portland for a month because her lover Zach, brother of Steffi who is Jesse's lover, moved there to attend law school. She likes the little city with its big parks and friendly people and hasn't yet experienced the rainy weather. A self-confident photographer, comes right out and says she is good, and an artist in New York looking for galleries to show her work, and a singer in elks or moose clubs around Portland with a money hungry band.

As we talk I get my first good look at her. She is a plain, by no means beautiful woman who has learned well the arts of dress-up and makeup. She is outgoing, a gay, talkative girl. At first I was awed by her mask of beauty, she seemed to disdain me and I felt inferior, but after we talked our equality was established.

Liz Larkin once suggested that everything between men and women, perhaps between all people, is a question of dominance and subordination, who's on top, power. So now I am more attractive to Marli and she comes into the living room where I'm sitting thinking

about what to do, go to Ken's or stay here, and asks in her sweetest tones if I'd like to go to the museum. But I'm not in the mood for the museum and she's offended by my answer.

During this long tete-a-tete Jesse has received a phone call from his mother who is on the East Side in racking pain from arthritis, having gone to her doctor for painkillers but found him away. In Marc's family too the old parents are turning to the son for support. Jesse asks to borrow Marc's car which Marc agrees to, putting aside in light of the emergency some grudge I sense is between them on this account. Jesse shakes my hand on his way out.

I have also decided to leave and console Marc because he had wanted to spend the day with me. But our parting is not too awkward, leaving plans in the air for him to come to Boston. On my way out the door Marli, busy making new plans for the day after discarding the museum trip, acknowledges my farewell cursorily.

Outside it's cloudy, threatening rain. Heading toward 110<sup>th</sup> St. buy two bananas at one of the open air markets on Broadway. Indian woman at cash box slaps my change down on the counter instead of handing it to me. I run across the street to catch approaching bus, sit across from girl who I noticed for the first time a few years ago at Columbia. A plain girl but something

ephemeral yet up front in her manner interests me. Balance my big pack between my legs. She smiles at me. These days in New York four seats at front of bus are marked Please save for the aged or crippled. A tall blonde woman with two long red cylindrical packages boards and sits across from me. Bus driver takes her money personally to reimburse old lady who dropped too much in the machine.

As we continue my interest gradually shifts from the one woman to the other until I'm entirely absorbed in the tall blonde woman and she gradually turns her attention to me. Two French ladies sit near me bumping my legs unabashedly to twist around to look out windows at Central Park. An American lady would make every effort not to touch me. Can't make out many words but the street numbers they are counting—soixant vingt et un, soixant vingt, soixant dix-neuf. The young woman across from me is squeezed on both sides too so this we have in common. I can't figure out why I'm interested in her except that perhaps we both have big loads to carry.

Coincidentally we both get off at 72<sup>nd</sup> St. so I decide to follow her. She takes off at incredible speed, arched back and cheeks of her ass pumping like a machine. Struggle my heavy pack over rubber raincoat and buzz off after her, jaywalking in front of a Con Ed project. Crossing Park Ave. I think of seeing my father

who works at 48<sup>th</sup> St. She turns into a building between Park and Lexington and when I pass there is only the doorman to see.

I choose to go Lexington with it's bustle of stores and people, strong pollen scent of a flower store reminds me of my days years ago delivering flowers around Christmas. Down 71<sup>st</sup>, a little unfamiliar because I never really noticed these big apartment buildings set back from the sidewalk and then see Ken's distinctive building corner of 71<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, painted black with white window trim. Through courtyard, ring buzzer and upstairs Ken is waiting with the door open leaning against the back of the couch as he did the first time I visited him here.

Make a joke coming upstairs about how I hope the mountains will be able to hold my weight. Ken is looking forward to our camping trip. I am not nearly as enthusiastic but it will be something to do. The apartment is much tidier than last time I was here. He says that was an especially sloppy time. We compare equipment, he admires my pack and then I show him my sleeping bag. He intends on buying a nylon inner bag and just sleeping on a wool blanket inside it. Dubious plan, I think he'll be cold. I list for him the food I'll bring and he describes his menu.

Ken needs to go downtown to buy inner bag but I need time alone so I decide to stay. We agree to meet

tonight for dinner in a Cuban Chinese restaurant on 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 19<sup>th</sup> St. with Susan. He shows me how keys work and I walk him outside. We stop in his favorite used bookstore where he buys the science fiction he reads and we joke about dirty pictures on covers of some books. One called Hot to Trot, the writing inside terrible. A woman nearby looks at us with slight distaste.

Ken goes downtown and I go to supermarket to buy hike food. My cart has a stiff wheel that annoys me. Freezers for frozen goods, meats and dairy products in numerous parts of store so I wander all over looking for cheese. I purchase 3 cheeses, 3 breads, 3 bags of raisins, 10 oranges and 1 bag of peanuts. The groups of 3 seem propitious. Let a Latino guy in white baker's apron ahead of me because he's buying only one box of cake mix. Easy-going girl cashier, pay with last twenty dollar traveler check, guy who checks my I.D. mentions that he once had his car stolen in Cambridge. The joke is that it casts doubt on my check.

Return to apartment using keys as Ken taught me. I want to practice trumpet but I'm hungry and hunger often gets in the way of my concentration. So before starting, eat bread and jelly, four eggs, milk, and take a shit listening to Bessie Smith. Finally pour an anisette and put feet up on window to relax.

Once the anisette relieves the bloated feeling I begin to practice, sipping anisette between tunes,

watching the reactions of people and animals on the street below. A dog in front of window shade store, lying in middle of sidewalk often rising to meet passersby and be petted, perks its ears at the sound of muted trumpet, especially the high notes. He's very friendly but some people get quite cautious approaching him. His master arrives, dog wags furry tail, master accompanies him into street where dog takes a dump and both go inside store.

Many old women, children in strollers pushed by young mothers pass by. One fellow paces sidewalk for a long time listening to me play. Tired I fall asleep on the couch and toward five o'clock Susan calls. She asks for Ken without acknowledging me, but I know her and tell her we'll all meet around five thirty downtown. See you later. Play more trumpet and then go outside.

A mother pushes baby in stroller past two chatting old women one of whom says she's getting fat. The baby or the mother? Have trouble finding subway, not at 72<sup>nd</sup> as on west side so walk down Lexington to 68<sup>th</sup>. Subway station is crowded, many young women, Hunter College stop as well as numerous hospitals, station well organized with signs to each institution. Want to stroll platform to observe people but train will soon arrive and it's crowded down the other end.

When train arrives I sit in first car opposite a strong gray-haired but young woman with enigmatic

smile on her sharp, bony face. She gets off at 59<sup>th</sup>. At Grand Central find stairway to shuttle and rush along with crowd, some people not walking fast enough to suit my speed. Stand by the door on the shuttle in the aquarium blue station. The conductor shows up, watch the closing doors and we're off.

At Times Square I rush even faster for downtown local, get off at 18<sup>th</sup> St. and hurry west on 17<sup>th</sup> St. to the diner. Glimpse Ken and Susan through restaurant window but sneak a look at what's playing across the street at the Elgin before going in.

Ken has gotten up to meet me thinking I was looking for them across the street. I stride down center of diner, wide spaces between counter and tables, one of the waiters greets me. Say hello to Susan who makes her usual slightly averted greeting. They have been drinking beers. Old edition of Sinclair Lewis' Main Street on table, Susan's, we take a minute to criticize Lewis for being so negative about people and not seeing more of their positive traits.

Ken and Susan are very lovey dovey and huggy this evening and are leaning all over each other, putting arms around necks, etc. A skinny old lady at table across aisle from us looks over like she loves to see lovers. I avoid her knowing she'd love to come over and chew our ears. I am uncomfortable about where to put my eyes with Ken and Susan smooching right in front of me.



Our waiter is a Chinese-Cuban in blue jeans who has a cowboy look. He does his job and makes no bones about it. Real Fat City character, at our service but not in the least obsequious. Holds the pad steadily and writes the order. During dinner we don't really talk much, Ken and Susan do a lot of petting that irritates me. They pick up the tab in return for me agreeing to buy ice cream for desert.

On the street I am getting annoyed about their insular loving and me being odd man out, about them not making an effort to join us together as a group, but I keep it to myself just thinking about how people used to say they enjoyed being with Liz and me because we didn't smooch in front of them, we were two individuals conversing with a third.

We stroll down 4<sup>th</sup> St. and I look in all the restaurants. Dark ambiances. A vegetarian restaurant is lit like a kitchen or subway car. Other extreme. I'm getting bored and depressed with Susan and Ken and Ken is beginning to notice and wonder why. His attention and sensitivity is some consolation. We buy ice cream on 8<sup>th</sup> St. from intense vendor, very funny and friendly guy. He's so hyped up he'll probably kill someone before the night is out. We buzz Larry's apartment but no answer.

Tired but continuing east. No movies we want to see. On Second Ave. two drunks are having a fight. One

has the other pinned in the gutter but by the way they talk they are friends. The loser's head is bleeding from hitting pavement. A crowd stands around and finally two guys lend a hand. Ken and I look at each other and decide not to get involved.

Susan has to go to bathroom so we head home. 14<sup>th</sup> St. is intimidating with many junkies and drunks. We have trouble finding subway but finally we're going uptown. I keep my distance from Ken and Susan, giving them time alone. By the way they touch hands I see that they have created a strong trusting bond.

At home we turn on radio and I play trumpet poorly while they sew Ken's inner bag into sleeping bag. We go to sleep, me on the floor, in my clothes. I'm to leave at two o'clock to catch train but when alarm goes off I stay in bed, will catch morning train instead to Susan's and Ken's chagrin. No sex tonight. Tomorrow night they'll get those colored lights going.

## Full Day Walking

On the floor of Ken's and Susan's apartment and they just up so Susan can go to work and Ken can go back to sleep. Their morning ritual is to lie around a little talking and then Susan departs. She asks if I'm leaving today with hope in her voice. Yes and I'll see her if she comes to Boston. Ken is uncomfortable on the convertible couch/bed and that's why he gets a bad night's sleep.

I pack my belongings still unsure about returning to Boston yet. Because of my jokes about the inconvenience Ken and Susan suffer having me here Ken says I'm too self-conscious. I am making a bigger deal out of it than it really is but that will prevent them from making a big deal. Still, overall I'm impressed by Ken's ability to have a lover and still be a good friend to me. Don the heaviest pack I've had in all my travels, what with this notebook and food purchased for cancelled hike, and we speak our farewells.

The day is overcast but the sun begins to win its weeklong battle with clouds so that I'm not sure it was necessary to cancel our hike. There are numerous trains to Boston during the day so I decide to take my time and walk to Penn Station. I set a plan of walking four blocks south for every block west and seeing what places I pass.

The city bustle is just warming up for the day, the streets are still cool and shaded. I happen to pass on Fifth Ave. the church I used to play street trumpet in front of, so I take a seat on the steps and watch passersby. People going to work but the street is not crowded, not like at lunchtime. I am conveniently missing the first train to give myself time to change my mind about returning to Boston. None of the ladies are really beautiful, not like at lunchtime. People's complexions are city gray and cigarette smoke this early in morning.

Go into St. Thomas' Church, stone sculptures above altar rising and careening upward to the throne of Christ God's son. In the center the obligatory crucifixion. Really symphonic the piling of saint upon saint to the apex Christ. I'm nodding out in my pew. Businessman kneels behind me to say a quick prayer and leaves. Priest in green vestments lurks around the altar.

Hoist my pack and continue my stroll four blocks south, one block west until I reach Broadway and think how I'd like to see Porgy and Bess this afternoon, I Love You Porgy playing in my head, so I detour north to the Uris Theater. Ask man bending to unlock door if there's a matinee but there's not.

By now the streets are pretty crowded, my left arm's numb because the pack's weight pinches the blood to it but I'm almost at Penn Station. Find a phone

and give last try at seeing Larry Wilbur, he answers and we agree to meet at his apartment a little after noon. So going six blocks south for each block east I head toward the Village enjoying the streets, garment workers pushing clothes racks, old warehouses and businesses emanating 19<sup>th</sup> century New York ambiance, truckers unloading cardboard boxes, lofts and studios among the enterprises.

Toward 14<sup>th</sup> St. stop in at used book shop and lackadaisically browse for a cheap I Ching. None to be had. I joke to the petite woman who checks my pack she could be squished by its weight. Thumb through book by woman author who wears man's suit and tie in jacket photo, about four rich handsome men who become bored with sex of this world. Read one section about millionaire Roger who dresses as woman and his experiences in public toilets. He's amazed by crudeness of women's graffiti, lesbian tries to pick him up by the washstands by lifting her skirt high above the crotch. Not an interesting book except that it was written by a woman and even that's not too astonishing I guess. Leaving, the new check in lady, older woman, asks if my back isn't tired by day's end with such a heavy pack.

I'm in the Village early so I watch some chess in Washington Square Park. All the same faces as two years ago. Boris has crutches now, though he still wears a beret. The bald Henry Miller type's moustache has gone

white and he wears no beret. The Jewish chess master everyone calls Rabbi wears same white shirt, black pants and black hat and is as obnoxious as ever defeating his opponents but seems to smile more often these days. The smile is endearing and he is well liked by the other Village chess bums. Two men argue vehemently about illegal moves, like children, as if their happiness depended on that game. The Rabbi's game really is complex, his moves on one side of the board have significance on the other side four or five moves later. Yet, he runs out of time. I quickly write up yesterday's work and seeing that across the street NYU's classes are letting out, I leave the park for Larry's apartment.

After being buzzed up over intercom, I search third floor for Larry's apartment number. I hear voices in what I think is his apartment so I start back down hall to check another floor. Hear door unlock and as I peak my head into narrow hallway, Larry's head timidly peaks out and we laugh at this slapstick. Larry gives a warm greeting, hugging me and my pack.

His is a one room apartment with absolutely no view, a building stands three feet from his window. The kitchen is in a closet and the bathroom in another. He has furnished the room simply with desk, chairs, one small table and his futon. The walls are uncluttered. The simplicity of the room is refreshing. We are both

attempting to live simple lives, everything near at hand in a small neat room.

Larry is attending teacher's college amazed at intellectual poverty there but it is only a means to an end. Still writes and plays music, studies form of meditation-movement, takes voice lessons, and works with children once a week. He is struck by fact that he's only man in elementary education at NYU and only man in meditation/movement class. It seems like a good solid life. Plans to go west to California, Colorado or New Mexico after this year in New York. A budding romance perhaps too.

I read him a 'day dream' as we come to call these and he takes an interest says the writing is good and is amazed by my eye for detail and that I take my persona from concrete events. He reciprocates with his children's story which is now half finished, very polished and entertaining. Then we play music, some of the excellent songs he's been writing. Time for him to visit his kids uptown so I walk him to the subway and we agree to meet back at apartment between 9 and 10 tonight.

Decide to explore area west of Soho going south toward financial district. I zigzag west and south, watch a little basketball on 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. but the players are doing more arguing than playing. I pass a few sausage hero booths open for San Gennaro festival. I'm surprised at

how large an area the Italian community covers stretching this far north and west.

In a block or so, on Hudson St. I'm in the factory warehouse district and try to imagine where it is that Sue, Scott's Sue, the dancer Sue, might live. There are a few residential buildings interspersed. I like the feeling of this area and it gets even better as I push south, more residences, some bars, restaurants and grocery stores. There is a little community here squeezed in between warehouses, between the Village and the financial district. In a store I buy Hostess cupcakes and scold myself for recent bad eating habits. Will reform and to begin I buy two half-pints of milk, one too many.

Busy Chambers St., the work day just ending, newspapers blowing in street, people hurrying to subway. Decide to saunter north again to explore West Broadway but then turn south on Broadway and head for Battery Park, feet tired, lapping of waves against city will soothe me. Pass four young guys one of whom asks loudly if I believe in Jesus. Foolishly I answer, In some sense. The four gather around me to debate the godliness of Jesus, whether he did indeed rise from the dead. I curse myself for getting involved with these nuts. I am smiling stupidly. Finally I say that all this doesn't interest me. They counter quickly what does interest me. Fed up, I wave them off, Nothing and walk away.



Free again to mingle in the crowd, beloved slaves of financial district for whom I feel such nostalgic warmth from days when I played the streets here. Enjoy the beautiful New York women dressed so becomingly and compare my manhood to the men in suits. Love the energy of this crowd, a tide of many individual minds made one surging to work, then out to lunch, and then down into the subways to go home for twelve hours.

Something in my soul, the soul of the son of my father the New York corporate businessman, finds these people agreeable, finds them attractive in their roles and culture, supposes I could fit and knows I probably will never have to. The sexuality and the sadness. A dark girl catches my eye and holds long enough for me to see her beauty. A little longer and we might have stopped for each other. The massive and graceful buildings are ornate with past history, generations of merchants. Trinity Church where I used to play street trumpet.

Then all the way south to the tip of the island. The waves do lap the cement shore and many people sit to listen. I find my old spot on the spittooned steps of the World War II memorial and face the clouded setting sun, the New Jersey shore of trestles and factory fronts, the bay widening where two rivers meet and suggest the sea beyond. Battery Park is a meditative place, thoughts and plans rain down like fiery yods from the skyscrapers and are cooled in the waves.

Daydreaming, leaning on trumpet, nodding and then sleeping. Sleeping outdoors you inhale the very spirit of the place, the broad sound and silence of it flows through and absorbs you like a color in a vaster color of a slightly different hue. It's almost dark when I wake up to people bicycling past and a tugboat pulling a ferry to rest. The boatmen yell out the rendezvous for the night to friends on shore and the tugboat whistle hoots.

I get up and begin walking past three old people talking in the night by the bay. Follow Pearl St. north along the east side because it has the same name as my new street in Cambridge. Stop at Seaman's Union to take a shit. Dirty but usable bathroom, the only graffiti says I like to kill fags. I alter it to say I like to kiss fags. There is a dining room with big windows that look out over the harbor. Pearl St. winds through the financial district canyon, late stragglers from work drink in the few bars and restaurants, I like the calm after work feeling here, now there is nothing to do until tomorrow morning so these lone stragglers take a drink after the majority of their colleagues have hurried home.

The financial district gives way to, but impressively looms over like a living organism, east side projects where Chinese, Latino and Jewish mothers and kids animate the evening. Pearl St. becomes St. James and St. James turns to Bowery in Chinatown. Buy one pork roll

from pretty and efficient Chinese lady who seems vaguely annoyed with my small purchase. Lights of Chinatown lure visitors.

I adhere to Bowery and follow a petite Chinese gentleman in baggy gray suit, I look at pornographic photographs of movie playing, I pass many a bum who looks like me, tall, handsome in his own way, sadness in his face, naïve, down and out. The Bowery is a feasible destination for my life should I choose it. Bare bars, acoustics echo voices of men into street, only the tables and chairs, the bar and the t.v. The bridges over the East River, young black couple walking and talking, in love, Bowery Savings Bank think of Joe DiMaggio, look in doorways to decide if I were a bum where would I sleep at night and choose a couple of churches and a bank.

4<sup>th</sup> St. over to Second Ave. is alive with theaters and unique stores. One theater offers plays in French, another Divine in Women Behind Bars. Enter store that sells clothing from the early twentieth century up to the forties. Silk evening gown beautifully embroidered. Weird hats. Music of the period played on a phonograph of the period. Clothing recalls lovely white silk bathrobe I bought for Liz while she was in hospital, how all the nurses admired it. The store is unattended until black guy in wide brimmed hat returns, greets me amiably. When I leave he is pleased that I praise his store.

Larry not yet home so I stroll through Washington Square Park again, watch chess game with two cops who eye my trumpet carrying case nervously thinking maybe it's a gun and then, hearing a trumpet I sit and listen to guy play for a while. Good tone but few musical ideas of his own. I keep my distance although other listeners are not shy to approach him, introduce themselves and sit next to him while he plays.

During this time, a young schizzed out guy enters the park yelling He can play! He can play! and then wobbles toward me. Seeing me seated he stops dead center of the circle of benches we occupy and very slowly, like high noon in a western, squares off with me. Surprisingly I'm not afraid, just amused. He then does a mime, rolling up his sleeves very theatrically, like I have mine rolled up, and taking a karate pose saying to me I'll go one round with you, wanna bet? Then, without waiting for answer he screams, jumps over the bench and disappears into the park. I wonder what made him do that particular mime when he saw me. When the trumpet player finishes I return to Fifth Ave. and Larry is home.

I read the Post about the debates and we ridicule the candidates. We also eat bread and cheese while listening to a tape of William Carlos Williams lecturing in old age. He is senile and has difficulty reading his poems but this also throws new light on their meaning and

rhythms. He is like a child and his thought processes are transparent in his senility. But he is not pitiable, at least not to me. Although he has trouble reading his other poems, Asphodel That Greeny Flower he reads perfectly and passionately. Later Larry and I play more music. I take a fond farewell and hope he visits Boston especially to play for the dance company.

Walk eight blocks north for each block west to Penn Station, empty streets. Buy a much needed beer and then board the crowded train. Find a seat next to girl reading, blue jeans, college type, but really wanted to sit next to black girl nearby. I am too sleepy to talk anyway. Conductor sells me ticket, train begins to move toward Boston, I fall asleep in the brightly lit car.

## **It's Bob, My Roommate**

My eyes open to daylight of Providence, RI where the train has stopped in the station. The day is bright but slightly overcast. My neck and knees ache from sleeping sitting up, I feel the eyes of the black girl behind me, the college girl next to me is sleeping with her mouth open. Commuters to Boston board the train here, men in suits, women in business dress, finding seats next to an entirely different breed of traveler, those of us who have been on the train all night some from as far as Washington DC.

The contrast between these fresh and well-dressed commuters and we rumpled and sleepy travelers is marked. A young snappy business-type sits beside my black woman and snaps open his newspaper. She shrinks a little from him and seems small next to him. A commuter lady in bright orange print dress sits at head of car and begins to chatter with two businessmen, the three of them in a group of four seats overwhelm the one long distance traveler.

Out of Providence I settle into sleep again and when I awake we are stopped between stations for a long time. The girl next to me asks frustrated why are we stopped to which I reply they are repairing the tracks, having read it in the timetable. I pass the time by enjoying the colors outdoors, a few changing trees and

the sunlight in the air, and by flirting very obliquely with the black girl who turns out to be younger than I thought with face and eyes as open as a fawn's.

Moving again the Boston skyline takes shape and inspires butterflies in my stomach that have to do with Liz Larkin and what living in my new apartment will be like. At South Station I alight and walk along platform impressed by the size of train wheels and engines comparing them in my imagination with trains of old, considering the tons of solid metal required to build a train. Hop a subway to Cambridge feeling the difference between Boston and New York underground. Hurry down Pearl St. and upstairs to my new abode.

Bob White isn't home, the doors open easily. Spend time casing the place like a detective. Boston skyline spread before my bedroom window. My room unchanged, bed with Bob's clothes on it, plastic motel curtains, beat up chair, Bob has removed his tools from long chest, kitchen door he's working on standing in room. Kitchen and bathroom comfortable as ever. Check refrigerator and cabinets, very little in them. Empty beer bottles here and in Bob's study where there is some of his writing on the desk.

Read through a poem and autobiographical short story without disturbing pages. Express loneliness, desire for woman's companionship and sex, difficulty finding self, etc. So he has some problems but nothing

pathological, that's good. Decent poem, free verse, filled with this anguish. Also numerous radical newspapers and periodicals and poster of someone, Latino, with fist raised. Textbook to learn Spanish on his chair. His commitment to radical politics a little more complete than I thought.

His room neat and airy as before. Trees grow right up to windows and cover them with foliage, windows inset into walls so there's a nook to sit in at each one. Explore closets and pantry, some canned food, no health foods but no unhealthy foods either. Overripe pear and plums in bowl on imitation marble table with wrought iron legs, three kitchen chairs, each one different, map of the world on wall.

I settle at kitchen table to do some writing which goes well after Larry's encouragement yesterday. Afterwards practice trumpet wondering what reaction there will be from the neighbors but there is none. Below a guy who seems disabled by his awkward slightly uncontrolled movements and by the way his mouth hangs open and his eyes stare putters around behind his house and occasionally looks up to see me in the window. His two dogs look up in the same way. Although I'm on the third floor the distance between us is not great, one of the dogs never seems to look away, so I move further into the room where I can't be seen.



The space below is large, about six backyards adjacent to each other, surrounded by the houses and separated by low fences. Each has a different character giving the whole a patchwork quilt quality similar to the mid-west from the air. One yard is a long lawn, another a weed garden, a third has a small brick garage, one harbors a mobile camping trailer, clotheslines connect some of the buildings, there are but a few trees bordering an asphalt parking lot. My playing sounds ok but my stamina has suffered from traveling.

Decide to obtain a futon like Larry's for my room which is too small for double bed. Besides, when I move in the future I won't have to lug bedsprings and box springs up and down stairs. No yellow pages here so go out to nearby garage and borrow theirs. Workers play fight, I enjoy the rhythms and accents of their working class language, confrontations between them seem straightforward. Make a list of mattress companies at phone booth in Central Square.

Walking toward furniture store run into Rudy. I greet him warmly but he's too mellow from reading all that Thomas Merton. He's with a tall white woman who he introduces but whose name I immediately forget. They are in a hurry to catch a bus so I just write my number in his phone book to stay in touch.

While I write he says Liz is back. I say that's good I haven't seen her. He tries strange guilt trip on me saying

I really ought to visit her considering her health. Surprised at how bitter I feel. I think to myself to hell with her health which is about as bad as my health. I can't figure if Rudy means her back or her mental health. I say he ought to visit her if she needs visitors so badly. The girl laughs as if she understands something about me. Rudy says Liz is a strange woman and we'll have to get together sometime and discuss her. I don't relish discussing Liz with Rudy. We shake hands and go separate ways.

The store has ugly new furniture and nothing I need so I return home and make phone calls inquiring about sleeping mat 48" by 75" and 2" thick. Runs about 50 dollars except at one place in Lechmere I'm referred to where it costs about 22. Decide to investigate today, take subway to Park Square and then green line to Lechmere. People boarding green line as rude as ever, crowding aboard before other passengers get off. One group is left on platform because people in my car will not move to the back.

Lechmere is more residential than I saw it in a dream a few months ago. Ask woman carrying baby if she knows where Otis St. is. She just says no and I'm annoyed until she explains she no speak English. Large population of Portuguese here. Ask worker with cigar for directions and with difficulty find my way to Ray's Mattress Company.

Ray is shaved head black guy with earring in one ear. Very friendly and patient with my questions, enthusiastic and energetic. But all he has is foam rubber, hair mattresses are not made anymore. We joke about my hair and his lack. He doesn't seem to mind when I decide not to buy.

The day is getting cloudier and a few raindrops fall as I make my way through the neighborhoods up to Central Square. Lots of kids playing in streets, backyards and playgrounds. Fathers returning home from work. In a store in Central Square a guy tells me about rubberized hair so I check the phone books again and return home. Now I'm tired but first I'm hungry so I eat peanuts raisins and orange and then fall asleep on the bed.

Wake up in the night, plug in lamp and go to bathroom. While on toilet hear great deal of bumping and banging at the back door to apartment. Hurriedly wipe ass and pull up pants and call out Who's there, please? It's Bob White taking the hinges off the door because his keys were stolen at work. He says to whoever he's with It's Bob, my roommate and this sets my mind at rest that he is comfortable with the idea of having someone else living here.

When he comes in he looks the same and I still like him and I realize as he tells story of his hard unfortunate day that it is his sadness and loneliness that touches me. While he goes downstairs to return tools I

play a little trumpet, lots of ideas especially on You Go To My Head but stamina is still not up to par.

When he returns we talk a while, mentioning the bad times we've had living with women. He lived four years with his lover and then after they'd separated and he needed a place to stay for a while she wouldn't let him stay with her. A hard reality for him to accept. I said it amazed me how you can generally count on your male friends if you're in a tight spot but even a woman you've been more intimate with than anyone in the world will often let you down.

Bob leaves to go drinking in Inman Square and invites me along. I say maybe I'll meet him there later but my legs say I'll never make it that far. Soon after he leaves I put out the lights and go back to sleep, skyscrapers blinking in the distance, moon a vague glow behind thickening clouds.

## Election Referendum

Low clouds hide tops of skyscrapers across river. Rain has been spraying through the open window all night, close window, return to bed. Daydream staring out window then rise, no need to dress since slept in clothes, brush teeth, gums bleeding a lot again, and settle down immediately to write. Raindrops on kitchen and bedroom windows, sound of rain on roof. Going to like it here. Writing goes reasonably well, keep high even energy to describe details almost to the end. Thoughts of Liz Larkin impinging, churning feelings generally anger, whatever warmth once felt with detachment now lost in proximity to her and anticipation of our first meeting.

Can predict already attempt at friendly detachment will fail. She will expect friendship and back off when it's offered, insidious and frustrating. Then I will want to strangle her. The rain is lovely and tomorrow I can already tell will be cloudless and beautiful. Bob White enters kitchen as finish writing. Friendly greeting, he looks like he has hangover, hair tousled, he too sleeps in clothes it seems. I apologize for not showing up last night, he says music was bad and crowd rough. Bob has to rush to North Cambridge, tenant organizing.

Practice trumpet energetically remembering Charlie Parker said When I practice I play as hard and fast as I can. Buzzer from downstairs rings and excites me, maybe someone come to visit me. Woman's voice on stairs calls Bob? and I go Yes? But when we meet we don't know each other. Her name Madeline, Bob's old roommate, bringing his mail. Same blonde hair as Bob, short woman, doesn't want to leave note. I think she's the woman Bob lived with for four years who jilted him so take immediate disliking to her. I can see I'm fucked up from summer with Liz.

Then call some upholsterer supply companies to learn about synthetic rubberized hair. One place has materials but closes at noon until Tuesday. Others no one answers phone, long weekend already begun. Disappointed but not surprised, put feet up on window sill stare out at rain and obscured skyline Prudential Building, Hancock Tower, old Hancock Building, downtown cluster of nameless office buildings, and engorge peanuts and oranges last of travel food. Lie down on bed, stare out window at pouring rain, fall asleep.

Awakened by Bob returning home, comes into my room to get tools and door he wants to work on, brings them into his room, apologizes for waking me up. No problem I say, and he makes comment about how much I've been sleeping. I'm catching up I explain, he says this

rainy Saturday is good day for it and offers me a beer. Open beer and go to Bob's room to watch him work, do you mind company, of course not he says, he's sawing strip of wood off bottom of door to make it fit jam, tough wood. Sunburst through clouds before dusk casts leaf shadows over bedroom wall. Listen to Chilean guitar music and voice on record player and tell him Madeline brought mail is she old lover, no, just one of people he lived with on Florence St. My antagonistic feelings toward her that were fortunately not expressed look even more ridiculous now.

We put door on hinges in kitchen, I hold it steady with face in world map imagining all exotic places to travel Tahiti, all of Asia, Africa, Greenland, in fact the whole world, still a restless daydreaming wanderer. Bob then paints door and we speak of poetry which he has been writing for seven years. He tries to destroy all images and stories to reach pure feeling, something I don't quite understand, images and stories seem to me the only way to convey feeling with the written word. He's also working on short story, finding the form difficult.

I explain my writing project which evokes modest interest and then fill in with my writing history. Bob laughs at Da Liu ghostwriting stories but I am annoyed when he calls I Ching religion, has no use for it. Topic changes to Cuban revolution and I show mixed feelings

based on films. He's slightly aggravated that I don't show whole hearted support of Cuba. So to avoid any arguments I change subject to referendums up for vote in next election, does he understand all the questions. He gives me booklet with texts of questions, proposed laws and explanations pro and con.

I notice he votes against absentee ballots for people who can't vote on election day for religious reasons. When I ask what can be wrong with that he explains he figures that a religious element is usually conservative and he hopes to block their votes. I argue that that changes with the times and the issues and so he changes his mind.

On all else we agree. Some emotional issues especially a public power company to take electricity out of hands of private enterprise. Step toward socialization that most people will fear. Electric companies arguing incompetence of most government agencies in a heavy advertising campaign in subways and on billboards. Bill to outlaw handguns seems pointless since only three of last 225 gun murders in Mass. done with licensed handguns although there is a certain validity in that the only use for a handgun is to kill a human being. Bottle bill it turns out insures recycling with deposit returns reaching all the way back to the bottlers instead of stopping at retailers, bottle bill opponents have been telling half-truths in their literature.



Referendum on offshore oil drilling I vote against automatically. Problem is not to supply more petroleum but to cut down our use of it. Other issues more complicated. Someone wants people convicted of certain crimes like manslaughter, child rape, burglary with a firearm, etc., to serve maximum sentences without chance of parole for good conduct. Statistics show large percentage of these crimes are committed by convicts on parole or probation. Argument goes that society has been more concerned with rights of criminals than rights of victims. Although statistics look compelling, to me the world does not seem such a dangerous place to warrant this unyielding switch from rehabilitation to punishment so I will vote against.

Another bill would force electric companies to charge same rates to homeowners as to industrial users who get a lower rate because they use so much more. Philosophically this seems sound but economically it seems like a severe measure when homeowners would save an average of two dollars per month while industrial costs would rise tremendously.

Bob also gives me literary magazine of Harper College in which two of his poems are printed and then leaves to go out on town. Invites me along but I say maybe I'll meet him later. Spend a couple of hours reading debates, short stories, poems, find a few amusing pieces of college literature, Bob's poems don't

grab me much but they're not bad poems either. Can sense his vigorous attempt to stay true to feelings in his poems. Also less inclined to obfuscate with language than his fellow students. I feel very mature about considering so thoroughly the issues up for vote. Think how proud parents would be to see me finally shouldering responsibility as a citizen. But don't know names of all these councilors, judges and clerks I must vote for or against.

Want to go for walk but not to bar on Inman Square. A clear waning full moon becoming more often visible through clouds. Outdoors a rough wind is blowing this week's clouds northward relentlessly and bright moon begins to dominate sky. Explore Pearl St. down to river, warm lights in bedrooms and sitting rooms. Squelch temptation to walk by Liz Larkin's house to look in window.

Walk along same path Cassandra and I took to river that night last summer we split for good and final supposedly. Wind rushing off river almost fearfully strong. Go to huge elm by white boathouse being brushed vigorously in roaring wind, see last deck of clouds pass the moon and disappear northward, tomorrow will indeed be all sun and blue sky. Chants of trains in trainyard across river recall months I walked home late at night from work to Liz's.

## City Dance Theater

Sunrise, rust red horizontal of light behind skyline, ever lightening shades of blue above. Grab swig of orange juice from refrigerator, back to warm bed.

Later sun high warm through window, air crisp and cold, autumn tastes of winter, daydream a little staring out window, hop up pull on shoes and socks and go outdoors to buy newspapers. Air too cold for t-shirt, park full of dogs sniffing assholes. Small grocery store on Magazine St., sweet bread, overripe bananas, newspapers, store owner has moustache these days, girl weighs bananas, charges me cheap. Sometimes you win says owner, not too often or it'll ruin my personality says I.

Hurry home cold, skim papers looking for futon. Bob White wakes up, we hardly speak, wonder if that's strange so I open a conversation ask him what he did last night, drank, heard bad music. He plays a little guitar then goes out for breakfast, I borrow towel from him, must have lost mine during travels. Try to write but goes badly, tear up two pages and take much needed shower, incredible amount of hair in bathtub, gums bleed when brush teeth, going bald, losing teeth, getting older. All this to counterpoint of thoughts about how to arrange my room, anticipation of seeing dancers tonight, some Liz Larkin, a little Cassandra Szymborska.

Calmly brew tea and sit down at kitchen table to write. Occasionally break for more tea and look out window at neighbor's dogs play fighting and digging hole by fence. They seem so loveable until a stranger approaches and then they bark viciously. Young woman comes to deliver mail to old lady. Dogs bark ferociously at girl who stays on her side of fence, old woman comes out and I watch them talk, black dog calms down but tan larger dog won't get friendly even when old woman slaps its nose when it barks. Two dobermans playing in one of the other yards. When girl leaves and old lady goes indoors watch tan dog hold perfectly still on porch and stare with intense curiosity at two pigeons perched on fence.

Practice trumpet, Bob comes home, interrupts to get rope out of closet, is putting in a storm window, interrupts a second time excited that he's been successful. Enjoys working around the house, this is good as long as he doesn't expect the same of me. Shows me how the storm window works, opens and closes, I watch his wrists and hands, practice trumpet more and then go outside.

Sunday afternoon streets almost eerily empty. Everyone has gone to the country Bob said. An American city. Bob laughed at that like he understood something about it. I have too much energy for this Sunday afternoon, anticipating tonight's dance but afraid that it

has been cancelled. Hurry to Ronnie's apartment to see Rylin under pretense of picking up some books and finding out if there will be dance tonight. On way stop in Hundred Flowers for few minutes hear trio of drums, guitar and jazz cello. Amped cello sounds a little metallic, music not too interesting but not hard to listen to either. Cellist leader in red flannel shirt reminds me of a more self-confident me.

Rylin's not home so I explore house quickly. She's put up postcards and pictures of Indian gurus and deities, shantras on wall, book about meditation on table, cushion embroidered with Indian symbols on chair. Her journal on desk, refrain from opening it. A little food in refrigerator, spinach and green peppers I bought long ago still there. All dishes meticulously cleaned, same with bathroom, seat on toilet down, for a woman's needs. Although Michael's coat is hanging in closet otherwise it seems Rylin is living here alone. Apartment is quiet and darkening in late afternoon, still feels like Ronnie but also has flavor of Rylin, special quality of Ronnie's place that it can accommodate so many different people, myself included.

Enjoyed investigating apartment but disappointed Rylin not there, premonition that City Dance Theater will not rehearse tonight. Walk slowly home along Mass. Ave. still battling Cassandra Szymborska and Liz Larkin in my mind. Getting to seem a very stupid waste of energy,

why not take them for who they are, I don't have these conflicts about men friends or anyone I've never slept with, so why them? Expectations they cannot fill for me, not my mother, I have no right to demand that they adhere to me and no one else. Buy a few more groceries on Magazine St., proprietor and I discuss the baseball playoffs, agree that Cincinnati will probably win.

At home Bob is on the phone when the downstairs buzzer rings. I answer, two friends of his, lead them upstairs, girl on second floor opens her door and they all recognize each other and chat among odors of good cooking. I continue upstairs and slump in chair reading some recent writing. Bob's two friends enter and I overhear them talking about politics and Marxism. I am tempted to go in and say the great revolutionary political writer was not Marx but Jefferson and the important revolution took place here in 1776 not Russia in 1917. Time to go to Watertown and passing Bob's room I smile in and say goodnight.

Now I'm really excited rushing along the more crowded night street. Doesn't matter if dance is cancelled, the lonely bus ride to Watertown and cold night air and moonlight is enough for me. Stop by Ronnie's to see if Rylin's there yet but she's not so I take a piss careful to replace the seat and jiggle the handle so the toilet water will stop running. Then hurry through Harvard Square to the bus stop but next bus is in fifteen

minutes. That's o.k. I'll just sit on post office steps and watch the moon come up and the love couples from the Blue Parrot walk by.

One couple is a short frail guy who speaks fast with a foreign accent, Arabic perhaps, and a tall blonde heavysset American woman. They are arguing about five dollars. The man speaks angry staccato and insists he's given her five dollars, check your wallet, he won't even consider the possibility that he's mistaken. The slow American woman is very conscious that I'm watching and her sardonic comments like What's on third? are as much for my benefit as her mate's. They seem to have created a perfect hell together and reinforce my contentment with being alone. Getting in the car she checks her wallet reluctantly and I'm afraid it looks like he was right, obnoxious as he is. It is wonderful to be stationary and reclined observing a small area of the world in detail.

Suddenly I feel a step removed from life around by thinking how all this will look in tomorrow's writing. Does writing shelter me from living? The solution comes soon enough but is not entirely satisfactory—writing must be relegated to the morning hours and when it's done it should be forgotten for the rest of the day. This means not tying my confidence to an identity as a writer. It should be no more important than trumpet

playing, part of my life but not part of me, a suitcase I carry while traveling.

Many couples pass, all of them interesting in the ways they relate as a couple, clinging physically to one another, the man often possessing and the woman allowing herself to be possessed for now. Few are so engrossed in one another that they fail to notice the bearded bum observing them. Only one couple, interracial, black man, white woman, seem very natural together, they see me but they cannot be divided by my presence. But none make me want a lover.

Blind to my companions on the bus, they may as well be mannequins, my mind and feelings furiously weave the future of tonight with the dance company with hundreds of images from my past in Boston, and the present is the eye of the storm, a white wait dead center of the tapestry. In the mirror the windows make of the night outside and the fluorescence within I look weak and pale, like a professor or pedophile.

Get off bus at Watertown Square and search for dance studio without luck so ask two teenage girls, enunciating clearly so they won't crinkle their faces look at each other and nasally say What?, if they know where the Joy of Movement Center is. They seem a little afraid of me and they don't know. Hurrying toward a phone I come upon the doorway, it is unlocked and I step inside.



Up a long carpeted stairway at the top of which I hear the faintest music. Through dark offices and studios wondering that they keep all this unlocked and in the maze I see a crack of light. Through it, on a huge dance floor are five or six dancers exercising, dressed in tights and costumes that reflect their personalities. Rylin in colorful gypsy outfit, Tom in baggy black pants and purple tights, Raymond in same with black tights and three dancers I don't recognize, two men and one woman. Steve playing bamboo flute for warm up, Scott tinkering with electric guitar on low red carpeted platform at far end of room. Scott sees me standing in doorway and then Steve but it's a long time before any dancer notices me.

Then Rylin notices and we stare into each other's faces at a distance giggling, me a little uncomfortable at the intimacy of the interchange but also lit up with pleasure at seeing her. She comes over and we hug, Rylin taking a perfectly calm pose, passive, that throws into sharp relief my tense crazy nervousness and makes me wonder how would it be if I just presented a perfectly tensionless body we'd be like two slabs of tofu. What to do with my hands, how hard to squeeze her, make sure we don't bang heads coming together by both going to the same side, how to break the embrace simultaneously. And Rylin acting so natural puts burden of responsibility on me and if I told anyone this they'd

think me neurotic, just be natural, and they'd be fundamentally right.

A long embrace but she lets me go at last although she never really held me, enigmatic woman. She says glad I came, I look good, they could use a trumpet here. Feel like her grandchild, especially with the last comment meant to make me feel wanted that always implies that it's not completely normal for me to be here. Or maybe things have gotten too bamboo flutish for her tastes since she's been away.

I hug Tom who has trimmed his beard which makes him look tough. His hug is more active and satisfying. Avoid Raymond who I don't know how to approach, we are both very shy and everything we do seems to symbolize the struggle between blacks and whites. Then to the musicians. Steve and I try to hug, which we've never done, it just seems inappropriate for us to hug each other, but we try it with him standing a foot above me on the platform so it turns out incredibly awkward and embarrassing with me laying my head on his shoulder and he holding it like a baby's or lover's. Really weird, we're both embarrassed and I can only hope he can see the humor as well as I can.

Scott has guitar on lap so we shake hands and this turns out to be the least pretentious greeting of all. He and I talk a little about our summers, that I never did hike the two thousand miles I'd planned, everyone gets

a laugh out of that, and I listen to them play trying to get a feel for music and dancers. Michael stands nearby massaging Rylin's shoulders and I think how glad I don't have to massage Liz anymore. Carol strides in and comes to me, we hug briefly and she says simply she's glad I'm back. Her clarity and swiftness impress me as if she understands exactly how much affection I can handle and moves on to the next person. She says I look good and I can honestly repay the compliment. She smells of coconut perfume.

Now we get underway. There have been changes in people over the summer, Tom is a bit of an organizer and we are all to stand in a big circle for some kind of meditation. When I hang back Scott skips before me and says C'mon Bob, we all do this. We must stand in meditation for five minutes, Rylin must look at the clock to know when time is up, and then each of us must do some kind of walking weave. I am amused, my spirit rebels, I enjoy the human warmth around me. I wish Ronnie were here, we'd make short work of this serious foolishness. As it is I must humanize this machinery myself. Some stare at the floor, the grand Naropa-trained meditators Tom, Rylin and Carol all stare dispassionately, eyelids half open and closed and since I stand across from them that means straight at me.

At first I'm quite cowed and look only at the floor, it's like being in church. Then I feel laughter rising inside

of me and I bite my lip hard to suppress it. I wiggle my toes, scratch my ear, bend my knees, arch my back and look around. I feel physically much bigger than everyone but very childlike. Maybe that's because I am big and childish. Can't get a shred of recognition when I meet Carol's or Rylin's eyes.

When the clock says time Rylin moves with Tom's coaching to the center then circles Tom, then back to the center until she has weaved around every person. I enjoy the personal styles and worry about what mine will look like. One guy moves so slowly I am transfixed by his meditation, he makes triangles instead of smooth curves, he makes it like the Indian ceremony when I was a boy scout and now I try to find a persona for myself to make my own walk a little fun.

How about hiking in Newfoundland but I can't hold the image. Decide on hands behind back, insanely lost in thought. I begin, erratic about speed, my weaving is uneven and ugly, I really want to do a different pattern but dare not break the ritual. As I pass each person I look into their eyes but everyone looks away. When I'm done I feel like a heel for staring everyone down, so what did I prove but that there's no warmth in my eyes and I am so defensive I must battle everyone down before me? One of the dancers actually looks angry with me for this behavior but when I'm done Scott smiles over to me and this eases my conscience. From Minnesota, he'll never

fit in completely with the new high consciousness.

Michael proves my undoing when he weaves someone twice, the computer expert, and I can no longer control my mirth. To my surprise Rylin also starts to laugh, and Carol and Tom until everybody but Michael is laughing. Michael can't figure it out and quite honestly I don't think anyone else knows why we're laughing except Rylin. Fortunately bursts of laughter punctuate the rest of the ritual and I feel truer to myself.

We disband to dance and play music. Scott sets a modal rhythm that Steve improvises long flowing lines to that I zap with short sexual muted bursts that expand until I take over the melody. Then hand it back to Steve and end. Feels good to play together again and glad I could find a function amidst Steve's professional playing. At one point dancers dance crazily to which I strike up mad frenzied riffs Scott responds to on electric guitar. Feel Steve looking over amazed at my energy or amazed that I could play so sloppily in front of other people.

Many lovely abstractions by the dancers. At a mellow moment play wailing tune, very much myself, and see the new woman do tragic dance with her hands covering and uncovering her face and once again I realize how people interpret my most personal music and, therefore, me. Sadness. Steve plays very airy bamboo flute to gorgeous improv by Carol, Rylin and

Tom. Then there is soundless period of dancers crawling around searching for a theme.

New dancer slaps floor with hands as I play Body and Soul to his rhythm but he gives up on me. Scott comps with guitar but can't anticipate my quirk-filled interpretation. Steve plays perfect, every measure filled beautifully, improv off of tune, Scott does less competent guitar improv and we end it there.

Dancers act out various twenties and thirties flapper girl poses to muted trumpet and break into flowing movements with Steve's flute. Long theatrical debut of new dancer without music in which he teaches the other dancers how to use the broom in old man working class persona. He's funny and Raymond is hilarious. Then Scott climbs high ladder with guitar and we make a rock star of him, disco dancing, pound piano, lots of noise and a frenzied ending.

Generally pleased with my playing but marred, compulsive of me to think this way, by not reaching high F authoritatively enough on Body and Soul and not delineating notes well enough in the frenzied dance improvisation. Also very often unable to find all the notes Steve was using in his melodies.

Afterwards we sit around and talk in small groups. The dancers hold a meeting among themselves to arrange rehearsals for performances. Scott and I praise Betty Carter and Stan Stafford's recent work, talk about

Sue, also all the study Scott is doing on guitar. He asks me about Liz and I wave my hand disgustedly so he drops the subject but with a slightest smile that says he knew it would end like that.

Find it difficult as usual to talk to other people so I wait for them to approach me. I mention to Scott I want to play music with him regularly this year but he shows no enthusiasm, too busy already. Michael rounds us up to go home, we decide against going out to eat and all climb in back of truck laughing and joking but I feel subdued and outside the fun. Notice that Steve does too. Tom out first at new house in Watertown. We talk a little but Michael breaks it up to move on. Tom suggests give him a call and we'll get together.

In Cambridge most everyone else unloads. I stand to get out just as Carol is kissing Steve goodnight so it looks as though I'm looking for a kiss too. She believes that's the case and so she pats my head like a dog's. I say I'm getting out too, but it's too late. As I get out Steve says it was good seeing me again but my shyness must make it seem like I don't believe him and again he's frustrated. Michael wonders how long I'll be in Boston.

Outdoors Rylin and I get a chance to trade phone numbers and I very much want to spend time with her alone but I sense it can't be tonight. While writing my number I jokingly ask So how was your summer Rylin,

like at a cocktail party. Her reaction is strange, she says I know what you're trying to do and when I don't understand it throws her into confusion. So she tries a serious tack, it was very intense, she met a lot of powerful people and was particularly keyed into men. This piques my curiosity but time is up because Michael appears out of the night to move us along.

I walk home through gas fumes on Mass. Ave., cold air, city lit night, wishing I were walking along the river. Very depressed by quality of my encounters with people tonight, hoping that Cassandra called and maybe she'd like to baby me tonight. First I want nothing to do with the two-timer and then I want her to take care of me. At home daydream staring out window at moonlit sky then go to bed, grateful that there is such a thing as sleep.



## Indigenous Monday

Rusty sunrise through bleary eyes and then up a couple hours later. Perfectly bright cold day and a lot of work to do, dress, make cup of tea and settle down to write account of first dance Sunday. Writing goes well at first but toward end of long six hour session run out of energy, become needlessly negative about people and self-centered in my perspective, forget much that was important and insert much that adds no information.

Bob awakes and on way out to breakfast he marvels at hours I've put into work. Only because I still enjoy it I respond. While he's out friend of his buzzes up, surprised as all his friends are at finding me at door instead of Bob. This fellow wears farmer jeans, heavy beard to shave each day, thick square glasses. Decide to entertain and throw two of us into conversation about map on wall and traveling. He's a little perplexed at energy I put into this conversation skipping over any personals.

His name Arthur. I'm chagrined to learn map is distorted severely at top so Greenland looks twice as big as South America but is really only a sixth its size. Bob White returns and corroborates Arthur's knowledge and I return to writing, they adjourn to Bob's room to discuss leftist politics, difficulties organizing tenants. Arthur departs and soon after Bob leaves for Ringe to organize

tenants, easier to get them on holidays. On his way out, fearing he'll forget, remind him about sander for my floor. He says he's glad I'm going to do the work. I'm glad he's glad but I wish he wouldn't call it "the work."

Couple of difficult hours later finish writing, generally unsatisfactory feeling. Practice trumpet, go over all the things I did poorly on Sunday night, Body and Soul, etc. Seems that if I had stood instead of sat I would have performed much better but my tall body exposed like that when all other musicians are seated, everyone might think I expect only to take solos. Nevertheless I will stand next time.

About four o'clock go for a walk, maybe I'll catch a movie in Harvard Square, walk toward river although there's a chance of meeting Liz Larkin accidentally since this is about the time she returns from hospital on weekends and holidays. The day is crisp in the shade and warm to the bones in the sun. Sit near the big oak by the boathouse in the sinking sun's rays. So mellow that Liz could come up now and I'd be glad if she sat down to chat. This sun and grass, wind and river, sky and clouds better by far than being drunk. I am like a baby in a womb, perfectly comfortable, every need and desire cared for.

Head for Harvard Square and while crossing road someone runs up behind me and says How are you? It's Mary O'Hara, strange she doesn't use my name. Right

away we are both pouring forth words about what we're doing these days. Mary doing another pediatric rotation, at Cambridge City Hospital this time, says it's an excellent hospital. Finds teenagers tricky to work with as patients. One twelve year old boy came in with pain in testicles. Seeing Mary he said, Are you my doctor? To save him embarrassment Mary called that place "down there," when did it start hurting "down there"? Until another doctor suggested surgery the boy kept it secret that he and other boys in school were playing wedgie.

Mary pleasantly surprised at how friendly and courteous staff is at Cambridge City. Also, head pediatric doctor has quietly set up neighborhood youth clinics all over Cambridge giving this city best youth care around. Mary and I see Days and Nights in the Forest, very good Indian film about four smart ass Calcutta slickers who spend a week in the hinterland and experience the mystery the country invests human relationships with. Each of the four men are revealed in their true identities, stripped of city pretense, by the combined effects of the women and the land.

Afterwards we return to her apartment for dinner. Discussing Debbie Kunitz Mary accurately sees that she is trying to live up to self image as exciting, curious, intelligent woman but this leads her away from plumbing her real depths. Coincidentally Debbie calls

during this part of conversation, she seems to actively be courting Mary's friendship.

Discussing men and women Mary and I laugh and agree that the last words on the war between the sexes come from the mediocre film Oklahoma Crude. George C. Scott is a hobo working for a tough Faye Dunaway who owns an oil rig. One rainy muddy night they meet on Faye's porch, she always plays kinky jazz on her early twentieth century victrola and after a big argument they discover their love for each other. But the fight flares up again and George walks off drunk slipping in the mud. Faye yells after him You know, it's not easy being a woman in this world! Over his shoulder George yells It's not so easy to be a man, neither!

Mary is thinking about doing her internship in New York which would be nice if I happen to move back there next autumn. About men and women again I'm telling Mary how when I'm downing women like when I think you can never count on a woman, even one you've been intimate with, when you're in a tight jam, I often think of her as the exception. I mean this as a compliment but when I remember Mary's fragile ego concerning her femininity, that maybe she might take this as meaning she's more like a man to me than a woman, I stumble and get flustered. If she does take it badly she doesn't show it, seems touched by my confusion and wears a patient expression.

We drive to Central Square, she to visit Debbie, me to go home, and dropping me off she invites me over for dinner to meet her cousin Tommy on Friday. She seems to have thoroughly enjoyed our evening together, her hand touches my leg goodnight.

Walk home in brisk cold, no desire to face nature tonight. Bob is home writing another short story, perhaps inspired by my endurance earlier today. I greet la belle lune risen before my window, clear and waning, and climb into bed to read *The Ruby Fruit Jungle*, autobiography of a lesbian Mary has loaned to me, which Debbie loaned to her. The writer is funny, seems to throw herself into the thick of life and enjoy herself. I detect no, or little, derogation of men in her lesbian perspective, just her preference based on childhood experience with girlfriend and bad or nondescript relationships with teenage boys. Put out the light but awaken in middle of night and continue her story, write down dreams, fall asleep again until dawn.

## Smooth Road, Clear Day

At dawn the sky is full of big broken clouds that filter the early light into shapes that recall dawns traveling in Newfoundland. It is a strong memory. I can recall the feeling of being on my own out in the weather, entirely exposed and self-sufficient and more open to the world than ever before. Will this morning have its own nostalgic strength someday, the first few days camping out in my new room on Pearl St. with the view of Boston's skyline and sunrise and moonrise? I wonder how the confluence of forces here will shape my life.

Dress and go downstairs into the warm morning to buy notebook to record dreams. Stroll in sun on Mass. Ave. to Harvard Coop and Woolworths. Ask about sleeping mats, there are none, and no notebooks I like. Buy slate blue book in stationery store, just the color of dreams. Walk back along Mass. Ave., happy, no big plans, singing Smooth road/Clear day/But why am I the only one/Traveling this way? Young woman walking a little in front, knickers and black stockings, looks over shoulder and smiles, not really to me, just smiles at the song.

Turning down Pearl St. who should I run into examining a parked truck but Ellen MacLeish. Black hair and blue eyes contrast, her clothing is neat, she seems happy. Donny has left her. She always seemed happiest

when he was gone. One night late he was playing banjo and singing and she asked him not to because the kids were asleep. He flew into a rage and beat her black and blue and broke her nose. Then he left and when they met soon after on the street he was ashamed to look at her. Ellen says she believes he really loved her but just didn't love himself. I agree but she is too forgiving, she wants him back. Ellen is with her sister who has had hard times with men herself.

Ellen is moving to North Cambridge up behind Harvard so Morgan can go to a better school. That sounds smart. She's in another play, carrying a briefcase because she is taking classes. We come to my place and I invite them up to take a look at my new apartment. They are duly impressed by its size and view. They can't stay for tea.

While giving Ellen my phone number she asks if I've seen Liz since she's been back. Curt No. Ellen picks up the vibes, just mentions Liz was in the hospital in England for colitis and drops it there. Liz had asked after me through Ellen but Ellen hadn't seen me. Ellen says she'll invite me over to dinner sometime and maybe we'll do a few moving jobs together if she gets her truck fixed. Ellen is a strange woman, I admire her fortitude raising Morgan alone and running a moving business but the way she speaks so flippantly of her broken nose and other difficulties perplexes me.

I eat looking at the dogs out the window and do my writing quickly. Then practice trumpet vigorously. Watch the old man who owns one dog come and go below. By the time I'm done it's late afternoon, too late to go downtown to see about a futon, I'm getting more resigned to just using my big old double bed. Get absorbed reading the rest of Rubyfruit Jungle through dusk into the night. The Hancock Tower reflects the sunset like a thermometer, as the sun sinks the colors rise on the mirror building.

Rita Mae Brown is very clear in her desire to be a filmmaker and confidant about her lesbianism. She's not afraid of sex, will use it as a way to learn about life and people. I envy her because she shows no possessiveness of her lovers although her lovers sometimes wish to possess her. Her contention that men are boring lovers irks me mildly but something tells me that may be true in general. I myself often feel leaden and awkward with sex except when I first met Cassandra because sex was my main project then. Having little desire for sex now, I would have no patience to be sensitive and creative, and I am too tense to receive pleasure. These days I prefer sleep.

While I am again practicing Bob returns from work. His presence influences my playing but I remain creative. My playing has not been beautiful lately. It has been energetic, quirky and sometimes angry and I get no



response from him suggesting to me that it doesn't get to him at all.

Bob forgot the sanding machine during the day's business. He draws me into the kitchen, wants to talk about writing sometime. Now's as good a time as any so I start talking but we miss each other and the conversation slides over to men and women. We seem to have developed the same bitterness over the years, something I sensed when I first met him. I tell him about the scene in Oklahoma Crude and he politely laughs. He has reactionary feelings—maybe it would be better if marriages were arranged when we're children but I'm sure he doesn't mean it. He thinks these things must be simpler among primitive people. I think the problems are the same between men and women everywhere but the acceptable solutions are fewer there. He goes out to another meeting.

Shortly thereafter I go for a walk. The night is mild, no moon yet. Walk up Mass. Ave. and I'm about to call Cassandra but I've lost her phone number. Just as well. After I've been released from the plan to call her I feel happy being alone, free to look around. Two guys welding something under a car. The top stories of buildings I never noticed. Whole buildings rediscovered. Decide not to see a movie and return along the river. Cooler here, glad I'm not camping out, those days are over for a while. Enjoy the walk up Pearl St. from the

river, each house different. Corner of Pearl and Putnam  
like a town in the country, apartments above grocery  
store, moon rising.

## Moving Day

Awake at overcast dawn but the sun's golden heat spreads through one vaginal rift in the cloudbank. Daydream until it rises completely above the low belt of clouds. Today must move out of Liz Larkin's but can't go too early or I'll meet her there. Give her time to get to work, so read more Middlemarch, passing interesting, boil two eggs, roll up sleeping bag, last night was my last night camping out. It's been a long time.

It's a cool morning outdoors but the day will warm up. Walk in the sun, buy banana on way over to Larkin's. Unfortunately she has overslept and when I turn key in door hear her voice from bed. She comes out hair ruffled and face puffed from sleep, we are both amused by this "coincidence" which she suggests she may have subconsciously arranged. I'm not too upset. The apartment is clean and fresh, all the plants are healthy and everything is in order. This is a sign that Liz is well and as sleep wears off she too seems healthy. Working seven days a week at the hospital.

She wrote a sweet note last night which is on the kitchen table. Sorry I don't want to see her but guesses she understands. Strange to be living so close together and not seeing one another. Misses me. John misses me and asked to be remembered to me. Mr. O'Connor and wife going to nursing home. I should go see him because

he often asks after me. Liz would like to see me sometime but will leave it up to me. P.S. Don't let Chia-jen run out of the house.

Liz says I'm looking well. Every one of her friends who had seen me in the last week reported back to her that I hated her and never wished to see her again. I ask who. Ellen, Nancy, Ruby who she called to find out where I was. I'm tempted to think there's something inside her for me, and there is I suppose, but I continue to keep my distance. She notices me eyeing her sexually, legs falling out of silk bathrobe I bought for her once. Glad to see she wears it, kind of thought she didn't like it. Michael Hardy told her I got a standing ovation last Sunday night for my trumpet playing. No such thing, wonder why he told her that, or did she mistranslate.

I mention her colitis in England and that gets us into tensions of her whole family being together. Somehow, don't remember about what, we begin to disagree about something, and she senses anger in me and says we'd better not try to talk right now. So she gets ready for work and I stay down the basement sweeping off my mattress and collecting my stuff until she leaves. She takes a long time.

While I'm in the basement Mr. O'Connor slowly descends stairs so I go out to meet him. His wife started to cry when she heard she had to go to nursing home and Mr. O'Connor wouldn't be with her, so he agreed to

go also. Says but he can come back to his apartment for visits anytime he wants. I bring Liz's mail in. Same old roles, forever and ever, amen. This is why I want to stay away from her. Certainly away from her house. I never want to be another person, particularly another former lover, doing things for her just to keep contact with her.

I pack everything but the mover calls to be late. So I pass the time sitting peacefully with the cats. Dina's kittens are under the kitchen sink and when she's with them she's paranoid of me being close, but we enjoy sitting together away from them in the kitchen while Chia plays at being mother, giving them all a good bath. Dina watches closely but trusts Chia enough not to jump down and supervise or take over.

Also read an old diary of Liz's from middle days with Marcus. She was in romantic love and suffering from insecurity, he wouldn't call often, etc., bothered me how she took Mitchell's love for granted. But he granted it for granted. Also once when she saw her old lover Roy she remarked how he was still attracted to her. She sounded Machiavellian, like she was thoroughly enjoying her dominance over him. Makes me extremely wary of her.

The movers finally arrive but want to charge me twenty dollars. The ad said eight so I say no. My mover's truck broke down so he had to get his friend's help. His friend the hairy beast makes a big stink about the dough

but I hold my own. The younger guy is stuck in the middle and we settle on twelve. The whole job takes a little over half an hour and then I give them beer. The bitchy guy is impressed with my speed and ability to work. He at first is lazy but perks up when I work so fast. I hand them fifteen dollars and the young guy comes back later and returns three to me as pre-arranged in secret.

When they have left I hurriedly arrange my room. As I'm finishing Bob comes home. He shows a sense of humor about an office job he once had. This is the first time he's sharing without my asking questions but I'm impatient because I have to get back to Liz's before she gets home. I leave a lackluster note for her implying that we'll get together but promising nothing and trying to show no emotion, just detachment. I will not call her to see how far she'll go, if any distance at all, to mend the rift between us. If she won't put herself out then it's just as well, no great loss. If she does, I'll respond but never again will I give her the sense she will be loved and worshiped like a queen. Some other sucker for that. Shoot a few lousy hoops and return home.

Finish unpacking, the setup will do, and take the shower I've been putting off for this moment for a few days, wear fresh clothes I haven't touched in two months. A new and lonesome beginning. Have put Cassandra pretty much behind me and now Liz if it

works out that way. Throw out old pay slips and leases that I've lugged around for years imitating my father who saves every financial tidbit. Very thorough he, but I'm looking more and more like a wanderer who will have to preserve his history in stories. Am tempted to chuck out most letters, save only the picture postcards, but that will take time to decide.

Now it is time to go downtown for Stan Stafford's concert. Depressed on the subway ride and walk, stand in line on the stairs among groups of people talking, recognize no one. Inside Tommy, Mary's cousin, awaits me. We sit together and talk about baseball for starters, Yankees clobbered by Cincinnati today. He has a wry sense of humor but something about him makes me untrue to myself. I try to be cooler than I am.

The concert starts with African drum rhythms getting louder and louder. Steve Gunn is playing tonight and Carol is dancing along with the rest of Stan's Sundance group. Throughout there is a little trouble meshing styles but generally the concert is enjoyable. Steve does a beautiful tsambos flute solo and Carol's dancing, smooth accurate and theatrical puts Aisha, the other dancer, a little to shame. Ernie plays his usual solid, inventive bass.

Afterwards while the audience is dancing in a frenzy getting their pent up energies out, Carol passes by. I tell her her dancing was beautiful and she says

Bullshit. This surprises me because I'm sincere. We hug. She asks why I'm not dancing and I answer I'm feeling a little laid back tonight. But we have nothing more to say and after a slightly embarrassing silence she moves on to someone else. Tommy departs, we will meet tomorrow night for City Dance Theater.

On the walk to the subway I pass a gang of teens at entrance to public gardens who ask if I want to buy some weed. One guy runs at me and acts tough but he's only kidding although I couldn't tell at first. I was ready for a fight and something in me kind of wanted a good brawl. Cars honked their horns at me. The city seemed aggressive and crazy and I was glad to get home. Went to sleep on my old bed in my new room.



## A Good Brother

Awake a little after dawn, room so cold can see breath, bed warm and firm. Pleased with new living situation, view of sky and skyline, weather coming in and going out, my room like an observatory. Get dressed quick in very cold, brush teeth carefully, cook up scrambled eggs with cheese and onions. First prepared meal in new home, feels good cooking and making tea, a calm and meditative task.

Our kitchen is clean and uncluttered with the world map on the wall and the imitation marble table wrought iron legs and three chairs around it each one different. Plants and a northeastern light. Clean plate and take tea into bedroom to write. Sketch the day without filling in details, hurried job but a consistent evenly paced outline of day. Discover during writing what feelings about Liz Larkin really are, not anger but caution, need time to learn to be open to her again without grabbing and clutching.

Afterwards glad to get outdoors to buy newspaper, wear wool cap, other people dressed heavy coats. Go down to Magazine St. store but to owner's chagrin his Real Papers were stolen this morning. Buy seven bananas, store has no good bread, owner's moustache smiles coyly as he serves pretty woman who

I follow out of store and up Magazine, her sweater autumn colors, whistle smooth road/clear day.

In Central Square wonder if I'll meet Cassandra but if I went by her house this early she might be in bed with Ramona. Turn corner at Pearl St. pass Hundred Flowers Bookstore, Cambridge Public Library, poured cement three story parking garage kids riding skateboards down the ramps, count on kids to make use of every junk heap in a creative way.

At home Bob wakes up and we say good morning, converse about what he did last night. Instead of going to bar he sat around talking with five or six friends, found the games everyone was playing confusing but enjoyed being analytical about it afterwards. This group UMass students but with looser, less goal oriented attitude toward school than he ever had. Bob trying to figure out attraction between himself and woman friend who he's known for years but never even kissed goodnight. He also explains how he has a few circles of friends, rotating his involvement with them but never feeling an integral part of any of them, basically a loner on the edge of these groups. Likes it that way because he meets different kinds of people.

Conversation ranges to our families, we are the black sheep, and for the same reasons—went away to college and got ideas, could no longer tolerate family's life style, political differences. However now Bob gets

along with parents, talks hours with mother when home, drinks whiskey in front of t.v. with father. More than I've accomplished with my folks. Bob departs to organize tenants in North Cambridge.

A peaceful afternoon. Finish newspapers, no movies this week. Practice trumpet, accuracy good but stamina poor, learn Autumn Leaves, find myself improvising right off the sheet music. Need record player to develop ear and learn certain tunes, Billie Holiday, Ornette Coleman, Thelo. Monk, Charlie Parker.

Dig into boxes of books, have one whole box to sell, must buy Penguin Complete Shakespeare and I Ching tomorrow. Also electric space heater, feet too cold. Begin reading my old poetry some of it very good, rich and sensual, musical, but time to meet Tommy at City Dance Theater and I'm hungry. Former tenant knocks at door to get into basement for some wood. He plays folk guitar, gives longwinded explanation of why he doesn't expand his talents, then another longwinded explanation of caveman precursor of chess.

Must hurry to meet Tommy, skitter in night up Pearl, skitter back forgot soprano recorder, Bob and former tenant talking smoking cigarettes, then out up to Mass. Ave. Lines at McDonald's too long, ask guy for time he answers too slow, rushing past bar hear trumpet jazz so go in. Smoky small packed joint can't see band at first but then see black trumpeter blowing hard, playing

well although his back up is so loud he can't really modulate volume, limits his voice. Still he is energetic, four sax players less interesting, drum and guitar boring.

Set ends with unprofessional rendition of the basic tune and I burst out into night. Nothing in Mt. Auburn grocery store interests me to eat and lines too long, pass various small restaurants and cafes, buy bagel and cream cheese in luncheonette. Although I'm in an obnoxious rush I like the guy behind the counter easy going and willing to serve, place wonderfully empty except for couple at table.

Continue to bus stop slopping cream cheese onto beard. Tommy is on the bus in his week old beard, basketball shirt, floppy knit cap, has electric guitar and amp. Each tell story of how we got to bus, then talk about Yankees, basketball game Tommy played this afternoon, he and I will be only musicians tonight. Find dance studio, Raymond opens door, awkward situation with Tommy, Raymond and new dancer Ed. Tommy and I new friends having awkward beginning, Raymond and I were never anything but awkward, and Ed I don't know.

I shoulder responsibility as central uniting figure and talk to Raymond about T'ai Chi and Da Liu. Tell him I wrote for Da Liu for couple of years, interests Raymond but asks how I could write if I never did T'ai Chi. I'm tempted to answer flippantly I understand it all perfectly without having to do it, but refrain. Enjoy talking to

Raymond without City Dance love expectations, just straight talk. Tommy entertains us with cat and monkey noises and Ed and I get acquainted. Soon other dancers, Tom Carol and Rylin enter laughing and joking, cursory greetings and we enter studio. Rylin greets me with odd distance and wryness like she's miffed that I haven't gotten in touch with her all week. Tom immediately apologizes for not calling but he didn't have my number.

Depressed, uncomfortable in studio, can't talk to anybody, sit alone watching Tommy try to plug his amp, so sneak out to Napoli Pizzeria. Quiet and empty, Italian woman sells me slice of Sicilian spiced delicately with oregano and I eat it staring out window. Buy second slice boyishly asking for middle piece, she amused, and ginger ale. Then three greasers drive up, joke with lady, buy pizza and put on jukebox. Feel at home here compared to dance studio, watching car headlights and listening to crappy jukebox music, like I'm traveling again. Teenage sister and younger brother come in, make the place warmer yet.

Depression wears off a little and return to studio where Tommy's playing soft and shy to duet by Raymond and Tom called Nigger-Whitey. Black Raymond calls Tom nigger, Tom calls Raymond whitey. At end other dancers make comments, they are working on routines for Halloween concert. Tommy frustrated because he doesn't know what he should be doing and

I'm not sure myself, this kind of rehearsal new to me, so he says he's just going to talk to them. Carol says she'll tell him if the music gets obtrusive. For rest of evening dancers work on various routines while Tommy and I diddle some music between acts. Tommy decides to leave, I feel guilty about such a bad first night for him, hope he'll return in couple of weeks, goes home to catch end of Yankee-Cincinnati game.

Rylin lying on floor across room, go over and lay down next to her, finally get a chance to talk, she's the only one I want to talk to about Liz Larkin. Since pinpointing in my writing the problem I feel with Liz, I am less accusing and disgusted when I talk about her. Rylin is first person I explain to in detail what happened. At the studio I describe it still a little confused but later that night at Rylin's she makes me feel much love for and optimism about Liz. Her observations are that anger is a waste of time and that hurt is my real emotion. It is not so much my relationship with Liz that I am working on but my own inner development. Every jarring decision of your lover requires an adjustment and that adjustment simply needs understanding to take place.

Rylin says Liz is a private person who feels things deeply and because she feels so deeply must protect herself which is something anyone can see in her dancing. I realize during the conversation that I need only time. Now my approach to Liz is to grasp, hold and

possess, whereas I would like to be separate and content, gently receive her, loving her as she is. I know I can do it but going to her prematurely will set me back severely. I implore Rylin to visit Liz because it would cheer her so, Rylin seems so superior to the general run of visitors Liz receives and after urging her I realize that Rylin will serve a double function as an emissary of my love.

To my query Rylin tells of her revitalized relationship with Michael. How last spring she closed off to him for a few reasons. First she felt attractions for other men that were frustrated because she couldn't act on them for fear of hurting Michael. The other problem was she became pregnant but didn't want the child. For their first four years every night was like their first night until Rylin discovered her attraction to other men. From there things went downhill, good sex was a rare thing, they'd read until they were too tired to make love and thereby avoid the issue and then last spring Rylin pulled away decisively. Over the summer Michael put himself together and began to understand how much their separation was needed. Now they don't live together as man and wife but they are both friends and lovers, can share and laugh over their experiences with other lovers and a few nights ago Rylin says they shared the most beautiful night of their lives.

While in Colorado Rylin had an affair with Don Cherry the trumpet player who she says is a wonderful man, excited about all kinds of things in life, for whom music is the most important thing. She met and slept with a lot of men in her attempt to figure out what place sex has in her life, how it can be such a basic influence. Why is it that in a relationship even if everything else seems fine, if sex is bad the whole thing's fucked up? She figures why shouldn't she go out and learn about sex just as she would go out and learn about anything else she wanted to know. I recall how that attitude was the solid foundation for the love that later sprang up for Cassandra and me.

Rylin is having an affair with a man in Boston who now is pressing for more but she is holding back because Michael is her most important relationship. Grappling with her propensity for monogamy yet her attractions to other men, she insists that people can love more than one person, and sexually, well. Rylin's dream: she and Michael are lying on the floor of their house in Brighton kissing goodnight, nothing passionate, when her present lover appears silently at the door. She is aware of his presence but it does not cause her to pull away from Michael. Then Michael sees him and they look at one another for a long time. Finally Rylin's lover smiles and says, You're a good man Michael! Michael answers You're not so bad yourself.



Rylin's dream about me is she is in church jiggling and feeling uncomfortable, everyone around her is gray and robot-like listening to a boring sermon when she looks across the aisle and sees me red-faced and glowing. I mention how much like church that weaving ritual felt that City Dance Theater did last week. It turns out Rylin felt the same way and we both laughed at the same thing when Michael did a double weave. I convince her that nobody else knew what they were laughing about.

We talk about Lee Dickinson, both of us feel optimistic that she'll lick her problems and be happy. Rylin thinks she needs an older man, I think she needs a woman. Raymond has been trying a long time to get next to Lee but last New Years Eve she gave him the jilt to be with me, flatters herself that Raymond is still smarting from it. Rylin and Raymond get a good laugh about that in the car coming home tonight. As far as I know Raymond is unaware Lee was with me that night and I look out the car window silently, get a private laugh from that.

I tell Rylin what a good lover Lee is excepting her fear of anyone getting near her vagina. Rylin knows how sensual Lee must be and has recently put it to Lee straight that it's time for her to quit babying herself about sex. Lee has told Rylin that I'm the only man she's ever slept with who didn't treat her like a stranger

whenever they met accidentally afterwards. I explain to Rylin that this is because Lee made no demands and didn't make me feel guilty when I got involved with Liz and pulled away knowing that her problems were too much for me to handle. I tell Rylin the story of me and Cassandra from where we left off last winter and she asks if I ever gave C. the poem about our last night that I wrote to her from Canada. Then and there I decide to put it in C's mailbox tomorrow.

The evening with Rylin is rich with friendship. For the first time I feel completely fulfilled being with her, and that I have heard and understood her. I believe this has to do with the many changes in Rylin. She smokes cigarettes and eats meat now. This isn't good intrinsically but it shows a willingness to dig her teeth into life and not avoid it with all kinds of Buddhist make believe about harmony and perfect balance. Even her voice has changed from that mellow meditative monotone to a strong voice with real intention. Her sentences hold honest feeling and hard thought. She reads to me a long poem by Pablo Neruda. In return I introduce her to Williams' *Asphodel*. Then we listen to Rampal's first jazz album, never have I heard an instrument played so perfectly and because he's new to jazz he plays simply so it is moving. Rylin and I hug goodnight and she says what a good brother I am.

## Hearts and Minds

Wake up to a clear day and listen to Bob get ready for work and leave. Spend the morning and most of afternoon writing, practicing trumpet and doing a little reading. Trumpet goes particularly well, find my stamina working on new tune, Cole Porter's I Get a Kick Out of You. Also spend time watching dogs play down below, their old white-haired masters going in and out early in the morning. Enjoying Middlemarch, Eliot's descriptive abilities teaching me for this journal but still haven't figured out how she moves the book, chronologically?, but her structure is becoming clearer. Couple of chapters on Lydgate, then a couple on Dorothea, two central characters, and these scenes slowly weave all the satellite lives together. How Lydgate and Dorothea relate will be the final stitch.

Now late afternoon, searching for something to focus on, switch on radio, begin washing out beer bottles to return, lose interest, return to trumpet practice, then beer bottles again. Maybe I'll ask Cassandra if she wants to see Hearts and Minds, if she doesn't I'll call Ruby and go with her. Run out and return bottles, do some shopping in Central Square, eat cheese, bread and drink beer, try to call Ruby but no answer.

Then Mary calls, she sounds a little lonely, voice strained and gravelly, invites me to dinner Friday night,

says she enjoyed having Tommy and I meet at her house for dinner last week. We talk about Tommy how I thought by his manner he had his whole life together and I felt inferior until I asked him questions and saw he is at same stage in life and art as me. Mary says she admires both of us for striking out on our own and sticking with it unlike others who try for a couple of years and then give up and take a job or return to school. Invite Mary to Hearts and Minds but she's having a friend over to dinner.

Soon after, Tommy Nowlan, Oh you must want Bob White, no Bob Ronnow, Mary's cousin calls to ask if I think next Sunday night will be like last Sunday night. I honestly answer yes, until after the Halloween concert. Also wants to know if I'd like to play together, some tunes he's writing, likes my tone. Of course, this is exactly the kind of work I'm looking for this next year in Boston. His gig last night at Pooh's went terrible, couldn't keep up with big band arrangements. We'll start playing together in a couple of weeks. Nice to be wanted.

Go out into night and head toward Cassandra's house. Red house, ring doorbell, her roommate answers by opening the door and re-entering without saying a word. Follow him in ask if Cassandra's here, says no, can I leave note, yes but shut the door. Woman watching t.v. with him, they seem to be relishing my arrival in a

gossipy way. Down ugly unpainted narrow hall to Cassandra's room, light on inside, knock, someone answers from bathroom thinking I'd knocked there, so I go into kitchen and wait, start to write note, just below my consciousness I know who's in that bathroom.

Ramona, Cassandra's lover emerges, meet her in hallway, shake her hand quite happy to meet my rival, I now get to size her up, put her in perspective. I like her immediately, she is shorter than I'd imagined, softer in general, puts herself out to be friendly. Says Oh you're Robert the poet, that's one way to describe me I guess, hate it when people who don't know me intimately call me Robert or poet but maybe she feels she knows me intimately through Cassandra's stories in bed.

She's using C's typewriter to write college paper, sits at desk, I sit on bed in open position, she crosses legs and lights cigarette. I ask her questions, read Rubyfruit Jungle?, shitty literature in her opinion, then she tells about her experiences in army and why she's in school, what psychological pressures her search for a new identity causes. I listen but do not really hear because I want to get to film on time, invite her to accompany me but she wants to finish her paper.

When I get up to leave she insistently invites me to birthday get together she's having for Cassandra tomorrow night, I say yes but I know I won't be there, not the kind of situation in which I'd like to deal with

Cassandra and Ramona together. Ramona takes my hand and holds it too long, a little mischievously I sense, to see what my reaction will be. I withdraw it awkwardly. Feels as if she wants to hug or kiss but I shy away, can't figure out why she should be attracted to me so quickly, how she can take such liberties, maybe she does feel she knows me intimately through Cassandra, or maybe I'm reading more into her body language than is there. She says she was nervous about meeting me but I don't respond in kind although it would be true.

At the front door which she shows me to indicating that I'm the visitor and she is comparatively a resident, she continues to press for my presence at tomorrow night's birthday party to which I accede to get her off my case. Notice that she has picked up many of Cassandra's mannerisms, a certain wild jerky turning of the head when she gets excited telling a story that mythologizes herself or grossly overexpressing her awe at having met me.

A little upset at meeting the person Cassandra loves and sleeps with. Along Mass Ave. try phone in Orson Welles restaurant to call Ruby but line busy, when finally get through she has just stepped out and I forget to leave a message. Cross Harvard Yard to Science Center still absorbed in encounter with Ramona, look for Ruby in line thinking that as a filmmaker Hearts and

Minds, Vietnam war documentary, will interest her. Inside run across Mary and her friend Elaine, we sit separately though, Mary tries to introduce us but I brush it off by saying Elaine looks familiar to which Elaine grimaces. Find a seat on other side of auditorium. Across aisle is pretty girl who dresses poorly and has bad posture but is extremely good looking. We flirt a little but both are shy.

Guy comes to front of audience and makes series of banal remarks about the war and present day conditions between U.S. and Vietnam, passes out petitions calling for normalization of relations. Easy to sign up for that, impatient with his obvious remarks. Hearts and Minds hasn't the power it was reputed to have, at least for me, and seemed to make some too easy associations using cuts and splices of film, but nothing untrue so in that respect a good documentary. Little actual footage in Vietnam, mostly a film about Americans, particularly embittered former GIs. Amazing Buddhist monk in gold robe, very articulate, militant, light emanates from his skin. Film clearly documented egoism of American policy makers, camera took particular interest in men crying, like Daniel Ellsberg about death of Robert Kennedy.

When the film ended Mary and Elaine had already left. I walked home along the river of dreams in the wintry evening thinking mostly of Liz Larkin and how it

would just take time for me to be able to be with her again, be loving yet detached, not possessive. The dreaming Charles River is a good companion, little, dark and deep, river to float my thoughts on. Then along quiet Pearl St. windows lit, people indoors, thinking of Liz until there is nothing more to think. Time heals all wounds and my only mistake could be in seeing her too soon. But what if she calls before I am ready? How strictly must I adhere to my hermitage? Guess I'd be glad to have coffee with her and talk.

So absorbed in thought overshoot my house, the ever-shivering neighbor's dog which they leave outdoors in all kinds of weather reminds me where I am, catching sight of him lying under a parked car. Upstairs Bob still not home, leave hat on, cover legs with jacket, read more Middlemarch. Dorothea becoming disenchanted with Casaubon her musty emotionless husband. Ladislav, young artist falling in love with her. Tired after two chapters, lie in bed thinking of Ramona and Cassandra, blinking buildings far away in Boston.



## Seeing Cassandra

Rainy dawn, fall monsoon, clouds traveling southeast at terrific speed. Phone rings, instinctively know it's for me although Bob is on phone a while. It's Cassandra Szymborska, confusion over the two Bobs. Calling in response to note and last night's visit, she was at Betty Carter gig last night, would have loved to see Hearts and Minds, Betty wonderful but back up band disappointing, drummer scared of her, bass player uninspired, Cassandra passing through Carter's dressing room to go to bathroom says to the singer how high she makes her, Betty smiles and responds That's nice, thank you honey. I tell Cassandra how Betty Carter took a bow to me as I applauded her while she walked backstage in New York.

Ramona is very nice, yes isn't she? Some conversation about C's theater group and then ask her if she'd like to meet for lunch, 12:15 in front of Bonwit Teller, some difficulty getting directions straight. Cassandra sounds very happy to be meeting me for lunch, I feel a little ambivalent but look forward to it. Although Bob could hear whole conversation I felt no self-consciousness. Whether I have changed, or the relationship with Cassandra has changed, or there is something especially unobtrusive about Bob White I cannot say. I have a couple of hours to write, don't quite

finish story of meeting Ramona, practice five minutes and then rush out to meet Cassandra downtown, first visiting the bank to withdraw money.

Green line transfer and then off at Arlington station, out onto Berklee St. and there's Bonwit Teller but Cassandra is not waiting under the canopy although I'm twenty minutes late. Browse ugly jewelry, furry hats, leather handbags, made up dressed up ladies, look at pretty salesgirl talking to model looking woman, next door the intimate apparel department that I almost accidentally enter, seems I always end up in the lingerie, and then outside to look for a seat and wait.

Wander the corner expecting Cassandra any moment by car, then find a seat on a dry spot of sandstone stoop watching people hurry by with seemingly important purposes. Woman runs by awkwardly in tight dress, left leg swinging out like it's on a busted hinge, hailing guy in black knee length coat carrying a box. She grabs the box angrily out of Freddie's arms and says she's going to take the subway like normal people do. Freddie follows passively and unperturbed but at the corner hails a taxi with his umbrella and the lady stands waiting with her box. But all the cabs are taken to Freddie's chagrin although he keeps his face a peaceful mask as he follows the angry woman down into the subway.

Begins to drizzle so I take a position under the Bonwit Teller canopy, growing impatient, will give Cassandra a few more minutes, very hungry for a McDonald's hamburger. Then cross Boyleston St. and lean like a detective on the corner looking people over, old popcorn vendor occasionally croaks the word popcorn. Finally when the clock says 1:15 depart neither angry nor disappointed and go into bookstore on the slim chance they'll have a cheap complete Shakespeare. And to my surprise they do, not a pretty volume but only five dollars. Leaving store try one more time, check around corner, woman in plum colored jacket, glasses, hair like Cassandra getting out of small car, turns around, it's her.

Cassandra hugs me warmly and without self-consciousness, her love seems so unpremeditated, whereas I hold her tolerantly defending my feelings. Introduces me to friend Marlene, thin pointy woman, sharp nose, has heard much about me from way she looks at me, comparing her vision of me to the reality before her eyes, then drives off. Marlene the woman Cassandra started the children's theater with, they are late from a meeting.

We decide on a Japanese restaurant, fast food décor, seats rooted to floor, food turns out to be not very good, waitresses extraordinarily pretty, particularly ours. I make my admiration no secret. Joke about

Cassandra's mascara and lipstick and eye shadow, say I only like women who are made up nowadays anyway.

Over lunch we discuss mainly her theater group, I listen patiently but when I try to tell of my own life, travels in Canada, Quebec City, I can't get enthusiastic and am too sensitive to her patience to continue. However I'm enjoying our distance from each other, all communication is verbal. Two men in three piece suits discuss education and Cassandra overhears names she recognizes, maybe these men will cross her business path someday. Cassandra points out that the pages of my new Shakespeare are xeroxed and this disappoints me but the volume will do.

Although something is lacking in our communication, perhaps I'm not giving her all my attention and energy as when we were lovers, she betrays no sense of anything being amiss except once when I see her mind working apart from what she is saying. Today is Cassandra's birthday. She hints at maybe taking another trip to Quebec together and also asks if I want to ride to New York this weekend with her and Marlene. I must call her she says, I can see she wants me to take more initiative. I pay the bill and improve on the tip Cassandra leaves which she notices with a short laugh.

Walking is easier, draws us together, makes me more at ease with my ambivalence, we are playful by

the drained pond at public gardens, fecund pond bottom odor. Pass through downtown in drizzle to old bookstore, people on street notice the lovers, C. says musty smell of old books is sensuous to her. We browse enjoying each other together and apart. Then passing by a religious bookstore Cassandra treats herself to an annotated Bible that she's wanted for years. It's easy being together, when the saleslady loses sight of me she asks Cassandra where's her boyfriend.

We head for the subway because Cassandra has to go to rehearsal, sit side by side comparing our experiences at rehearsals and performances. C. feels she must attain a certain energy level whereas the performance is a reflection of my mood at the time. On the street in Central Square we kiss goodbye but I'm not all there, thinking of Liz Larkin. I kiss with my eyes closed but notice without nervousness that Cassandra's are open to the light of day.

Cassandra reminds me to call her and asks if she can sometimes drop by. I say of course, tired of the old sensitivity to timing and privacy in our lives. We go our separate ways, I wonder how she can't be disappointed with our afternoon together. I am displeased with myself, I would like to be able to devote myself to her without qualms or defenses. Her transparency and trust are beautiful although I feel that our ideas about love are quite different.

Return home to finish writing. When Bob enters he remarks how hard I've been working but I confess to being out all afternoon. While he sits at table eating green beans in butter I take opportunity to slouch in kitchen easy chair and chat, about the weather, about big cities. Nothing edifying, just friendly roommate chat and he smokes a cigarette to prolong it a little.

Bob has a meeting to go to so I go to my room and practice trumpet. Switch on radio and happen upon recording of Betty Carter's performance last night. Cassandra was right, her back up was not on top of things but Betty had fine moments, her piano player was particularly annoying playing too many notes too loudly. I try playing along, not unsuccessfully.

Decide to go to poetry reading at Hundred Flowers Bookstore. Rainstorm starting. Poet named Tomas O'Leary, beard and neck length burger's hair, very humorous and entertaining, has certainly mastered alliteration and his voice recites the lines musically. I stay for his whole set. He recites everything, reads nothing, drinks beer, tells stories between poems, has mike around neck, taping performance. Afterwards the rain is beating down outdoors. Fortunately no wet stray dogs out tonight or I'd feel obliged to take them in.

## Ruby and Ronnie

Wake up late, cloudy and going to rain. Bob wakes up, taking day off from work. I am debating whether to call Cassandra to see Cousin, Cousine this afternoon and finally decide yes but nobody is home. Bob goes out. I sit down to write but my style is too detailed, it bores me and has lost its breadth and humor so throw away crumpled pages. Smell garbage so take it out back by narrow rear staircase. Upstairs open page of work to reread and see what the purpose is and what changes have occurred. Seem to have moved from more general and humorous descriptions to detailed lists of day's events. Best work was the earliest written in Quebec City.

The most important personal quality is patience. Sometimes I don't get outside until three o'clock but then, as Ken said, So what, there's not much new out there anyway. Each morning, usually waiting for Bob to go to work, I spend time in bed or at the window daydreaming. The dogs play fight below, the fat lady comes out and feeds her Doberman. The weather has been overcast for a few days so there's no warmth sitting in the window.

While I'm reading over work at kitchen table Bob returns. We say a few words. He is easy to live with, I doubt we'll become friends but we won't be enemies

either. The dynamics are simple. We exchange courtesies, we're polite, make an effort to talk small talk rather than live in silence, but we are different enough that I don't feel inclined to share ecstatic conversation with him.

Claims a large part of himself is shaped by being from first generation working class family. Entertains himself weekend nights by going drinking in neighborhood bars. Shares some pedestrian and pessimistic ideas with American socialists and communists yet never proselytizes. He is a sensitive person who doesn't let his sensibilities intrude on others. Struggles to bring into harmony his political ideals and his personal problems, loneliness and desires, with some success, sees the political situation directly determining his happiness and commits himself to an aspect of necessary change, organizing tenants.

Although his body moves flowingly, in some ways Bob's personality seems inflexible. A point by point schedule that includes pleasures for Sunday and today, his day off. His block of wood use of the word work, some kind of ideal that could, without his sensitivity to others, be obnoxious. Sometimes I feel older and wiser than him but often think he has reasons for having the same perspective on me, seeing me spend hours of indoor solitude youthfully trying to write and play trumpet. Considering my meager skills and slim



accomplishments at 25 it is a slight anachronism that at 50 will be uncomfortable to behold. A Mr. Casaubon.

When Bob goes out I continue reading and then call Cassandra. She's very busy today but wants me to save seeing Cousin, Cousine with her. Our conversation is lackluster, I don't care whether she goes or not, accepts me, rejects me or saves me for a sunny day. She never went to New York but may go this Thursday and I volunteer without being invited that I won't be able to go. Something in the way she receives this silently indicates I've overstepped my bounds but even this makes no difference to me.

Obviously I'm just diddling with her, I'm beginning to suspect it would take a blowtorch to rekindle my passion for her, my old flame I can't even remember her name, and in a careless way she is piqued by this. She says she thought I didn't care to see her again since I didn't get in touch and I say nothing to deny this. Still I have discharged my responsibility in this curious dance of two once high flying mated birds now shorn of their feathers and it is her turn to show interest and keep whatever possibilities alive.

Remainder of afternoon practice and read Middlemarch while awaiting call from Ronnie to eat pizza per last night's plans. The music goes well, I manage to contain and discipline myself, hit notes accurately, overcome boredom. Practice exercises as I

haven't done for a week and find new resolve to regain my stamina and creativity. Then take an interlude to go shopping with my last \$1.36 which after searching Stop & Shop and resisting temptation to buy cookies, is exactly enough to purchase pumpernickel bread and raisins. Now that I have balanced and purified my feelings the nostalgia for and fear of running into Liz Larkin has worn off and I can concentrate on shopping. And the liquor store adjacent still sells those lovely Spanish wines for only a dollar fifty. The cashier, I was noticing how pretty she is, overcharges me two cents and I hastily panic to correct her.

Pockets blissfully empty, some kind of freedom and rightness associated with this like everything has worked out to the penny and the moment, I visit the riverside righting an overturned bench to sit and watch one train engine tow another into the hangar-like workshop, stopping half in half out. Two skiffs of rowers race past in colorful jerseys one decisively overtaking the other right in front of me and the coach in motorboat pattering behind shouting orders. Three teenagers come down to the river and right their own bench but don't stay long. The Coca-cola neon marks time obtrusively and a big bus rumbles the ground around me. Time to go, I enjoy the peaceful walk up Pearl past old houses and autumn trees on wet streets. Seem never to tire of

this walk although it's still early in my life in Cambridge-Boston.

Soon after my return the former tenant drops by to borrow Bob's wood saw. He senses my standoffishness, he talks too much about things uninteresting to me and I don't want him feeling he can chew my ear whenever he sees me, but out of politeness I ask how he enjoyed Steve Gunn's concert at which I saw him Saturday night. He makes his comments brief and takes his leave without being coaxed.

Then Ronnie calls asking how I'm doing, awkward because it's been a month since we've been together. We agree to meet at David Meredith's. In the drizzling evening I take side streets to Harvard Square carrying Ronnie's Human Physiology book I've been meaning to return for almost a year. Go to his house first and while just getting off the toilet listening to Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, Rylin MacNeice buzzes and comes in.

She's had a long interesting day giving two massages, one to Timothy Leary who has a good body but too much tension in his head and not in touch with his sadness which is centered in the back. He believes that in ten or so years the earth is doomed and 5,000 superior people will make an escape into outer space, thus he is preparing himself by studying space travel. Rylin and I agree that his doomsday prediction and belief is useless, that we may as well work with what we have.

I am curious about Rylin's ability to read personalities in people's bodies and would like her to interpret mine but don't want to ask her to work for free just because we're friends.

Rylin is in the kitchen cooking a small meal and I watch from the doorway. I sense she'd like to be alone but when she sits at table I hover between going and staying. When she says she can take it either way I stay. We chat of this and that mainly what an excellent dancer Carol has become somehow having transcended self-consciousness. Rylin speaks less wholeheartedly but does not disagree. Finally I depart and wave to her through the window.

Passing David's window on Ware St. I try unsuccessfully to fling my hat through the window onto their dinner table. David comes round and opens the door for me. We look around their still incomplete apartment and then join Ronnie and Elsa in the kitchen. Ronnie is in the middle of a long story about his mother and grandmother coming to America, how they heard Benny Goodman's All Stars playing a jazz Yiddish tune first time they turned on the radio in New York, how it cheered them up when their snobby relatives failed to greet them in the city. Elsa and I interrupt to complain about U.S. Customs, how nasty they can be. Elsa seems to understand and speak English much better than last

time I saw her. We eat turkey and spinach, drink orange juice.

David and Elsa look happy together doing the dishes when Ronnie and I leave. David mentions that Mary's been very depressed and left Boston in a hurry for New York. I keep silent wondering if Mary told David what role I play in her depression. Actually I'm only a minor character in a major depression but I wonder if Mary shares that opinion. David and I arrange to play trumpet together tomorrow night, he taking the initiative.

Outside I ask Ronnie if he wants to walk. He left David's to play cello but he agrees to walk with me. Ruby is not pregnant fortunately but she is giving Ronnie grief about his placidity in their relationship and this makes Ronnie want to quit her. At the same time her sensitivity about him possibly leaving keeps him from fighting back. My suggestion which he derides is to fight back while making an inward resolution not to leave her, take the relationship as far as it will go until she leaves him.

Ronnie is calling Ruby insane and his frustration with her is wearing on his love. Last night when they got home Ruby cooked for him and Ronnie ate in silence. He was comfortable but she exploded ranting about how he could sit calmly through their boring, meaningless, spiritless relationship. Ronnie's conclusion is that all this violent complaining is insubstantial, it's just to create

something for them to talk about, make contact. He's right and it's exactly what I used to do with Liz, attack her until I got some kind of response, angry that because we knew each other well she felt complacent enough to do and be and create nothing special when we were together.

My emotions still side with Ruby and perhaps it's people like us who'll never be content with a happy marriage. As Ronnie spoke I couldn't help remembering Ruby's observation that she and I were more alike than she and Ronnie. Also, felt constrained not to mention the times Ruby and I spent together last week not by anything more than the way Ronnie turned his head ear and eyes when I began, in such a way as to say he didn't want to hear about it.

On the other hand I understand some of what Ronnie feels. Now, a rare moment in his life, he has nothing to say to most people and prefers to remain silent. So this was the look I recognized in his eyes upon first seeing him yesterday, a little dull and the spirit laid back, defensive in his hope that this new attitude is acceptable and struggling with his depression around people who have so much to say. Recognizing it so well I advise him to stay true to himself. He exclaims he needs peace, not fighting Ruby.

Then I confide in Ronnie about Mary. She is lonely and wants a boyfriend and why she should key in on me

I can't fathom. I'm the wrong choice and some emotional chemistry repels me. She came to me with the question why don't we know each other better after three years. It was a hard question but not as direct as it could have been. I answered that I'm not interested in being close to anyone, that I am still excited about what may occur with Liz and me. That I have been eminently satisfied with the distance Mary and I have usually maintained over the past few years. Had I needed to answer directly it would have shattered Mary and what friendship we have. That I didn't want to sleep with her in the first place but she wouldn't let go when we hugged goodnight. That the whine and complaint that appears in all that she says is unattractive and that she's not a person with whom I can feel free with my emotions.

I feared slightly Ronnie's remonstrance but he was simply amused and took an interest in what I said about Liz. Felt him criticizing silently my actions in remaining away from her and pretending I didn't want to see her. I explained the distance was necessary to purify my feelings about her but he was skeptical, only pretending to understand. I joke maybe he should have taken Liz after all, and I Ruby. The night is misty and the streets wet and empty, the mist softens our beards. All the trees are wet and vivid in their colors. In thinking Ronnie might go to L.A. next year I've been imagining living in

the always warm sunshine under the influence of the Pacific Ocean.

We return to his house and awaken Rylin. Ronnie sits on the bed and is physically warm to her but I'm keeping a friendly distance. Besides it wouldn't do for us both to crowd the bed and put our hands on her. We eat Ronnie's grandmother's pastry and laugh over Rylin's resume for a dance grant. According to Rylin the moon has been in Scorpio for three days and that explains my feeling of being swept away with events beyond my control. Now it enters Sagittarius but who can tell what that will mean. Ronnie calls Ruby to say he'll be over soon but takes more than an hour.

Rylin and I listen while he plays cello, bathed by the wonderful sound. I am glowing with contentment and feel Rylin's gaze on me from behind. Ronnie's fingers are stiff but his innocent attempts to be careful playing, hit the notes correctly, make up for it. A lover of Rylin's calls mid-stream and they talk in the background. When she hangs up Ronnie teases her about it and Rylin rolls in the covers embarrassed like a teenage girl.

Ronnie complains about Ruby to Rylin. Rylin does the same about Michael to Ronnie. For all their being friends and lovers like she described to me, Michael has had a bout of jealousy about Don Cherry that extended into accusations of her with Timothy Leary today. He said it's another feather in her cap which Rylin took to



imply she was a man chaser and groupie. Rylin was going to visit Cherry in New York but canceled because she didn't want to go chasing men at the expense of her work. Of course he's too busy to chase her up here. She says if some man turns up in the course of her work that would be fine. Lots of men.

Ronnie's sitting on the edge of the bed with Rylin, examining her weak knees, me taking care where I put my eyes and how, suggests that one of us should someday have the pleasure of sleeping with Rylin. Rylin says she wouldn't mind if I stayed and walks into the kitchen. The offer is a little too offhand for me and confusedly I say, and embarrassed too, and scared too, that I'll have to choose a better time and place and besides Rylin has too many boyfriends already. The words are all wrong, I just mean I'm not ready tonight.

We get ready to go and Rylin jokes that she sure got rid of us fast. I call myself Ernest, Ernest Hemingway, who'll face a pack of lions but not one woman, and do a hilarious dance for them that degenerates into a more self-conscious violent one, picking on Ronnie. Rylin shies away from my violence. Then Ronnie and I do an Einsala-Muhti act, me kissing him and pulling his beard calling him Einsala in a nasal falsetto and we tumble out the door leaving Rylin laughing.

Outside Ronnie wonders that I turned down "the queen" as he calls Rylin, with a hint of condemnation in

his voice. I plead innocence on the grounds that I feel less like a king than a clown tonight and if she really loves me she'll wait for another time. She is for me too a bronze goddess, one of the great women in town, a spiritual greatness, but she is only infatuated with the recent changes in me that are too new to evaluate and understand, even for myself.

I tell Ronnie a little about this writing project, just what problems I've encountered, how ridiculously detailed it can get and we stop on the spot to point out all the possible details—the courtyard we stand in, five story red brick building with white trim on institutional windows, woman in down jacket descending cement steps, misty cool night, etc., ad infinitum, a moment is a book. His positive reaction to the project echoes many others' and gives me impetus to continue.

I leave him on the steps of Ruby's gray house with a hug and a kiss. A visitor to the house, small fellow with trim beard has just joked that Ronnie better have a good excuse for not coming over right away. When our eyes meet I believe we are commenting on the spiritual smallness of the man compared to our ostentatious selves but now I wonder if Ronnie didn't take his warning to heart. As I hug him he begs that I come inside, it will soften Ruby up but I name him an idiot for acting like a cowed married man.

Walking away I hear the two lovers greet at the door and there is real fear and trembling in both voices. I pity them their hell, once again value my aloneness, and kick myself for being so flippant and cruel to Ronnie in his little hour of need. Could have helped Ruby too but, on the other hand, these things will help themselves, probably the better without me. I follow the river home. I love this walk, the dream river, the city highway, the unbroken wind and then the warm, quiet street of old houses my new home is on.

## Lunch with Liz

Sunny and wintry, today is the day to meet Liz Larkin. Sitting in bed try to think what I want to know of her but feel only apprehension about inability to control my anger and how that will ruin our chances. Listen to Bob White cough phlegm in his room, smoker, and plod to bathroom, later hear him zip up his jacket and the door to the apartment opens and closes behind him. He descends creaky stairs and building front door slams shut. Carpenters hammer a new house going up a few doors down on Pearl St. My windows are iced over last night being the first hard frost and I can see my breath. Jump out of bed and dress in clothes been wearing for four or five days.

Decide to put in my storm windows and go down basement to get rear window. Basement has dirt floor divided into six or seven rooms by low wooden partitions, each room has its own character. One houses the boilers and storm windows, another two are storage space for tenants' personal property, one is piled high with all kinds of junk, etc. Enjoy exploring making mental inventory of any useful items. Carry window up narrow stairs but find later that my window has no hooks to hang it from. The other window goes in easily enough though an imperfect fit that must be compensated for with blocks of wood.

Later while sweeping my floor Ronnie calls wanting to get together after I've seen Liz. Four or five o'clock. He seems upset, still disturbed by conflicts with Ruby and in his imbalance expresses excitement out of proportion with the nature of my work when I tell him I've been sweeping my floor and putting in storm windows. To fill time before meeting Liz write letter to my parents to accompany \$300 loan repayment.

Stop at Hundred Flowers Bookstore to kill time hoping I won't get to the luncheonette first, then post office for stamp on letter. Saunter down Pleasant St. apprehension rising, perfect autumn trees this perfectly clear day, clarity of day should mirror clarity of encounters but do not have faith in the nature-society correlation the I Ching teaches. Consider calling off our meeting because as I approach the restaurant my mind is rampant with scenes from our past that anger me. Turmoil. Avoid passing Liz's house which is nearby.

The luncheonette is crowded with all ranks of workmen on their lunch hours from computer people to carpenters and painters and I feel comfortable in the crowd ordering sandwich and coke at counter. Lady who serves is friendly as waitresses in these unpretentious working class places so often are. She knows many of the customers, some by name. Take a seat in the corner and wait for Liz sneaking glances at feet and legs passing below the window shade thinking maybe she won't

come. But she does, wearing green corduroy pants and her black sealskin coat she wore the first winter we met.

Before meeting someone for the first time or anew my mind creates an impressive picture of them that seeing them in the flesh puts in proper perspective. So it was with Liz that I pictured her radiant, self-contained and knowing her own feelings, strongly unaffected by me. But today she was nervous as she sat under my gaze. She's deceptive in her strength though, and I'd bet she accepted this role ahead of time for the sake of our communion. We, she, talked mostly of her trip to Wales and her family. Only rarely did I have to ask or answer questions, just sat and paid attention. There were some silences, awkward for her it seemed but that I felt comfortable with.

I refused to make myself vulnerable by showing my feelings, not yet at least, but was fooled into it. At one point Liz said she didn't want to sit here anymore but what I heard was I want to see you some more. My feelings urged me to say with some passion that I wanted to see her more too but an equally strong and very severe voice told me to keep silent and while the two urges battled inside of me I just looked at her. This went on a long time until Liz repeated herself and while outwardly I obligingly agreed to leave with her, inside the voices broke into silly astonished laughter.

During our interview our eyes often met amused at the formality of the arrangement and that we both avoided speaking about the crux of the issue, our relationship. Often tears came to Liz's eyes that would have made me cross the distance I'd established had I not known Liz's ability to act without acting—like me, she can be wholeheartedly and sincerely involved in an interchange and yet a sliver of herself stands apart watching with amused or dispassionate detachment. She puts four cigarettes out in the ashtray grinding their heads into the glass with her forefinger.

We share the coke naturally as two siblings, alternating taking sips. She tells story of her brother John whose saxophone got busted. Liz, her mother and Evan could hear a few notes and then John cursing out loud. One day they overheard the same sequence of events plus a crash and John stormed out of the house. Evan and Liz meekly sneaked upstairs and found the soprano sax bent in two on the floor. Soon after John bought an alto that Liz says is more his instrument.

We leave and navigate through traffic crossing River St. to go shopping with her food stamps and I will give her cash in return. But first must go to her house, don't mind stopping in for a minute but no more, and I avoid snooping around remembering the attitude I've decided to assume in regard to her. I don't want her

taking me for granted so I won't take her for granted by walking around like I live here.

Chia-jen shows herself and I squat and greet her by calling her name in the old sweet daddy voice I used to use when she was a kitten. When this side of me leaks out I can hear Liz chuckle to herself in the bedroom recognizing the soft guy under the detached exterior I've assumed for her benefit. Chia-jen recognizes my voice and approaches but feels something in my touch that frightens her. Liz calls me to look at her plants all of which are thriving and then we go back outside. That wasn't too bad. Going to Stop & Shop together like the old pattern makes me want to turn back but we see it through. Liz makes jokes while we look for the raisins. I find it hard to concentrate on the shopping while she's with me and I forget the cheese. The good cheap wine is sold out.

Liz wants to come up and see my new place which is o.k. with me especially since I'm happy there. The day is so beautiful and I'm actually enjoying Liz's company. The house is further than she imagined and I sense she's a little sorry she came but we're soon there. She looks around impressed with the view. I tell her I thought Bob White's sense of space is like hers but she doesn't like his room, maybe she's changing she says. We sit at kitchen table, she smokes cigarette and eats orange



while I nosh raisins and we continue in same manner as in restaurant.

She wrote a poem today about her father who died around this time five years ago and each year she relives that experience. It is her first poem and she'd like to read it to someone, me perhaps, but it's still too close to her. But she describes it as having three stanzas of five, eleven and—I say eight lines would be good numerologically—and eight it is she counts upon her fingers. So it ought to be a good poem.

I am comfortable with her in my own house and our eyes meet often with understanding, I feel the love in each of us for the other, and I see that of all the people I've spent time with recently, alone and in groups, she is the only one who really excites me. Our time together means much to me although our conversation is more mundane than most, no new ideas shared, no analytical discussion of relationships between men and women.

Ronnie calls again and Liz shows warmth toward him, unusual for her, and she remarks on this. Perhaps he is associated with our past, last spring. Liz met Debbie Kunitz on the street recently and didn't like her shallow exuberance. Liz was with the incredibly deep and beautiful Holly. Liz says she feels closer to Holly than just about anyone else in Boston but this seems incongruous with the time they spend together.

Liz gets excited about inviting Ronnie and me over for dinner but I dampen it by telling her to give it a little time. Will we be friends? Who can tell I say, my anger comes and goes. But I add that I enjoyed being with her today. Downstairs as Liz leaves she touches her hand to my arm, her perfectly balanced touch different from any other, and a little seductive. I barely resist responding in any way but with a glance, and we leave off the delicate dance until next time.

Upstairs I pace, we are still very connected but slowly the bond dissipates. Then collect my trumpet and sweater for cleaners and head up Mass. Ave. to Ronnie's. Nobody home so I leave a note and go to movies to see Renoir's *La Chienne* a good enough film but a little too obvious as Renoir is apt to be when he is not at his greatest. Sit in front row to be apart from other viewers and eyes take time to adjust to moving from subtitles to images fast enough. Short film and return before dusk to Ronnie's. He is home with great sadness in his eyes, drained from emotional night with Ruby.

They have decided to split up for a while to give each other space to breathe, think and exist as individuals. Ronnie's decision but Ruby concurs. It seems like a natural thing to spend some time apart, less than every night together, and it doesn't sound like a permanent rift. I describe without details my afternoon

with Liz and this conclusion escapes my mouth uncensored, that Liz means more to me than I ever did or will mean to her and thus, I must be cautious with her. Ronnie winces for me but I feel little pain over this—simply a fact to be accepted and to guide my actions.

On first examination it seems to have been my position with many women, to pass easily through their lives leaving little trace whereas they stop inside of mine and leave a scar. But looking closer these are only the relationships we remember, the important ones, and I suppose I too have left my indelible brand on a few women I rarely think of anymore. We go out for coffee and end up eating a whole pizza and then visiting another restaurant for coffee and desert. But our conversation about women, and more conversation about women, until I've had far too much food and talk, leaves me impatient to get back and use the bathroom. The night is cold and clear with a crescent moon hanging in the sky. Somewhere I heard the man in the moon is a woman.

Ronnie plays cello while I feed the toilet and read pages from the Ramayana. The story line and instruction seem interesting but all the conversations have an ecstatic sameness. While we play music together, improvising on When Sunny Gets Blue in our own quirky

haphazard fashion, Ronnie not too interested in what we're doing but I'm enjoying it, Rylin comes in.

I listen to Ronnie tell Rylin about his decision with Ruby, and I watch for Rylin's reactions. Nothing remarkable since there's not much you can say about these things, what has to be done is obvious regardless of shades of difference in approach. The buzzer rings and to my surprise Ruby enters bearing a gift for Ronnie—a hot dog on a bun. Ronnie caresses Ruby's chin awkwardly and Ruby looks at me embarrassed, the false note in Ronnie's touch is obvious to us both.

We talk about little nothings, Rylin tells of her airplane dream about Michael and also talks to Michael on the telephone. Although she is friendly and intimate I'm glad I'm not her husband because her friendliness seems nothing more than what it ought to be for a husband. It has occurred to me that Rylin and Michael simply married young and were it not for that marriage contract they would have gone their separate ways long ago, notwithstanding Rylin's talk about the primary relationship while she carries on secondary and tertiary affairs.

As Ronnie says, I am a bitter man. Carol fell in love with someone in Colorado and so Steve Gunn who treated her so well last year is passe in her life. Ronnie ran into him as Steve was going to the airport to meet her in September. Steve was glowing with happiness for

her return. But these things are between others and they will work them out in their kind without my bitter opinions which I'm sure even Steve has no use for. I for one am taking a break from the business of mating.

While Ruby and Ronnie tantalize one another with kisses because Ruby and I are ready to leave and Ruby and Ronnie will not be sleeping together tonight, I entertain Rylin with the story of my climb with the camp kids up Mount Washington in a hurricane. She listens too closely to be genuine, gives too much of her attention to a story that neither requires nor deserves it, so what is she giving her attention to? More sexual play between she and I? The idea would never have occurred to me had she not made her offhand invitation a few nights ago. I feel slightly hunted, nothing offensive really, but I sense she feels it's only a matter of time. And if she continues, it is. But I shy away feeling that she enters intimate relationships lightly. I would never attribute to her the slightest evil or premeditated intent but I feel she uses lovers easily as emptying a bottle of milk.

Ruby and I depart leaving Rylin and Ronnie to what may prove to be an interesting evening together.

## Halloween Performance

Wake up sick with cold and headache after depression last night that I couldn't keep up musically in rehearsal. Sunny and not too cold but tempted to stay in bed all day. Get up to do laundry and chores, gather clothes and head outdoors. Worried about how I'll perform tonight especially having to dance during fifties piece. After starting laundry and while walking along Mass. Ave. to get sweater from cleaners run into Carol.

She notices my new jacket and turtleneck sweater which is just very old and rarely worn. We hug, she coaxes me to dance tonight, she missed seeing it last night, and we separate. Carol seems always en route to someplace and we never get a chance to talk. When we do we run out of things to say and stand in uncomfortable silence. As we hug I have my hand on her waist, the women are so soft.

Return to laundromat, buy beer, cheese, hooks for my storm window from friendly tall guy in gray hardware store who speaks with working class hardware accent. Climbing stairs in my house hear the phone ringing but can't get door open in time. Hang clean clothes, make bed sloppy at first and then remake it, still rather depressed and agitated about tonight. Eat tuna fish sandwich drink beer and climb into bed to sleep again. Read Middemarch, their mixed up world of

complex relationships a good escape from this one and a lot like this one.

Early in my snooze the phone rings five times but I leave it unanswered not wanting to get out of warm bed on the edge of sleep and also knowing it's my father and not being prepared to speak with him. My mother probably received the letter and check and mentioned it to dad when he called from work as he always has for twenty years around noon. When I was nine, the Yankees lost in the seventh game to Pittsburgh. Minutes after Maderoski homered, dad called from NYC to razz me.

Almost immediately after speaking to her he made his first attempt to call me, his motives for such a speedy response unclear and probably complex, combination of love for oldest son created in his image, molded unsuccessfully to his stature and named with his name, and a duty or obligation completely internalized. Missing me on the first try he makes a second after a reasonable interval, rings fewer times and gives up for the day which leaves him with a slight doubt about whether he has right number.

Son is probably out doing who knows what, does not occur to him I might be rehearsing for tonight's show because he has no image of his son as performer or entertainer. Has mother read the letter to him over phone? No, merely mentioned receipt of it, perhaps a

short summary of its contents. What feelings has the father? Excitement that he will be in contact with the prodigal son or iron duty-bound habit not to put off for tomorrow what can be accomplished today. Who can say? Not the son.

Two hours later awake, almost time to go to afternoon rehearsal. Dress in “costume” for my dance which is the same outfit I’ve worn almost every day for a week. Some costume, slim difference between stage persona and everyday self but then that’s a style I’ve cultivated for years. Remember Cassandra’s Halloween party last year that I attended as Harvard student since I happened to be wearing a crimson sweater and corduroy pants that day. Procrastinate a little, read one more chapter from Middlemarch on toilet, will dance better if I’m not full of shit.

On the street rushing to make five o’clock rehearsal by five thirty. Friday night after work fumes, Harvard Square traffic backed up five cars wide very bad for lungs of one walking fast. Arrive at church to find only Tom there, everyone else out making last minute costume preparations. We set up the audience chairs and I make a schedule of dances for the musicians, search all over church for scrap of paper.

Carol and Barry arrive and make askew greetings ignoring my presence. Michael soon arrives to efficiently set up lights and Rylin and Raymond come while I’m



hiding my uselessness tinkering at the piano. Eventually everyone settles into their own ways of psyching up or down for performance. Tom lays on floor and when Raymond finishes making plaster mask joins him to get a feeling for the space. While putting on makeup, Carol and Rylin try out a dialog they've written. Michael continues hanging lights and making electrical connections seriously and efficiently. Barry plays and sings at piano and I lean on wall observing and feeling I'd like to get out of here. So I head out across Harvard to Ronnie's house to be with my close friend before the performance. My way of preparing.

Ronnie just taken shower, his way of preparing, and we talk and eat grilled cheese sandwiches. Passing in opposite directions at the kitchen it occurs to me to ask him if he and Rylin made love the other night after Ruby and I left. Something in the way they behaved on the way to or from rehearsal clued me. It was Rylin's sidelong glance and pregnant silence when Ronnie mentioned he hadn't got much sleep last night. So they did and I feel a little spur of jealousy. He says it's their secret since it wouldn't help for Michael or Ruby to know. Says it surprised them both to be in each other's arms and that Rylin is a powerful and passionate woman like Mary but with more control and finesse since she is a dancer. Ronnie adds that he could never be a steady lover of Rylin's but is unable to specify why. I make light

of the whole affair by mock praising myself for perspicacity in surmising. Perhaps Rylin will be the second woman that Ronnie and I share.

We depart for the dance concert. Ronnie is sensitive to the autumn, crisp air and sound of dry leaves rustling. Nearing the church I feel little of the pre-performance anxiety some claim is necessary for success. Ronnie maintains that anticipation makes one like an animal, must count on instincts and fall back unconsciously on skills nurtured consciously over years.

Entering the large space first catch sight of Steve Gunn and Scott in the center standing over Tom and talking. Wave to Steve but get little response and as it turns out he and Michael are having a spat over some equipment Steve must drive back to Brighton for. Steve has been on edge a lot lately most likely still chafing because Carol jilted him for another lover, Barry, who is performing in tonight's piece. Must be hard for Steve to work with them.

Ronnie has in the past complained that Steve, being the best musician of us all, is in a position to teach and give support but it never seems to occur to him. Often he simply seems impatient, mostly just absorbed in his own playing. I feel that he is shy of me for some extra-musical reason, something in my personality, and I am shy of him because he is musically so superior that I feel like a charlatan or tolerated extra when he's playing.

Steve storms out. I press Scott for an explanation of the scene.

We tune up and take our corners to await the beginning. During this time the audience files in. I search for Liz Larkin but she hasn't come and never does. Ronnie comes over with a woman he introduces as one of the two crazy women he and John Larkin met in a London theater. She is a bubbly nervous type, smiles and laughs a lot but her laugh-smile is so intense it looks like crying. She is impressed that Ronnie has told me all about her. She takes her seat on a floor mat and Ronnie returns to his corner, the lights go off, the dancers emerge and take their positions, Steve returns just in time.

Scott makes the rounds lighting pumpkins and when he gets to mine I whisper Good work just to talk. Then we begin to play soft music with lots of shifting space the sound moving from corner to corner. I feel no self-consciousness, just sweating and swaying to the music, working hard to make it work, and I see Steve swaying across the way in the dark. My job is to break the softness with loud crazy blasts which I do and feel the audience shudder. Cheap thrills. We play loud and furiously a while and then abruptly stop. Here the dancers start to move out of their positions like bugs on their backs and move around making abstract shapes mirroring each other.

After a period of silence we musicians each take the dancer closest to us at that moment and play for their individual movements. I get Tom but my music imitates too much his movements. Yet our four instruments are in good rhythm and harmony and this helps the dancers. Michael does his usual excellent lighting. The musicians return to the corner where the piano is, I go back through the darkened dressing room to avoid marching across the space and Ronnie laughs at my deference. Return just in time to play again and then first half closes out, dancers walking off silently and separately.

We are ecstatic about the first half and I go backstage to share in the joy. Only Ronnie remains out front to mingle with the audience. Everyone hugging and supportive backstage, Steve extremely pleased with the music which means a lot to me. Lee Dickinson visits behind the scenes and I steal her from her talk with Raymond to hug for a second. We don't have much to say so she returns to Raymond but I feel my faux pas in once again stepping between her and Raymond. Carol gives me instructions to relay to Michael so I go out to tell him.

Ronnie is squatting talking to a friend of Ruby's so I go over to Ruby and comfort her in her hard times about Ronnie. She's dressed in black with a blue neck scarf and I say she looks pretty. She hugs me hard saying

she really needed someone to tell her that. Her passionate embrace startles me but we talk a while and then the second half is about to begin. . .

## Julie's Freaking Out

Liz calls says can't talk long at hospital working but Julie in her house is freaking out because some guy out in the night is peering through windows and the house was broken into two nights ago. Will I go over and stay with her? My lame excuse so as not to get involved with helping Liz in this and that crisis like all her past lovers, maybe I'll help her and then maybe someday she'll love me more than Marcus, is to say I'm in the middle of cooking dinner.

Once past her initial absorption in her mission of saving Julie she senses my distance anger and annoyance and repeats Oh, you're cooking dinner with an intonation that speaks Well, can't you just put it aside for a while and go over to my place. The problem does not sound serious enough for me to get involved, exactly the kind of involvement to avoid but I compromise and say I'll call Julie.

The phone is busy so I have time to think. Decide to invite Julie over here but when I'd mentioned that to Liz she indicated she wanted someone in the house to prevent a robbery. She wants it both ways just as she wants Marcus for a lover and me for a friend. When Julie answers she doesn't sound frantic at all although she would like company, so just in case something is amiss I agree to walk over and take a look around. Put on winter

jacket and go out in the night, why not, I didn't have much to do tonight anyway although I'm waiting for call from Ronnie to watch election returns.

The night is calming and I accept my fate. Near Liz's house I see no one prowling. Knock on door and it opens without a word to learn who's knocking. Mitchell Ashbery is there, just arrived, bony face but bright eyes, still hanging around Liz's life. Julie and I kiss lips and hug, I wonder if Mitchell thinks we've been lovers. Just Julie's way of greeting. Mitchell has brought pictures of some clown's exhibit of aluminum foil altars.

I just want to get out of this place as soon as possible, same old Liz Larkin life, treasury of loyal retainers passing through her doors. Motivates me even more to come here as little as possible. She is La Collectioneuse, what a dreary role to be a fallen knight kissing the queen's hand while she tormented awaits her black king's visitation and throws you out when he arrives. Love and loyalty, Mitchell loves her that well and I guess in this light, I don't. Love works in many wondrous ways, my wondrous love keeps me away. But here I am and Julie has adjourned the three of us from hallway to kitchen for coffee and tea according to our likes.

Julie wears a big fur coat because Larkin's apartment is very cold as it always is in winter. She has regressed since I saw her in New York. There she was

meditative and alone, had a certain seriousness that made her less jumpy and nervous and enabled her to speak coherently, look directly into your eyes. Now she is lacing her speech with baby talk and all kinds of drivel perhaps under pressure of Mitchell and me on either side of her, thinking she must entertain.

Sit around that familiar kitchen table like everybody eventually must, having a conversation that nobody's entirely committed to. I'm scheming ways to get back home within half an hour. Julie answers my questions about her new apartment on Fourth Street which I ask just to keep things more or less comfortable. Her apartment on the fifth floor sees lots of sky and a view of the Empire State Building uptown. Big tree in front of window, like living in the country says Julie. Yeah, you could end up staring out the window all day, I offer.

When the phone rings Mitchell answers and talks in living room a long time. I assume it's one of his band members but it turns out to be Liz. Above all else I don't want to speak to her, all her friends mobilized, including proud me, to protect her apartment, everything is hers. She calls the shots. But it's not necessary to use the phone. Her supervision ended I make an attempt to escape. Julie looks pretty safe I say.

But Mitchell is leaving presently and both of them indicate it's up to me to protect Julie. Fortunately Julie



agrees to come over to my place to be protected. As Mitchell leaves I offer him my address and pretty sincerely invite him to pay me a visit. Then Julie and I search for two decks of cards and make the house look occupied, Julie straightens up the kitchen under the spell of Liz's recent fastidiousness. Dina's kittens all have blue eyes and one black kitten reminds me of Marcus, Liz's lover.

We reenter the night. Moon will be full by Saturday, sooner it seems to me but I can't think clearly around Julie, her energy is too every which way. I want to ask about Liz but I spare us both that hardship. All that I've surmised from talking to Ronnie who spoke to Rylin who saw Liz a few days ago indicates she's still with Marcus and they're doing fine. I take new resolve to keep away from Liz, just keep away, I'm not missing anything but plenty of pain. Liz of course just wants to be friends and will wait patiently until I come around. And deep down it won't matter to her if I never do. Although I expected to hear from Julie and therefore Liz today or tomorrow, I didn't expect it to happen in this confounding way.

Bob is making dinner when Julie and I enter, the usual awkwardness when two worlds collide. We convince Bob to vote which he has disdained to do and when he goes out Julie and I play cards and listen to election returns over radio. When Ronnie calls and I

describe Julie to him as a friend of Liz's she grimaces. It would have been better to say a friend of mine through Liz or something like that. But Julie understands and makes no bones. Recalls Liz's description of me to her family who'd never met me. Guy I'm living with.

Later Liz calls. I answer and am cool to her. She senses it right away and laughs a little bitterly. But I don't care, I'm plenty bitter myself. What happened to the warmth I felt for her just last week? Liz seems to want to talk but I'm being curt so she shrugs, what can she do?, and hangs up. After one more rubber Julie feels she ought to get home because Liz will be back from work soon so I walk her downstairs and we kiss goodbye, maybe we'll see a movie together this week.

## **Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing**

Clouds rolling in from ocean cover tops of skyscrapers downtown but as morning continues sky clears completely. Waiting for Bob to cough, crash open his door and clomp to bathroom, zip jacket, putter around a few minutes in kitchen and then click of lock on apartment door. Bob's footsteps hurry downstairs, front doors open and slam closed. I am sitting up in bed and thinking from the early hours until sometime after Bob leaves about Liz Larkin.

Why, when I'd imagined I'd overcome my anger about her, why, after our comfortable time together one week ago, did I behave so coolly toward her on the phone two nights ago? Describing to Ronnie the reasons for my enforced distance from her one reason repeats itself in my head: that often she said to me that the only man she could ever really love and care for was Marcus Stevens.

On the other hand this vitriolic anger that periodically churns inside shows I'm still attached. And our success together a week ago was simply because I remained unattached throughout our interview. The paradox: as long as I'm unattached I can receive her with warmth but as soon as I'm attached I see that she means more to me than I to her and I am angry. How is it that this relationship follows the same rule as all else in life: a

thing comes to one who doesn't desire after it. The inexorable answer is that as long as I feel anything but warm reception for her I must stay away. Yet when I come home at night my strongest desire is to find a message that Liz called.

I am in search of a mate and if I ever come to terms with a life alone it will calm a lot of turmoil and striving. A mate, what is a mate. The back of the Celestial Seasonings box says marriage is the one relationship in which intense growth and maturity can be attained. My short time with Liz confirms that: it gave me a definite and central place and identity in the community, made me grapple with feelings I had simply run away from before, made me deal with other people's expectations and also showed me all the people to one degree or another dependent on me.

All this and more I owe her so why am I angry? Because we left the work unfinished so she could return to her old habits. Anger, Rylin says, is not the primary emotion, hurt is. And that perception is useful for bringing me into myself rather than striking out at Liz for doing only what she had to do for her own life. Which, a lover should keep in mind, is not his life. She becomes a person, another person to discover.

So after our initial excitement with discovering each other last spring, a relationship began in which I forced her to satisfy me and vice-versa. After a certain

point we satisfied one another unwillingly, or she did me, and she was glad to see me go in June and unhappy that I returned.

My anger about her phone call asking me to run over to her house and sit with Julie stems from the same thing in reverse. Here I am over the past few weeks and months coming to a clearer vision of Liz as a separate, distinct person upon whom I have no claim, and we even succeed to some extent in our first meeting since last summer, when in the wake of that Liz calls expecting me to serve her in any crazy passing crisis. After all, her other former lovers drop everything and run when she calls for help or companionship. But to act on those feelings would only show how petty I am. So drop everything and run magnanimously I will, right into her house full of the fucked up past. And because she has taken me for granted as another old lover slobbering to do her bidding, I show her my cold angry face that she stiffens for and we are set back in our attempts to know each other again.

I agree wholeheartedly with George Eliot's conclusion in *Middlemarch* that the good of the world is advanced in countless ways by the reverberations emanating from one good, albeit anonymous, life. But there seems to be a dark corollary concerning the pain of the world. The great pain Liz has suffered in her

relationship with Marcus has been distributed among her other lovers such as Mitchell, Rudy and me.

By the time I get up the clouds are gone, burned away by the sun. Eat a little, listen to jazz, try to write but tear up the first page and resolve that tomorrow I will return to the discipline of writing a prose description of the day before.

Cassandra calls to inform me that she's back from New York when I never knew she was gone. The signal of course is that she wishes to get together but my ambivalence about her prevents me from taking the hint. Instead I listen to a sketch of her trip and we hang up after I've feigned happiness at hearing from her. But soon after I feel sorry I didn't respond more openly so I leave a message with her answering service. Cassandra returns the call while I'm practicing the piece David gave me and hurriedly I tell her I'm happy she called today and would she like to get dinner and see a great movie, Samurai Trilogy, Friday night. Far out says Cassandra and she'll call Friday morning, she might have to rehearse. A certain feminine softness in her voice and her eagerness to see me shows that our relationship still holds mystery for her. If I can forget our past and see her as a new acquaintance, forget love, maybe I will find myself both new and older.

I must get out of the house. Outside is warm and sunny and I'm on the street not sure what I'm going to

do. Pass some time reading about elections in Boston Globe. Ford bows graciously to Carter, nation has great respect for former president who served country well after darkest hour, and has cautious hope for innovative Carter. Both men on verge of tears, Carter in Plains Georgia pressure of two year campaign releases itself among hometown folks, sign that the man is human editorializes the Globe, and Ford at White House while his noble wife Betty reads his concession. Most referendum questions shot down and conservative voters even pass one I voted against: for a deep water oil refinery off coast of Massachusetts.

I wander up to a bookstore to buy Kerouac's *Dharma Bums*, bookstore is almost empty when I get there, full when I leave. This edition cheapens Kerouac into the crazy writer who inspired the freaked out drugged out free and wild hippie generation. Buy three beers from the sweet chain-smoking skinny middle aged lady who calls everyone "dear" in the liquor store.

In *Hundred Flowers* I find a quiet corner upstairs to continue reading May Sarton's *Mrs. Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing* always intending to read the *I Ching* but never getting to it. Stevens is a woman writer and poet now in her seventies. The book spans one day in her life in which, now that she's famous, two journalists come to interview her. It takes the reader through flashbacks into Mrs. Stevens' life that shaped her

development as a writer. The book's structure taken from Virginia Woolf's work and the sentences are the long ones with even cadences of many fine woman writers.

Mrs. Stevens is so alone and meditative that reading about her makes me feel the same way. I found this book a day ago by wandering the shelves reading a page or two at random from various books. Sartre engaged me so that today it was an effort to put it down and return home to practice. When the two young journalists stop along the shore near Mrs. Stevens' house, they realize what it does to a life to live under these influences, the ocean, the sky, the wind, sun and birds. The Muse it's called in the book.

Go home to eat tuna fish sandwiches and beer, wash dishes and turn to practicing. Must learn how and where to take breaths in piece full of eighth notes, no rests. Each day I look forward to something, such as tomorrow's dinner and film with Cassandra or tonight's trumpet lesson with David Meredith. Ronnie calls who has taken rest of day off from work, wants to go for a walk so since I have to be in Harvard Square later anyway I agree to meet him at his house.

Against my impulse to walk the back streets through the community I follow the river and am irritated for not trusting my instincts because now I'm breathing the fumes of rush hour traffic. All along the



river I look for a reward for enduring the noxious fumes. The nearly full moon is pale in the afternoon sky. I probably couldn't have seen that from the city streets. And the sun is golden just above the horizon.

Ronnie arrives home from the market while I'm taking a piss. I sit lackadaisically and grate under his ecstasy over a book about the Apollo space flights that he's reading in conjunction with medical textbooks about the human arm and Walt Whitman's prose writings about America. He has bought a New York Times to read about the elections which I peruse while he expounds. Ronnie is extremely sensitive in ways few people understand and it's only my mood shaped by the day's delicate loneliness that makes me so critical of his usual exuberance. This is Liz Larkin's reproach of Ronnie, that he shatters delicate moods by crashing about with his own. He seems conscious of this and it seems to me he holds onto it fearing to lose his reputation for joyous energy. Thus, his dream in which I express disdain for him because he has no "understanding of zen".

Yet, when I look at it without romanticizing myself and placing myself above everybody else, in many ways Ronnie lives a zen life far more successfully than me. Take music as one example: he can improvise more consistently unself-consciously than I can. Or, during his travels in Scotland he stayed with a Scot family, a hunter and his wife, for two weeks and learned their way of life,

an experience I could never effect because I'm too bound in my shy habits, holding onto a self-image of one who teaches and has little to learn. The real point of all this zen stuff is that there is a zen for Robert Ronnow and a zen for Ronnie Kunitz, and that until now, and I trust into the future, we have been perfecting ourselves through our friendship.

Because I'm still smarting from Liz Larkin, something about the way Ronnie has left Ruby and started going out with other women makes me angry or defensive, as if the world is divided into two camps, the divorcees and the divorcees, and we are on opposite sides. While he's on the toilet I look for a record to play and sing Monk's Ruby My Dear which I used to sing as a celebration of Ruby and Ronnie but now replace the name Ruby with Rachel, the woman Ronnie is presently seeing. Although I do it only because it sounds so amusing, I get a thrill when Ronnie feels guilty and says to cut it out.

I sometimes think of Ruby's description of Ronnie that whereas we think on many levels Ronnie's thinking occurs on only one plane of his existence. Perhaps he thinks with his head and others think with their whole beings and that's why Liz says she could never be attracted to him, he moves so stiffly. Or David's or Ruby's disbelief that three weeks ago he could be thinking of marriage and now be sleeping with other

women. The movement is so jerky. While Ronnie practices cello I read more of the paper and then it's time to go over to David's.

I feel no anticipation on my way although David and I don't know each other well and are just starting out. Guess I think of it as a working relationship and when I enter I respond to David's personal chat without intensity while we limber up our trumpets. Often I find friends of Ronnie's working off of illusions about me implanted by Ronnie's effusive language. Last week he described me to Rachel as an unacknowledged genius which left not much for Rachel and I to work with. I fear David is thinking of me as a "great thinker" which happens to be, thanks to Ronnie, part of my fantasy about David. But regardless of any awkwardness, David and I work well together musically, each putting in our best energy from a wellspring of enjoyment of music. David claims that without me he wouldn't be playing trumpet at all these days and this assuages my feeling that I'm getting all the advantage from our association.

While I'm practicing double tonguing, te ke, te ke, Mary drops by refreshed from a trip to Rochester and an internship interview. She greets me formally as she has since our night together two weeks ago but includes me in the conversation about her trip. She would go crazy if she had to live in Rochester for two years but the hospital program is excellent. Meanwhile

my unruly mind is imagining making love to Mary as I stand across from her, her smooth skin, my hips tilted rakishly.

She met a guy from Provincetown on the plane who's going to give her flying and gliding lessons. David says one in every hundred gliders dies and his statistic irritates Mary. She's brought two beautiful photos from the Eastman Kodak pavilion and describes how the spirits of people photographed in the eighteen hundreds seem to pierce through time to us. I wonder if it is some quality of the photography of that time, a quality that improvements have destroyed just as black and white films in the thirties seem more vivid than color films today.

Mary seems a little lonely beneath her enthusiastic talk and David confirms my view after she's left by commenting that she could use a steady man. He's critical of her two lovers in the past year, one was a dolt and the other too much like her father. She'll find someone soon enough, I say.

David wants to do an improvisation so I throw myself into one and he wades in after me and it turns out simple but good and we are just building on it, understanding each other better, when the buzzer rings. Elsa of course and David's not so into the music as to ignore her, and neither am I. So we end it with her arrival and I begin to leave sensing that they want to be

alone together. Pretty Elsa lights up her pipe and I'm looking at the tight pants around her crotch as she sits opposite me. We make small talk about Danish cuss words and then I leave not wishing to impose on their love.

I follow Harvard St. to Central Square avoiding yet another miscalculation about routes, and go past Cassandra's house. The moon is high and almost full, kids playing in a playground, trees on Cassandra's street, a man organizing back seat of his car, high rise apartment house he probably lives in, fathering a family. Cassandra's house so ugly glad I don't live there, absent-mindedly nearly bump into one of her roommates but we don't say hello. She seems shy, I'm not watching where I'm going.

Stop in Hundred Flowers again and buy Mrs. Stevens so that when I'm finished reading I can give it to Ruby for her birthday. Ruby has called and I return it but she's not home. I wish Liz had called, that's who I wish had called, I'm going through another period of being with people I only half want to be with, and I return outdoors because the night is so mild. Just walk around smelling the autumn leaves, admiring the almost full moon and remembering Liz Larkin.

## Chushingura

Wake up late to sunny morning and go downstairs absent-mindedly for a newspaper to find five or six fire trucks careening around the corner but nobody can find the fire. I am one of a crowd looking on and appreciating the heroic stature of firemen. While others investigate the problem one fireman sneaks a smoke at the side of his engine. Kid asks if he's the chief. Not yet. An old lady consults with me on the nature of the emergency. Society mobilizes. Motorists find alternate routes so as not to block the trucks. People are not shy to talk to each other, everyone out in the full colors of their personalities.

A sparkling Sunday. Still absorbed in my own thoughts pinballing from person to person, I enter the grocery store. Buying a yogurt the proprietor asks in Spanish if I want a spoon and it confuses me. He has a good time having me coming and going. Today I have planned for myself an easy day reading the paper and finishing Mrs. Stevens, then going to see Samurai Trilogy as I failed to do Friday night. But I am bummed when I realize Samurai left town yesterday. At that moment Ronnie calls. He is depressed because last night he and Ruby made a final definitive break. He wants to see a movie so I agree to meet him at his house this afternoon.

The downstairs buzzer rings. For some reason I imagine it's Ronnie but when I open it a beautiful woman is standing there, so attractive she pierces the defenses I have built since Liz. She's a friend of Bob White's and she leads the way upstairs introducing herself as Toni. My name's Bob too I say although her name is not Bob. She wears a long dress that gradually widens at her perfect hips. Suddenly everything inside me is alive and I can't really see her face. She and Bob hole up in his room and I in mine. I then hear them making coffee and listen closely to her voice. She is intelligent, speaks well, something about filmmaking but I can't discern what is her relationship to Bob.

They go out for a while and I practice trumpet, playing hard for her. When they return I happen to be sitting in the kitchen drinking a beer and so a scenario is set up where I can get to know her. She passes to use the bathroom and by her smile I see she too is curious about me. I gather self-possession enough to see her face, tanned, even a little ruddy, uses makeup, dark eyebrows and eyes and sandy brown mussed hair. Sometimes when she smiles her chin puffs up, making her less formidable.

Eventually I get around to asking her about herself while Bob is on the phone. She came to Boston on a research grant to go to school at Harvard, biology, genetics I think, but dropped out for a year to travel and

immerse herself in the world. Was in California living along the ocean and in San Francisco for a while. I tell her my ideas about Los Angeles, the New York of the west. Raw she says. Then she returned to Boston missing the intellectual intensity of the east and lives near Roxbury. She has, on her own, started teaching theater to children and old people so I tell her about Cassandra's theater group but forget to give her C's phone number.

Curiously, Toni asks me nothing about myself. It was a strange quality of Cassandra and Liz that although they never hid or were shy about their desire to know me sexually, they would never ask a question about my writing unless I first offered to talk about it, as if it was a realm they could not enter uninvited. This frustrated me because my work was nebulous and I was too modest to speak of it without being asked, unsure that the other person was interested. Perhaps they left it a mystery for fear that they might see what a mediocre man they had chosen after all!

When Bob returns he asks Toni if she'd like to go outside but the day has turned cold and cloudy. She hedges on the idea and I am not sure if it is because she dislikes physical discomfort and inconvenience or because she wants to be with me longer. It is George Eliot's contention that most men can't imagine anyone any woman would rather be with than themselves.



Toni sits at the kitchen table with one leg folded under her, when she goes to Bob's room for a sweater and a cigarette she sings when she's alone. When she returns to the kitchen, lights her cigarette at the stove and the gas burner flames up more suddenly than expected, I can tell how self-conscious she is about her movements and body, her imagined clumsiness, under my scrutiny. Yet her strength of will refuses to allow that to keep her from feeling free.

The conversation turns to world politics. I have gotten sensitive to her attraction to me and where that leaves Bob White so I begin to address Bob more and Toni less. She picks up on that and tries also but her eyes seem involuntarily to turn to me. Bob on his part addresses Toni almost exclusively. The conversation has died a bit so I prepare to go to Ronnie's while Bob and Toni decide to go out for soup. On their way downstairs both say good-bye and I say a non-committal Bye-now but hurry out after them to get a glimpse of them walking up the street. They are not holding hands or physically intimate.

It is near dusk and overcast. Follow back streets to Harvard Square. What can Toni be short for, Antoinette, Antonia, even Annette. A huge beech tree, leaves still green, before one of Cambridgeport's old houses. This neighborhood will never be beautiful as rich Brookline but it's history is more visceral. Kids playing in street late

afternoon. Soon they'll be called in for supper. Little girls. Stray dogs.

Ronnie playing cello so use key. He tells me that he and Ruby separated with much love and grace. I believe that is true on the surface but in Ruby's depths is anger and pain that she was in the end rejected by Ronnie. Now she must resolve that anguish by herself. Ronnie says she's deathly afraid of being alone all her life and that is why I want to give her Mrs. Stevens who sees love as the waker of innovation, waker of the dead, inspiration for art, not the life-long faithfulness we have all been taught to strive for.

We cook spaghetti and meat sauce and then go to the movies. The moon is full, a little past full, and strong in the sky. Maybe the moon gives intensity to human relationships and the sun the next morning gives us our daily work and our feet planted on the earth. On the subway we read Whitman, his vision of the molting of humanity. But I find myself recoiling from Ronnie, his compulsion to praise everything and praise it often makes a sensitive place inside of me turn callous. It is a passing feeling though, his love and compassion for other people is far greater than mine.

On corner of Arlington and Boylston meet a former lover of Ronnie's named Dale. She is contained in herself, quiet and sensitive, neither offended nor excited by Ronnie's exuberance. I stand like a tall gawk asking

only what she studies. Archaeology. I think they are talking about Israel but I am experimenting by imagining that Ronnie is the individual I do not know and perceiving him as I would a person I've met for the first time. It is his practiced gentleness that shines through.

Ronnie later tells me Dale's ancestors were Russian Jews. I picture her as a Dostoyevsky character and my image of big broad Russian peasants is modified by this petite woman waiting for a friend on a wintry street corner. In McDonald's Ronnie explains that he backed off from her when they were lovers because he was afraid she'd want to marry him. Ronnie is a good marriage prospect because his profession is sure and mapped out. I'm bad because I'm a bum. I sincerely believe that the insecurity of my finances is a major factor in my breakup with lovers.

We enter the theater for Chushingura, Dale having convinced us that Teorema is a dumb film by describing a scene where a maid levitates over a city with arms outstretched like a crucifix. More Marxist-religious crap from Italy. My old theater boss Peter Burgess is selling tickets to a long line of customers I am camouflaged among. After the initial surprise we greet each other warmly and Ronnie and I go inside, Japanese credits on screen.

Chushingura about 47 samurai retainers who plot for two years a revenge for their lord's death. A long

illustration of the Japanese sense of honor and obligation. My favorite moment is when the chamberlain in the gay quarters hears of his son's death and hides his tears by splashing water on his own and the children's faces. There is something flawless about Japanese acting—the part, the mask, is presented without trying to hide the fact that it is an act so the actor is effortlessly absorbed by his part. American cinema is always attempting to fool the audience into believing this is real emotion. The Japanese make no such attempt and therefore the power of emotion is devastating when it emerges.

After the film we walk across the bridge to Cambridge. Ronnie was moved by the beauty of the film but resisted the violence and its senseless cause. One must accept the assumptions of Japanese culture to appreciate the film. Nothing comes before the samurai's obligation to his master. The film purposefully makes the cause ambiguous—a petty official teases Lord Asano to anger, so hundreds of men must die.

But it is all an extreme metaphor for what every man and woman in the world must do—compromise their personal happiness for their social obligation. And this is what makes men and women great—the resolution of that conflict with integrity and it is why age is sadder and more exquisite than youth. The art is to be

happy in fulfilling your obligation and the most part of that is knowing what that obligation is.

In chess a very successful game can be played merely by responding to the opponent's every move in the best possible way. Once you know chess well enough there is little choice about moves, to some degree there is no player, just the game. It comes full circle to this paradox that finally paralyzed our conversation over spaghetti and sauce: that either our every action is supremely important or it doesn't matter what we do and both attitudes may accomplish the same purpose. I put on my coat and head down to the river to walk home, full moon and clear sky, river very calm.

## J Train to Brooklyn

Wake up in Jesse and Steffie's comfortable bed and room full of thriving plants. Marc still asleep in his room so I have a little breakfast, he wakes up while I eat at his desk. A simple talk in praise of the Baghavad Gita, book of truth after truth. Yogurt, banana, chocolate donut. Then return to my room where Marc peruses newspaper while I pack and dress to go to Brooklyn and visit Ken. Feel no pressure from Marc to stay. As a matter of fact he wondered if I was hurt that we didn't spend much time together while he was in Boston. Not at all. Marc wears only a t-shirt his big thick lingham hanging down lazily between his legs. I can easily imagine how pleasurable it must be to a lady to have that long smooth rod inside her.

But Marc is more than mere cock, has bad dreams, life's difficulties muss his hair, a night of wine drinking and pot smoking and farting in bed give him a more human than god-like odor. And he's a good person. While he waters the plants and takes a shower I practice a little trumpet and the fullness of my tone this morning amazes him. Marc is worried about finding a job, that all his peers have gotten jobs and he may be left behind. That I'm a bum is no solace to him.

The day is warm and overcast. The special quality of New York is the electric sexuality of the street life. I

come into these streets and I'm immediately teased. When I enter the subway I'm sorry I didn't walk more but I'm willing to accept what the day brings. Excited to observe people on the subway again, one of the eight wonders of the world. IRT is sedate this morning, the IND is crowded with animated people from uptown. People are amiable today, I saw a young woman going upstairs pass an old woman going down and give her hand to guide her five or six steps. On a day like today this old woman could go anywhere passed along from hand to hand until nightfall.

The F train carries people from Queens, Long Island types, a pretty young woman and her baby and her sour husband chained by marriage and sick of talking to her. A skinny unkempt guy, unshaven and rumped black clothes with white socks sits with a sisterly woman who is aggravated with him, maybe tired of caring for him all these years. An Asian-Cuban youth in blue jean suit massaging his karate or kung fu fists. A young couple comfortable to be sitting side by side reading the Sunday Times. A helium-filled balloon tied to a suitcase and bobbing and swaying with the train. These new trains make us feel respected, the trainman announces each station, a warning bell rings when the doors are about the close.

The J train to Brooklyn starts in an old station without cosmetics to hide pipes and beams, passes over

the East River on the riveted industrial iron I-beam soot-covered bridge with a view of factories and boatyards and goes through bombed out Bedford-Stuyvesant on elevated tracks. Looks like there was a war here, some buildings have no roofs, some have only roofs. Wonder how anybody can live in this treeless land of defunct gas stations and mostly empty grocery stores.

But the train transports incredibly beautiful people. Young black woman neatly attired, calm demeanor, perfect healthy body, intelligent features, reads a magazine. I'm staring at her, she catches my eye, she's younger than I thought, she catches the eye of an older black woman and smiles kindly to her. A churchy fat black lady laughs jocosely with her skinny friend and they slap each other's hands in mirth. From Africa to the South to New York. A great good-hearted tough mommy woman needs no pity.

A sad eyed young man, drooping moustache, pointy shoes, slouching posture, gentle watery eyes, daydreams across from me. An old black man with thick trumpet lips and red wine eyes sits next to me and looks out the window just like me. He is an utterly defeated god, his gorgeous thin fingers and hands. Makes no attempt to look at me or converse but am I dreaming or is our bond strong and telepathic. I start out tense that he might talk to me and end up proud to have sat next to him.



He puts a cigarette in his mouth and gets off at the next stop. Eastern Parkway, Alabama St., Kosciusko St., Cleveland St. and I step out onto a wooden shaky platform, buildings just a few feet from the el, young Latino girl leans out her window looks down into street under el. At the turnstile a young woman waits for the next train with a pained wax smile.

So absorbed looking at happy Brooklyn children on street that Ken is in front of me before I know it. Our greeting relaxed, he looks rumpled and pimped, we walk to mailbox and grocery store for milk. The store is sparsely outfitted, lots of beer and a few loaves of bad white bread. Talk about what living in Brooklyn is like, quieter than Manhattan, Ken enjoys it, doesn't miss the city at all. He lives in his grandparents' former apartment rent free where his father grew up and just around the corner from where Ken was born. Huge Highland Park across the street, you could just about walk to LaGuardia airport through it. Walk up peeling paint stairs behind Ken who knocks on door and Susan answers.

The apartment is large light and roomy and I can see it will be easier to be with Ken and Susan here than in her tiny one room apartment. She greets me quickly and shyly without meeting my eyes much less touching and I see that it is not ambivalence about seeing me as I thought in her apartment but simply her way. Actually

it's a refreshing departure from the aggressive hugs of the times, it gives me room to be myself somehow.

We settle in living room, them on couch and me lounging across two easy chairs, Susan offers me milk and salami, and we speak of her difficulties with family over living unwed with Ken. She is strong enough to defy them though and her father is blind to her strength and resilience such that even if Ken left her she could still make a good life for herself. Ken and I add our observations about our own families. They sit apart and I'm glad at this change, that they consider me enough not to get mushy in front of me, something that leaves the third person, the friend, out in the cold charmed as he may be by lovers. But soon enough they are toying with each other's bodies.

Ken and Susan get stoned while I abstain and it serves to release Ken from his inhibitions. We find ourselves analyzing our fears and habits as amateur psychologists. He is impressed with my freedom from anxiety and confusion these days while I am amazed at his ability to uncompromisingly be himself while living with a woman. Susan is very quiet and Ken occasionally pries with a question pretty unsuccessfully. It seems to me that Susan compromises for the sake of holding them together, somebody must when two worlds collide. When we run out of talk and Ken gets bored he becomes his usual obnoxious self and teases Susan

mercilessly, poking her body and making lewd bad jokes until she loses patience in her quiet way and Ken feels guilty.

While dinner cooks they adjourn to the bedroom to work it out behind closed doors and I pass the time by reading a map of New York. Pretty soon there are bangs coming from the bedroom, the two of them are playing knock hockey. I get winners and the winner is Susan, we are both a little uneasy being alone together but we see the game through and afterwards we know each other a little better. While Susan finishes cooking dinner Ken and I play music, a couple of tunes that go so-so. We are to jam together free improv on one but to my surprise he gets absorbed in what I'm playing and just listens. This is encouraging, an improvisation of mine has a listener.

While we play it has rained and we all notice as we sit down to dinner. The quiet of the Brooklyn night is wonderful after Susan's Second Ave. apartment, the lights of the park glimmer off the wet street, we can even hear drops falling from wet bare branches. Everything is peaceful and much of our restlessness is relieved by the rain. We don't talk much over dinner.

After dinner lounge around and slowly get ourselves together to take a walk. Try calling Mindy, my first ever lover, who I've been trying all day and her man, John answers phone. Mindy as educational

consultant travels all over country to all the state capitols. I'm amazed that Mindy has gotten herself such a high position so soon but it's just like her, never settle for a minor role when she can be the star. John says he's heard a lot about me from Mindy, looks forward to meeting me, Mindy will be very sad to have missed me. I carefully and honestly include him in my hope that the three of us can have dinner together, wanting to meet him as novelist and Mindy's lover. I leave my address in Boston with him.

Our communication has been clear and open but when I hang up Ken is laughing at me, he is skeptical that I really wanted to meet John, thinks I said it just to be polite. I can recall when we were younger Ken would take what I said and live by it and then be angry if it didn't work out or if I had changed my mind, or worse, had spoken my ideal lightly and he took it seriously.

Outside the night is warm with a low fog that makes everything mystical. Groups of teenagers hang out on the quiet streets and look us over as we pass. I think it's because we're obviously different, Manhattanites, but Susan thinks it's just because we're new faces. Susan and Ken cling to each other and I am content in the soft night. The neighborhood is not remarkable, generally drab architecture, two and three story brick houses, varying styles, but the quiet of the community after the rain is profound.

The store under the el is spacious and comfortable, inviting, run by a pregnant Latino woman who takes great pains to properly price fig newtons for me. Friendly spirits here. We step out into the night with milk and cookies and I persuade Ken and Susan to wander a little longer. They show me a weird cinder block house with four huge classical columns and we return home passing the building Ken spent his first five months in.

We spend a quiet time before bed talking a little and looking at Sunday paper. Ken says he enjoys dusting and cleaning his grandparents' old furniture, taking special care of it, as it is a connection with his past and it is his inheritance. They go to bed and I stretch out on the couch reading paper and eating cookies. Hear their bed rocking and creaking behind the door. I change my bedsheets around searching for the best direction to enjoy the misty night.

## Wall Street

Like a baby who's eyes are still gummed I see Susan preparing for work in my half sleep. There is a warmth of breakfast from the kitchen early on a rainy morning and a radio talk show. My dreams include Susan pulling on her pants near my couch, her bare moon. I hear her go out the door. Later Ken comes to prod me out of my sleep and I struggle awake. Raining fairly steadily outside, dress in one of dad's white shirts and join Ken in kitchen for oatmeal, not too tasty. Ken calls me picky eater.

Call Jack Schuyler, he answers distantly like a person who doesn't like to talk in the morning, deprecatingly describes himself as a Wall Street lawyer, agrees to meet for lunch. Ken gives me keys to Susan's east side apartment in case I want to stay there and we hurry out into cold rain to catch subway, side by side down street, he fearful of missing train.

People wait near turnstiles rather than stand on chilly platform. J train already crowded with office workers, Monday morning after a long weekend, a low almost passive energy. On the holidays they live life and now it's life's turn to live them. We stand near a door, pack on my back, trumpet case, not saying much, people not too interesting to look at. Ken and I old friends, no compulsion to talk, I read subway ads out loud without

telling him where I get my sentences, dumb. Ken can be very obnoxious but he doesn't like it at all when I dish it out, but we expect it of each other.

Finally the iron bridge, gray city, and underground. Train transfer and crush aboard one stop then change to roomier train. Stand in front of girl who studiously keeps her eyes low, say to myself Take it easy girl, let it go, but it turns out my zipper is open. Her thumb tips were once cut off and sewn back on, red flesh makes my skin creep.

Upstairs into rain that soaks into down coat. I banter idiotically as we hurry to Susan's building and Ken is irritated, You're a pleasure to be with he says sarcastically. In telephone company building, Ken greets one of Susan's co-workers, great guy he says, big smile, and kisses Susan who stands in a corner wearing telephone installation gear around her hips, gun slinger. Wonder if Susan minds being kissed in front of the men she works with, one of few women who install phones. She gives me I Ching which is what we came for and I walk them part way down street, shake hands, can tell they enjoyed my visit by their open looks and honest invitation to stay another night.

Now alone in cold rain not knowing what to do until lunch with Jack. Hurry back to Susan's building and try to call Larry but he's not home. Take Ken's advice and train down to Lower East Side, to Garden Cafeteria.

Inside it's warm and crowded, I hesitate but find a seat in the back room which has fewer people, a seat in the corner near the phones where I can overhear interesting conversations. Getting tea and danish counterman gives me coffee instead, I take it not wanting to annoy him.

What a bustle of talk, cigars, Jewish old men, very few women, one or two blacks. In my room a group talks prices and politics loudly. The men express their opinions and don't want to hear contraries, they speak their minds and look away. The price and quality of a pair of shoes, taxes, etc., in competition with each other over who's most knowledgeable. A big fleshy guy chews a cigar, a small intelligent man who actually listens to others, and most interesting, a little gangster looking type in hat goes from table to table teasing men with his opinions. It takes a couple of looks to see that he's quite harmless.

Yiddish accents, there is a certain feminine quality to these men, their energy, they seem more vulnerable than men from my past and their defenses are more immediate. A guy calls a woman on the phone, his wife perhaps, who's sick to ask if she wants anything to eat from the cafeteria, some soup. Alright, that's all I called for, to see if you needed anything. My writing, which I am absorbed by, gives me a purpose here, makes me less out of place, the men's curiosity about me is not too obvious, they glance at me from their conversation but



without question. My beard makes me look Jewish, a young Turk amongst the old ones. I wonder in a crisis which of these men would emerge as leaders. I always have to look carefully or I'm taken in by a small man who talks big.

One at a time a few people sit at my table to eat silently and leave. There is no expectation to talk, my writing shows I'm busy, not here to meet people. A young Asian guy sits directly across from me and then opens a book written in Chinese. He stays longest. I come to like each person who shares my table and feel casual bonds created in silence. But surely this is something only I feel. The character of the restaurant slowly changes as the morning passes, many of the original men have left. Two young black women and their two children take seats nearby and it's time for me to go also. I draw on my pack and coat self-consciously before the pretty women and depart. They weren't even noticing of course.

The walk down to Wall Street is thoroughly unpleasant in the cold rain and snow. Look for the used clothing store on East Broadway but it's closed. Jack's building is 100 Wall Street almost over to the East River, the guard is tempted to check my backpack but refrains. I am slightly concerned about my rustic appearance in a New York law firm and whether Jack will be embarrassed by me. There is a small claustrophobic

reception room and the receptionists try paging Jack but it takes a long time.

The indoors warmth is making me drowsy, I could enjoy sitting here a long time. There is a mix up between a woman secretary and a man lawyer about an appointment, the man childishly vindicating himself of responsibility and the woman patiently amused and annoyed half-heartedly accepting his misplaced blame. Politeness is all for inferiors in regard to superiors on Wall St. Lots of self-important men go in and out and there is a phone on the wall over my head that they must speak into, announce that they are going and when they'll be back.

Jack finally enters and strides forward, shaking my hand vigorously, does not even take notice of my backpack as I should have expected. There is a crazy bell system for paging people that he's never bothered to learn so he just waits until it rings a long time and then figures it's for him. He shares his office with a cardboard square-jawed athletic type who's first comment to me is I wish I were dressed like you. I parry Sometimes I wish I were dressed like you. He's checkmated and I'm established. Jack doesn't like him anyway by his cool manner with him so it's ok.

Jack is his usual sharp, alive self, his honest clarity is impressive and challenging as ever and over the years has come a gentleness that makes him refrain from

pressing his logical conclusions when they are causing pain. He has taken this Wall St. job for six months as a bridge between his Brooklyn clerkship and his new job with the District Attorney's office. He's learning a lot but is glad he won't have to stay since he has moral qualms about the kind of work the firm does.

The view from his window is the symphony of lower Manhattan office buildings. Jack has two close friends working with him here who will be going to the DA's office with him, a man and a woman. The woman, Dee, is a little older and is quite macho about her achievements, perhaps it's necessary for her to overcome the weight of the social structure. Lee is a nice guy.

We go out to lunch and Jack stages his own little rebellion by not announcing his intentions into the wall phone. The day is still cloudy but stopped raining as we walk uptown to a bar he knows. Being outside relieves some of the intensity of our minds locked together but it returns when we sit across from each other in the bar. The cook who takes our order is grumpy but obviously soft inside for those who respond to him and Jack says many lawyers are afraid of this guy's gruffness.

The bar is nearly empty and over fish sandwiches we discuss New York City and making the subway system free. On this we agree but beyond it Jack's perfectionism proves superior to my romantic idealism

because he has actually discovered a way to finance the free system by increasing the city payroll tax which is good for a 50% deduction on a business' federal income tax so in essence we would support the subway largely with federal money. He is careful to define where his knowledge is limited in each statement he makes.

I listen closely to this and also to canoe trip stories and decide while Jack is certainly precise he uses far too many words to capture the artistic tension of the storyteller. A cute kitten eats scraps of fish from our plates and I like seeing Jack's kindness to the animal, a complement to his rigorous thinking. Walking back he points out some plastic air filled sculptures in the lobby of one of the great dinosaur buildings and asks how I like such art. I joke I can appreciate the shapes but I don't see where the personal catharsis or search for truth come in.

Upstairs I gather my belongings and leave my address, peruse the desk of a lawyer and Jack shows me to the door. We bump into a coffee delivery clerk who shows annoyance at Jack's apparent haughtiness. But it is merely that Jack does not think to be sensitive to the egos of unhappy people since he assumes everyone has freely chosen their stations in life, as he has his. I try to compensate with politeness. At the door Jack catches me by surprise with the new way of shaking hands, by

locking thumbs, it seems even less likely that he should do it than I. I descend fourteen floors to the street.

The streets are drying but the air is bitter cold. Suddenly I'm sleepy from getting up so early and also drinking beer with Jack. I don't know what I want to do next, go to the Village to see Larry or Julie or go uptown to Marc's to sleep. At Chambers St. catch a subway uptown, car painted orange inside and quiet, as if the orange paint thickly absorbs the sound. Warmth drowns me again but the trip is quick, Marc and Jessie are home. We all nap a couple of hours and then cook a fish dinner, wait for Steffie to return. I haven't much energy and Jessie jokes at least Ronnie makes an effort.

We lounge until late and then Marc, Steffie and I want to hear music at the West End so out into the freezing night we go. Steffie takes Marc's arm like a married couple and although Steffie sleeps with Jessie, Marc seems a better mate for her. Basie's Men play well tonight, Frank's trumpet is clean, Eddie's trombone is inventive and at times powerfully beautiful. In the break between sets we solve a math problem of Steffie's tutee, they get it right and I'm wrong but for a long time we're convinced otherwise, the power of my conviction.

When the music ends we step into the winter night, walk home. We buy cookies and milk and I clown all the way home, really outlandishly. Then in the kitchen we argue sexual politics, I'm over-excited, I'm

still screwed up from affairs with Cassandra and Liz. Steffie grows bored and goes to bed, I make my bed on the couch. Lights out, Marc says a strange thing. He asks if I'm comfortable and when I say Quite he says Good, cause you're not sleeping in here.

## Inwood Hill

Wake up in dark living room on couch, Steffie dressing, as she goes out she says good seeing me again. Try to decide what to do today, eat, practice trumpet, drink brandy. After some hesitation, call Julie to arrange to see her this afternoon. Already it's past noon and while sipping brandy summon energy to go uptown to Inwood. Want to see the community I would try to live in if I returned to New York. Drop Marc's keys with doorman and head for subway.

What a lovely, invigorating day! Enjoy heading uptown away from well-worn upper west side. Train comes outdoors at 125<sup>th</sup> St., magnificent light reflecting off brick buildings. Train empties at 137<sup>th</sup> St., last stop, we all wait disappointed on platform. I happen to stand near the panel room, an electronic map of subway system shows where all trains are on IRT west side line, red dots. One man keeps watch and writes on clipboard, couple of others lounge around room. Conductors get off next train and go into locker room, one old guy smokes a cigar, been around a long time, change of shifts, another guy reads a book at the long table, a comradeship like sailors or woodsmen, men's worn faces.

At last a train arrives that we can crowd aboard. Sit across from young boy, young woman and vigorous

old man in cowboy hat, perhaps they are recent immigrants or just visitors by their pride in themselves. The man is strong and healthy, evenly and deeply tanned, with moustache and square jaw, he could be the boy's father or perhaps the grandfather. Sometimes he looks up from his paper and says something in Spanish and the boy and woman laugh hard. She sits with her arm around the boy obviously happy but with a certain universal sadness when her face is not animated. She sees me looking at them admiringly. She wears high leather boots and her pants are rolled up exposing long underwear. When they get off I can find no one else so interesting to look at.

The train comes outdoors at Dyckman St., the light is brilliant. Follow Dyckman on the sunny side remembering my experiences up here, a place none of my friends know anything about. The little brick houses on Payson Ave. I so much wanted to live in still look inviting though I wonder if the parkland of this city is large enough anymore to contain me.

Climb into the park on Inwood Hill, look back on the neighborhood from on high. Breathe in cold air, sun shining over the south pushing west, smell of decaying leaves. Follow lower trails and get a look at the Hudson winding north and glittering in the sunlight, cliffs across river, wintering trees, a winter silence. Backtrack often, a certain patience must be developed to enjoy being



outdoors, look the same tract of land over twice, it is different each time. Raspberry runners are the only green left, few spruce or pine up here, oak, maple and elm mainly. Even the highway traffic is quiet, muffled by this winter silence.

Hike up and up to the high boulder overlooking the river. Sit out on the ledge, wind cuts through coat, get low to the ground. Remember days gone by talking and smoking dope with Peter up here, his Irish setter Maggie. Not a bird in the sky this afternoon, hear people approaching behind me, listen as they see me and decide to move on, three old people, one man and two women. The little meadow I used to sit in seems a little shabby these days, litter lying around.

Follow paths downward toward Spuyten Duvel, where the East River meets the Hudson, rocks along the shore, high cascades of rocks and trees toward top of hill, mossy shade of north side, city and rivers can both be seen from here. Trace the valley between two hills back toward Payson Ave., old guy pissing next to tree and there above me is the pale half moon high in blue sky and to the other side the golden late afternoon sun, silence of winter, a few other people now and then in their solitude, quiet hum of city far off. A leaf blows downhill. When I reach the city I'm tired from the climb, my spirit so dissipated and merged with the world that I can hardly think to speak.

The warm express train lulls me. I guess I could live here again, Manhattan Island, the Muse resides here, comes down the river in every garment of her glory. Nature and the city mate. Train crowds more with each stop, Harlem and then the long run downtown. Get off in Village and climb upstairs into gathering dusk, hour late for Julie. Black guy stops me to ask about my down jacket, is it warm. Pass NYU to east side and find Julie's place. She meets me on the stairs in her heavy coat going downstairs for cigarettes.

Julie's apartment has a view of midtown buildings crowding down including the Empire State Building. I see the lights of the Empire State the moment they come on. There's a tree in front of her window and Julie lets her parakeet fly freely indoors. Everything is orderly, she has even bought a new stereo and we listen to John Coltrane and light candles to talk by.

At first Julie irritates me with her crazy act but soon surprises me by calming down and asking questions about Liz. I surmise that she's a little upset about her last visit which didn't come at a good time for Liz. But I don't know much about Liz to tell, indeed Julie knows much more and does most of the talking. We get into an argument about men and women when Julie says relationships are more important to women than men. The argument's senseless and eventually I steer the conversation back to Julie's concerns about Liz.

It's nice talking in the dark but soon we run out of conversation and Julie gets wild again, telling stupid jokes. She's named her place Belle Vue for the view and for the hospital she was in. She seems to have landed in the right place for her.

Janie Goodman is coming over for dinner and we wait a long time for her, long because there seems little for us to share. Julie beads a necklace. Janie arrives and we all pitch in and make a vegetable dinner and drink wine. Janie tap dances to Coltrane. Toward the end of dinner Julie starts recounting her experiences before being committed to the hospital.

Basically she discovered psychic powers in herself that scared her and that she couldn't handle properly. The power made her arrogant and belligerent until her best friends couldn't bear her company and by a fluke she ended up in Bellevue. She had received a power, a natural and important passage for aborigines, but unacceptable in our society and so the pressures landed her in the mental ward. Now she's afraid to re-experience those powers although she feels she could handle them better now. Sometimes she had visions of whole scenes from other people's lives with details corroborated by the subjects.

We go out into the cold night and separate on a street corner, I kiss them both goodbye. Julie behaves

light-headed and –hearted but in retrospect something has passed between us tonight. The talk by candlelight.

I hurry through Washington Square Park to Larry's. The old black supervisor of his building is at the door and greets me kindly. Later we hear him roaring drunk and cursing angrily. Larry notes the fullness of my beard, says I look like Dostoyevsky which I take as a good sign for my prose. Larry's life is taken up with teaching and working with children, going to school, worldly activities. He is also in love and this explains the aura of light around him. His room is calm with art on the walls including the Picasso my brothers and I purchased for our parents' twenty-fifth anniversary.

Larry makes me a cheese sandwich. I read to him from this journal and he listens closely, his critical discernment and his attentiveness are a joy when most people listen merely out of courtesy, if at all. He is extremely encouraging. He shows me a wonderful poem of his called Staring. I see in it what poetry is and understand why I write prose. Larry says in eight words what I say in eight hundred. We also play music.

In the early morning I leave to catch a three o'clock train, walk to Penn Station through bitter cold night. The warm station drowns me and I doze in the waiting room. All aboard and I fall asleep as the train passes out of the city.

## Umberto D

Have had many dreams each night since returning from New York, all kinds of dreams, fight dreams, chase dreams, flying dreams, but no love dreams. Before going to New York I wrote to the Forest Service for a summer job so I have a vision of future change. Plans are so necessary, a landmark mountain far away on a vast flat plain.

Do some chores outside, down coat keeps me just warm enough against the bitter cold, but no warmer. Some people on street struggle against cold and others seem perfectly at ease and natural in it. Go to Woolworth's and buy this red notebook that due to manufacturer's mistake has a yellow cover right behind the red one. A little magic trick, the surprise gives the notebook a personality like it's laughing at you, you thought you knew me but you didn't, did you.

The aging cashier comments on the cold weather unhappily. One should try to console other people in little ways but I am always too absorbed in myself. Wish I were a saint. Then the liquor store for beer, five pint bottle Knickerbocker Natural, no additives, dollar fifty. The sweet skinny chain smoking lady is not so sweet today, I'm a bit disillusioned. She's waiting on a bummed out guy who's trying to be nice, dirt on his pants and the back of his coat, unshaven, in his late thirties. She

obviously doesn't like him, maybe from previous encounters, I give her the benefit of the doubt. She's civil to me of course but not friendly as usual, maybe it's just a bad day. A little joke might have helped.

Stop at Hundred Flowers for a few minutes to look over James Legge's translation of I Ching. Although most scholars disdain Legge's translations, I like his Chuang-tzu best because it's funniest. I think his method is a Chinese-English match of words whereas other translators are freer and more sophisticated. Burton Watson so intent on a literary, smooth flowing translation loses the humor entirely, and Thomas Merton thinks it's all so profound he makes what humor he senses awkward. Legge just plods along word for word and even with the archaic spellings and judgmental footnotes (being a Christian missionary in China) he naively renders the genius best. His I Ching looks interesting but not as good as Wilhelm's.

Home now there's a crisis about what to do after putting the food away. Relax, don't panic, take everything slow. Decide to read I Ching and Bhagavad Gita. Throw coins at kitchen table and receive Contemplation, that most beautiful and intricate Chinese character, with a changing line that becomes Dispersion or dissolution, the character for which is short strokes going every which way out from the center.

Contemplation is wind over earth, in the olden days the kings traveled forth to contemplate and instruct the people. In ancient China towers were built that served as lookouts but also landmarks for the surrounding countryside. The superior man unconsciously influences the people by his mere presence, like purifying wind bending and swaying the grass. But my changing line shows me to be contemplating through the crack of a door, a limited view that is ok for one insulated from the world but not mete for one who must take part in its affairs.

Settle in the kitchen easy chair to read the Bhagavad Gita in which Krishna instructs Arjuna that a life of action is a valid path to nirvana. But I can't concentrate for thinking of Liz Larkin and finally decide the only way I'll accomplish anything today is to call her and get her off my mind. I dial her number sitting in Bob's freezing room and she answers not recognizing my voice right away but when she does her greeting is friendly. I, however, am a cold clod, just returning your call I say. She says playfully, You're too late, Evan and I had all this food Monday night so I thought you might come over and help eat it.

Ask how she's been, the same, she gives her usual slightly depressed and humdrum just working at the hospital line. She asks about my Thanksgiving, is a little touched that my brother Mark says hello. I tell her I saw

Julie but she's not too interested. Evan is playing scales very fast and intensely in the background. I am holding back really telling her much, playing coy. She doesn't care much one way or another.

Stan Stafford has been calling her often she mentions half complaining and half seductively, exactly why she should want me to know that Stan's courting her is beyond me. She was going to call me to hear him play but then she decided not to go. It annoys me that she wanted to put me between her and Stan until she was more sure she wanted him, then remove me so they could be together. When I don't rise to the bait the conversation dies and I say to provoke her, acting nonchalant, Well, I don't really have much to say.

I think she's more amused than anything, she must know my act well by now, but she says We're terrible, which is shorthand for how inhibited we are with each other but it settles the blame equally nowhere and leaves zounds of space for interpretation as to in exactly what ways we're terrible and why. Instead of defining it better and saying Pathetic is the word, I go C'est dommage, she says ok, I say Bye and she says very sweetly to me, with presence, Bye Bob. It is obvious that she is far more together these days than I.

Is it the end or just an amusing misencounter? I can trust Liz to keep things in perspective. Yet I'm still racked by opposing instincts, to call her and set a day we



can get together and undo all that has gone before, or wait if necessary forever until this ego disperses. And undo all that has gone before. What power has love but forgiveness? That by its intervention what has been done can be undone. What good is it otherwise? Which leads me to wonder why am I so unforgiving, if forgiveness is in order at all. Everything was simpler when I didn't "love" her, I just happened to like her.

The day passes into night pleasantly and Bob White returns, no one climbs the stairs quite as loud or fast as him. We say a quick hello, trade good nights as I go out. Cold, cold night but take my time. Have time on my hands, feel myself heading toward Ronnie's, his lights are on. Ring buzzer and make face in window, Ronnie laughs obligingly. What's more important than medicine I ask him hyperactively. He says many things and starts his list with movies. Right! I plan to drag him to the movies.

Ronnie spent a quiet productive day at home practicing cello and reading medicine, our days then were similar. I feel a slightest tinge of doubt that Ronnie is completely glad I've surprised him. The slightly in command look in his face is the feeling of being in demand, the knowledge that I need his friendship at least as much as he needs mine. That when I am driven from my tree house by loneliness, I am not immune or the Buddha master of emotion, this is where I come to.

We mix kahlua in sour milk and he makes grilled cheese. He finishes checking his cashed checks against his balance, has spent a lot of money dating women in the spree after breakup with Ruby. I tell Ronnie about phone conversation with Liz. Ronnie irks me by asking if I'm less confused, I hate to think my confusions are obvious to Ronnie, or that I have confusion about anything, that I am anything less or different than very perfect and Buddha. I say yes I'm less confused but I know I'm not, I'm more.

He tells of how Ruby still thinks they'll get back together, that this is just a phase, but he thinks their love affair is over. Ronnie's true zen is in his ability to be vulnerable, sexually and otherwise, before women and it accounts for his success as if the vulnerability, the sheer courage with which he plays his part makes him invincible.

Milky moon behind church steeple. We arrive at theater early and after buying tickets, browse the shops downstairs. Have a grand time trying on different colored wool caps in front of mirror. Ronnie wants a white one but I think he looks better in his burnt orange. We ask a girl passing by and she picks orange. He still wants white. I as usual look great in all of them and am in love with my mirror image. We try every cap until the store manager begins to eye us. We rush upstairs late for the movie.

Bergman's *Illicit Interlude* about ballerina closed off after her first love affair. Series of flashbacks during which she finally frees herself for another lover and her work. She reminds me a bit of Liz when she has that closed face or when she says she can feel love as a tingle in the palms of her hands. They are both dancers too. The lover follows her about like a faithful dog which makes me uncomfortable, then he breaks his neck diving into shallow water and he's like an animal hit by a car. Good spacing of scenes, heavy handed profundities. But it is about performance and that's when Bergman is best. Ronnie is happy the movie has a happy ending.

All during film Ronnie scans the audience for women. A pretty girl across the aisle, alone, what to do if Ronnie moves on her, move faster? Illumined clock right above our heads, audience's faces lit by flicker of film, people in their winter coats.

We move closer to center for Umberto D, painful film about an old man alone in postwar Rome. Lives in boarding house that landlady is trying to evict him from, with his faithful little dog. Servant girl pregnant by one of two soldiers, doesn't know which one, helps him best she can. Finally he must leave and it turns out the girl needs him as much as he needed her but he's too deep in his misery to see. Someone wanted to make a very honest film but wouldn't it be nice if they got a place

together and took care of each other and the baby? Hard film to watch, the pain never lets up.

Afterwards Ronnie convinces me to meet a girl he knows who waitresses in nearby restaurant. Maria, Italian from Brooklyn, curly hair, flippant manner, gliding walk, looks like my mother. She addresses me mostly, as if she knows why I was brought. While she's working I tease Ronnie that I'll be like Umberto D, that I already am, and Ronnie takes me too seriously. A shudder.

Maria returns with tea but it feels like too much work to get her to my place so I leave the field to Ronnie who claims he wasn't even thinking about it. Feel very predatory in a tired sort of way. Occasionally Maria touches my arm as she talks, like she knows what she's doing. She's supposed to have eyes like mine, perfect for me says matchmaker Ronnie. When we rise to leave Ronnie whispers in Maria's ear to come to his apartment after work tonight. I wave goodnight to her with my mittens on. As we go toward home Ronnie convinces himself out loud how fine a woman Maria is. The temperature is in the teens, we part at a corner and I hurry home to bed.

## Notorious

Today it is nine months since Liz and I decided to live together and just about one year since we first met. Get my ragged underwear and long skinny legs out of bed, turn on the heat and stand by the stove munching slice of bread shivering. Going to take it easy, finish Bhagavad Gita, measure how quickly room warms up until I can't see my breath. Is it the rising sun or the space heater?

The last chapters of Bhagavad Gita lack the power of the first few from being too specific about qualities of superior and inferior people and yet being not specific enough. I lose interest when Krishna starts defining the three kinds of this and that and the lower and higher so and so's. But the admonition to give up yourself and the fruits of your work to Krishna, the path of pure action to enlightenment, to find your way in the world and accept your role, is powerful. What I don't understand I'll figure out later in life.

When I've done alternating between my thoughts and Krishna's the sun is high in the sky. While preparing to shower take time to throw the black dog below a bit of cheese. She waits a while for another and then her master comes home and she's wild with joy. He treats her well, pets her and plays with her. The mistress of the house is not so friendly and often, but not always of

course, the dog that is a man's love and companion is a pain in the ass to the woman.

Today I plan to sign up with a temporary secretarial services agency. My eccentric banker's uniform the black knit button down sweater with holes in both elbows, the autumn colors flannel tie, new forest green L.L. Bean all cotton shirt and brown corduroy pants. There's no rush, practice trumpet for an hour or so before going out, sweep the floors.

Warmer than I'm dressed for and almost everybody has made the same mistake. But that's ok, it will be cool tonight. I'm carrying five books I want to sell in Harvard Square or give away to Hundred Flowers. I imagine selling them like starved and struggling Henry Miller in Paris, five books for 65 cents that I know I'll need by Sunday, but I would rather give them away to Hundred Flowers where I have had such good times lounging and thinking in books.

While walking in the sun along Mass Ave. there is a moving kaleidoscope of colors across the avenue and it is Rylin MacNeice dressed like the gypsy she is. I see her before she sees me. We smile broadly to each other as I cross street to meet her in her green knit cap. Opens wide her arms to receive me holding them steady so there's no confusion as to how we should dock, and we hug a while, she a delicate balance of giving and

receiving. I end the embrace and she accepts the moment.

Rylin's hair is slightly red today and her eyes are green and green not with the green of envy as she jokes but with the green of spring on this warm day in the middle of winter. Long time since she's seen me she observes and also laughs at my tie and messes up the knot. Tell her my mission but that I'm wavering in resolve and there's really only one thing I want to do today—go to the movies. I agree to accompany her to her house where she's meeting Michael soon. As we turn corner into neighborhood a passing girl pays me the flattery of admiring me beside Rylin. Rylin's pants tucked into boots like a pirate's, what an odd picture the two of us must make!

Rylin's house sits far back from the street like a magic cottage and upstairs it is indeed magical with Rylin's colorful pillows and quilts, a brick chimney and a wood burning pot belly stove in the center of the room. The kitchen is thick with kitchen feeling, I feel like I'm in the country. Rylin talks about sharing place with Lee, that it's too crowded much as she loves Lee. We stand in the kitchen stroking the fat cat, Baba. A month ago Michael stood up Rylin to sleep with another woman, much good has happened since but I wonder why Rylin chooses this particular incident to tell me about, to explain her doubts about Michael amidst the good.

Then, as if she just remembered, she asks how I've been but I don't have much to say or time because Michael honks below. I say Isolated and invite Rylin over for a visit. We go downstairs, through the little wooden gate, I decline Rylin's offer to drive preferring to walk and greet Michael at the car window, bracing each other's arm. He talks his usual sweet baby talk to me, like he's talking to a child who he fears his normal voice will make cry, and then says they've got to hurry and abruptly breaks it off. On Mass Ave. all the ladies are looking at me as if this short encounter with Rylin has transferred some of her light to me.

The temp agency, Olsten's, is up auto fumed Mt. Auburn, lots of college kids going to classes and lunch spots. When I get to the door I decide what I knew all along, today is not my day to enter the job market. The thought of filling out applications, answering questions and taking tests to measure my competence sickens me. A pretty woman emerges and smiles to me in the hall reminding me how much I love the whole sad business work force. Laughing at myself I let myself off the hook, undo my tie and start looking forward to the movies. What luxury not to be pressured to work, partly the generosity of unemployment and partly my own discipline knowing how to live on sixty bucks a week.

Now that I'm free, let out of school early, go to Ronnie's apartment. Quiet here and me very hungry, eat



much of Ronnie's food, drink some of his booze and read two chapters from his volume of Bhagavad Gita. His has some key Indian words and the translation seems stricter than mine. Will read chapter or two each time I visit. Ronnie's desk piled with medical books, thumb through medical journals looking at ads written to entice doctors to use this or that new drug by so and so laboratories on their aching or constipated patients. The art work is better here than most commercial art and many ads I can't understand for the lingo.

Ronnie has weeded his bulletin board and only three items remain—a cardboard tag on which is written May the longtime sun shine on you/all love surround you/and the pure light within you/guide your way home, my address and phone number on little slip of paper left there last October, and an old poem by me that I re-read trying to understand it. It's ok I guess but it doesn't much get to me. Time to leave, squeeze in last verses of Bhagavad Gita and few quick sips of kahlua.

J.D. who used to manage Kenmore when I worked there is tearing tickets. Stand in line right in front of him a long time but he doesn't recognize me in my beard, not that I ever meant much to him. Look smack dab into his eyes when I pass but all he says is Cinema number two. It's like being dead or invisible. Next to flying, I always dreamed of being invisible.

I'm worried that this movie is not really what I want to see but when *Notorious* begins and the screen weaves its lights and music magic and Ingrid Bergman appears I'm in heaven. It's a great movie, good as *Casablanca*, best Hitchcock because script written by the great Ben Hecht, has everything, love, suspense, timing. *Suspicion* is fun, I bet Hitchcock wanted to push someone off that cliff but the studio wouldn't let him and instead made the lovers turn the car around and drive home arm in arm. It's dark out when I leave and a huge Friday night line is waiting to get in. What an opiate movies are!

Scramble home through the fluorescent night and buy three beers along the way. Bob is cooking dinner, we talk leaning against stove and sink, about the movies. He calls me crazy when I tell him about my Olsten escapade and how I spent the day at the movies instead of finding work. He is sousing beer trying to get drunk in advance for a night on the town. I wish him happiness as he goes out.

## The Hermit

We live at 24 Evelyn Lane and my father has had a heart attack. Red brick front steps, big sycamore tree. Somehow he struggles down to the last (or first) house on the block, the Smith's house, and sits in a lawn chair. This last house was on the perimeter of my world as a child, everything beyond it was uncharted territory and even it was rarely visited frontier. It is the border with the land of death.

Worried and responsible I go looking for my father and as I approach I see an angelic blonde curly-haired girl seated on the lawn near my father, playing. Across the street is brown-haired Josephine Emma. When I reach my father's side and squat beside him the two girls are seated side by side nearby us. In answer to a question my father asks the girls say We like it when the boys wear tights so we can pull them down and see them naked. I am holding my father's soft fleshy hand and convince him to return up the block to our house. We traverse the lawns but he is too slow for me. I arrive home and see his approach from the doorway, watch him laboriously climb the steps unable to help him.

Get out of bed for sip of orange juice and piss in bathroom. Leaving, catch sight of self in mirror, red eyes and scraggly beard, unhealthy complexion, wearing

brown knit cap this cold night, what woman would ever want to sleep with such a scrawny animal as this?

Reread a few days' writing, not good, something is amiss. I can't tap what is important and central, the work is an arbitrary chronology of dissipated details connected only because they happened in the same day. If anything deep and substantial is occurring it is bypassing my consciousness. It is another period in which the writing feels meaningless, a rote and badly performed exercise. Talking out to the world through a tiny loudspeaker about trivial events. That I woke up is the very same everyday. There must be other ways to say I woke up if I do it differently each day.

Not sure I'm completely happy with writing habits I'm working to develop, the kinds of sentences, the subject matter, my relation to poetry and inspiration. And by extension, my living habits, the solitude, sexual self-discipline, distance from the workaday world. Distasteful to receive The Hermit in tarot reading, or be called one by a friend. But at this speed you press on to the deadline making slight navigational adjustments but not questioning the destination. Some change is taking place up here alone in my tree house and I'm not unhappy. But I may be one of those who are not unhappy only because we haven't the faintest notion what happiness is like.

Don down coat, check five times to be sure have keys in pocket, day sunny and cold. In front of me black guy in wispy beard and ragged coat and hat turns corner, looks like Rudy but I'm not sure. Face not boyish enough but he walks just right, turns his feet out Chaplinesque every five or six steps. He looks at me but no recognition, another reason to doubt but then there's my own beard.

Follow him pretty close all the way to Central Square, predictably he goes to liquor store, follow him in and as he returns with a bottle of beer to cashier we recognize each other tentatively. I try to hide that I doubted his appearance because I know how sensitive Rudy can be that whites think all blacks look the same. Rudy points out I'm the one who's changed, not him. Although he claims to be happy he looks sad, but I know what that's like, solitude.

We stand in the liquor store talking. He is teaching a poetry class to four or five high schoolers, for free, but wants to extend curriculum to discussing "life questions" since kids aren't interested in poetry per se. Nice kids from tough backgrounds he says. He asks where I live now and also how my trumpet playing is going. Tell him about improvements classical playing makes and return question about his guitar playing. Not doing much but when he does his ear is surprisingly accurate. I suggest it's because he's loose, not pressuring himself to

practice, and that has a few advantages. Says he's not getting worse without practice.

Rudy's face is older than I remember and he's not the jovial type he's always been when I've seen him with Liz, talkative and hyperactive. His eyes are serious and discerning. He's on unemployment and I explain my get-up is to sell soul to temporary employment agency. He warns against trying to cheat unemployment, they'll track you down.

We're walking in the same direction. I ask about John Larkin but Rudy hasn't heard in months, he owes John a letter. Have I met Evan? No, not yet, what's he like. Mellow than John, says Rudy, with a faintest smile I don't know the meaning of. In their comparisons of the two Larkin brothers everyone but Ronnie assiduously avoids value judgments. Ronnie said Evan was boring and had the problems of a young person. Julie said he was gentler and more sensitive than John, not implying that she liked one better than the other. Liz the same, but a little partial to Evan I sense. I suspect I will like John better but decide not to decide yet.

Rudy and I start talking about writing of which he is doing little. I impress him with my present project. He understands well the benefits of such discipline and wishes he was disciplined enough, making me define more accurately just how undisciplined I really am, in

music and letters. I accompany him to buy a hero for his lunch, he seems able to take or leave my company.

He reveals what I already know, a second woman is to have a baby by him, and I feign surprise. Ask him his feelings. Unfortunate that he and the lady are not getting along, but will support the child as best he can. Wouldn't it be great if only people forever in love could have children together. Natural contraception, then the world would be paradise says Rudy, and all children would be happy beings. We discuss legal aspects of his wife and first child, Joshua, how he must pay welfare which in turn pays the mother. Rudy once taken to court for bypassing welfare and supporting the mother directly.

We're cold to the bones, so sign off. I give Rudy my address again and say I'd like it if he visited but I doubt he ever will. Maybe he finds me a bit of an oddball although he asks when's best to visit so he won't interrupt my practice or writing. Oh, come anytime, they're not so important, I reply.

Going up Mass Ave. to Ronnie's, hear my name called out, Rylin MacNeice behind me, dressed as two days ago, and to her great amusement so am I. Invite her for lunch at Ronnie's but she's already eaten. I show her my long list of employment agencies, she says You'll be very busy. She is stage manger for Arawana's dance concert. This afternoon she's scrounging costumes for a

City Dance Theater children's show. As I leave she calls out Come over to my house if you get tired at Ronnie's.

First I see Josh Morgenstern's head in the window, then Ronnie's, and when Ronnie lets me in Mary is there too telling them the story of her internship interview at Mass. General Hospital. Ronnie has had an interview there today too. Ronnie helps me to some burnt omelet with huge chunks of green pepper and mushroom and unmelted cheese. We all razz him about his cooking. They razz me about my tie and sweater but are also impressed that I can look so formal.

Josh feels a little left out of their doctor conversation and catches my eye to see if I want to talk. While Josh and I are excitedly discussing Casablanca v. Notorious Ronnie calls us a couple of frustrated graduate students. Entering I touched Mary's back in greeting to show I'm ready for conciliation after our long separation. She has been ready since Thanksgiving. But when Ronnie shows Josh to the door and we're left alone I'm awkward but she plunges into conversation.

Ronnie is going to another interview. I tease him Can't I come dressed like this, we can read poetry and improvise music for the doctors. He laughs but seriously suggests that we do a show before we leave Boston and this gives me my old stage fright. I don't think I could do a show, it would be self-conscious as my last few poetry readings because I just don't believe in that stuff



anymore. I'm simply not a performer, more an office clerk playing at writer. I can imagine myself before our Boston artiste crowd, Stan, Ernie, Rylin, Steve, etc., giving a reading that is boring or childish. No one would come unless Ronnie were involved. Without Ronnie nobody knows my name. But it's a provocative idea, there's enough material with Ronnie improvising to my poetry.

When Ronnie departs that leaves Mary and I drinking kahlua. She talks to me about internship interviews, her desire to live in New York, and how she is feeling her relationships are very important to her, wants to be able to use her friends for support and vice-versa, this is what she tried to say that Sunday she came over, after we'd slept together. I say, Maybe I speak this more lightly than you mean but you can always come to me for help if you need it. She says she realizes that now but didn't then, that back then she needed to hear it.

I am marveling at Mary's Irish blue eyes as earlier I marveled at Rylin's emerald green. Now that the heavy talk is over I start weaving some excitement about movies, Mary is a person who seems to respond to my "ecstatic ravings" as Ronnie calls them. I invite her to the movies, we go out discussing books, I tell her how Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native* moves along, narrative passed from character to character although speaker is always the novelist. She is disappointed with

George Eliot's ability to make things happen in her novels.

After the movie Mary invites me over to eat and I let myself be taken along. Her place is a mess, a sign that tonight is not the night for a repeat performance. Kick her underwear out of the way to pee. We talk about all kinds of things just like we used to, over tuna fish and tea. I enjoy making unusual associations comfortable that Mary is not judging.

Numerous phone calls during which I debate staying the night and always reach the same conclusion. Mary still talks in her whiny complaining voice except when she's sure of herself, and then her voice is deep, mellow and musical. Very attractive, wish it was like that more often. I'm no prize myself. Often I find myself getting bored and it's hard to believe, with all the yakking I do, that Mary doesn't find me boring too. After eight cups of tea I take my leave, taking care not to hug Mary for fear it will spark us. Once out the door my doubts are resolved and I'm immediately glad this was my decision.

Follow the river home. It's a good, cold walk, empty of any real thoughts except getting home to bed. Give a few thoughts to Liz Larkin, as I always do along the River of Dreams that I followed each night last spring past budding maple sprigs to her bed.

## The Talk of the Town

Snows early in the morning and although today I meet Cassandra it gets me thinking of Liz. Our love affair began in winter and then spring followed, the budding trees at night along the river and the mysterious atmosphere of her apartment. I know many women and only she is close to my heart. Why, when sexually I'm not uncontrollably attracted, and she has little regard for the intellect?

After dinner at her house last week, leaning over the piano where Evan sat playing some pop tune, youngest brother who in his innocence makes easy the complications between us, I could feel her sexual pull on me, like the moon on the tides. But I departed into the snow falling deep and heavy as a dream or Liz's inner life, into the night from which I take strength but that Liz rules like a queen her magician. Home, but purposefully leaving the touch of my hand on her shoulder. She didn't know how to ask and I couldn't give myself to her yet.

Soon the snowfall ends and the sun emerges from behind the last dark cloud. Rise and take a shower to prepare myself for Cassandra. Water lasts long and hot. Cassandra calls while I dry. Dripping, tell her to call back ten minutes. Later I wonder what it's about, to cancel our appointment for this afternoon? Ready myself for disappointment.

Have something to eat, throw the black dog a bit of cheese, brew tea and sit down to write. It is much longer than ten minutes when C. calls to say a rehearsal has been called for tonight but she's just up the block at T.T. the Bear's, can she visit now, or should we go out for lunch. I invite her over and return to writing. Just as pouring cup of tea buzzer startles me. Take phone up from floor knowing C. will trip over it.

Answering front door speak sweet nonsense to cat on staircase. Cassandra enters but doesn't fling herself around my neck as usual. I grant her her space and we ascend to apartment. Have received Christmas card from Ken and Susan, silly humor, U.N. peace dove taking a shit drawn in by Ken. Susan adds hopes to see me during the holiday [sic]. Card serves as conversation piece, I tell C. what Susan is like, a rare woman phone installer.

Cassandra asks for food but eats little, drinks tea. I pour myself wine that she tastes and as alcohol takes effect we grow looser. Go to bedroom, Cassandra sits on window sill, skinnier than in past. Says she likes it that way. Tells funny story of recent school performance her company did.

When I lie on bed she eventually works her way over and lies down too not yet touching. Then she plays with my beard, has ambivalent feelings about it, misses my chin, picks out blonde hairs from black brown and

red. It is pubic hair on my face, raw nature, holds the animal's odor. She jokes now she will hear my unfeminist views of men and women. She takes her pill, having forgotten earlier this morning. Was up at six o'clock walking in the morning snowfall. It is her day then.

We kiss in kitchen chair, I give myself up to her feeling my chest and when I open my eyes she is looking at my face. Old theory that your partner must be able to give as well as receive pleasure to love you. I haven't a lot of passion but I do want to make love and I carry her into bedroom, clumsy but funny gesture. Love making with Cassandra is always good because she is open to anything and there are no emotional constraints either. She comes wetter and fuller than anyone I know, like a sac of water burst in my hand.

We enjoy removing each other's clothing piece by piece. There is a trust here that Liz Larkin and I were never able to develop. Liz never had an orgasm making love. Whatever that signifies. And it always angered me that she would rarely kiss mouth to mouth as if those were saved for some past or future lover. To this day, if one little thing blocks me from getting together with her again, it is this reserve.

First time I felt Cassandra's queynt after Liz Larkin's it felt so odd, even ugly, everybody's genitals are quite different from anyone else's. Now I like it's

smallness and I know my way around it, the sensitive places. Cassandra prevents me from putting my mouth to it, wonder why but do not ask, simply accept. The mind is a part of sex.

The ritual of removing our clothes is my favorite. We do not fuck from behind as I fantasized because once I'm in it takes far too much will power to change positions. Afterwards feel slightly guilty that it is Liz, not Cassandra, I love romantically, but knowing Cassandra's live and let live attitude this should not matter much. It is late, I have missed unemployment and C. is late for rehearsal so after fooling in the bathroom, Cassandra wipes us both with warm water, we hurry dress and out. She dislikes rushing after making love and I agree.

Late afternoon near sunset, cold but quiet. C.'s hand in my pocket. Catches eye of handsome guy chaining bike in front of Hundred Flowers. Walk recalls events of day to her. Loves making love to me. Kiss goodnight at subway, says she'll call me about having dinner together next week, but I can call her too. She wants to break the tit for tat regime I've created, wants a looser, more trusting arrangement. But I want to leave comfortable distance between us since I don't want an intense relationship with her.

Hurry up Mass Ave. to movie where I was supposed to meet Ruby an hour ago. Fairly certain that she'll be there. Ruby spots me as I enter, quick greeting,

not too touchy, and sink into warm opium of movie. What a drug. Excellent flick called Talk of the Town with Cary Grant, Ronald Colman and Jean Arthur. Will sassy Jean Arthur end up with working class hero Cary Grant or supreme court judge Ronald Colman?

Afterwards we go out to restaurant, Ruby says she'd like to get drunk. Problem is pressure from her parents to live more secure life style, go to law school. Ruby feels strong inside but lack of support depresses her. One must follow one's own path in life, almost however wrong.

Ruby is depressed over Ronnie breakup although she won't admit it. We drink beer, eat falafel, near fireplace in Orson Welles restaurant. Rationalizing that she never really loved him at all, just working to make an ideal work, the steady relationship. We talk about love and relationships until the beer runs out. Leaving, I smile to the rosy-cheeked waitress in return for her smile.

## Unemployment

First thing this frigid morning, windows iced over, is go to unemployment because yesterday I preferred to make love to Cassandra than pick up my check, naturally.

At the Cary Grant flick with Ruby I found myself talking to her as the movie went along, anticipating scenes and judging conceits and acting. Exclamating! as in the working class theaters I've been to like the Edison on 103<sup>rd</sup> and Broadway in New York or the theater in Ottawa I saw those Korean karate flicks. People there talk, constantly and loudly during the film, there is no taboo against it like in art theaters. Both viewings are fine, depends on the kind of film, but the sharing is wonderful when the audience is uninhibited.

These last few weeks films have been a large part of my life. At first it was glorious going alone, getting good and lost, immersed in the celluloid fantasy. Alone in the dark, movies are like dreams. Lately, as my life reopened, Mary O'Hara, then Lee Dickinson and then Ruby accompanied me. It is a different experience, less freedom to immerse yourself. Indeed with Lee, after *An Affair to Remember* I felt reluctant to cry although Lee was wiping tears from behind her glasses and I was misty. Not that I would have cried anyway. I remember after *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* Ronnie cried



and turned to me to ask Did you cry? as though if I hadn't I was deficient. I said Four tears, I'm saving them forever.

Unemployment office more crowded than I've ever seen it. Workers and claimants, seated standing and walking, shuffle and rustle of papers. The late line is long so settle in and enjoy the personalities. Bureaucrats here do everything they legally can to avoid hassling you so I probably won't need to lie that I thought yesterday was Monday. Have picked out blonde lady with long hair in strict bun to sign with. She has angry blue eyes that seem to soften for other women, fleshy alcoholic face, a bitter woman with a good heart.

One of my favorites, an ugly homosexual with curly hair and a permanent scowl like he smells something offensive comes over to help with our long line of late claimants. I like him because although he looks caustic, he is actually quite kind and efficient. A woman friend of his turns up in line and they stop to talk but a middle aged lady in kerchief hauls off and tells them to talk after work hours, some of us have other things to do today. I would've told her to stick her things to do today up her ass, but my guy blushes deeply, ends his conversation and mutters about how he doesn't have to help out here. But he serves the lady without any hard feelings.

All the bureaucrats here are respectful and serviceable as this fellow and that's why I wouldn't mind working here myself. The two regulars at this counter are black men, one with afro and one with closely shaved head and a marine attitude toward work. He applies himself seriously, doesn't flirt with the women, prefers men but only a certain type, no longhairs or flashy dressers. The other guy serves up my card and I turn to the line in front of the blonde lady.

With her at this desk is an older balding hook-nosed guy who talks tough but then helps make sure you get your dough without mistakes, and a young Latino guy who speaks good English and calls you by your first name after he glances at your card. The blonde lady helps out an old woman in front of me and the old woman says Merry Christmas when she leaves. As I'm signing my card, the blonde lady is ignoring the fact that I'm a day late. To be nice as the old lady I say Have a good day. The blonde lady looks at me straight in the eye and mutters something. Her look unnerves me. Maybe she doesn't believe I'm sincere, or she thinks I'm mocking, or thanking her for overlooking my lateness.

Next stop is the check typists and I choose the longer line because it's Mary's, the woman who looks like my mother's mother might have looked in her thirties. While waiting I survey the adjusters and claims takers, each a different personality but never have I seen

such a tensionless office. Each person does his or her job without ego.

Observe my favorite threesome, the scowling homosexual, a short awkward and simple freckled guy with glasses and a childish handwriting, and a pretty woman, intent listener, who often breaks into a smile. These three are like minor gods to me, and their little kindnesses make life easier for a lot of people. When I reach Mary she is frustrated today by the work load and grimaces whenever her machine won't work fast enough. She is the kind of person who lets the pressures of people waiting in line affect her. She types out my check and sends me off without recognizing I am different from anyone else, and without responding to my thank you.

Many other characters. Two fat women, one black one white, the black lady has the most enormous breasts I've ever seen, how'd they ever get so big? and the white lady about as fat a lady as I've ever seen always dressed in the same black pants and sweater, maybe they're all that fit her. She has an attractive face and intelligent eyes. The white-haired adjuster, paternal type, with Irish red nose, severe even annoyed manner but as good hearted as any here.

And finally, the very bored existential guy with thin and delicate fingers and wrists, always wears jacket and tie, who hands out the cards, who has hardly the

energy to look at anybody or move his mouth. He always acts like you are a personal gigantic aggravation to him while he slowly lifts your ounce card out of the box. At first I was afraid of him, now I find him humorous and pathetic, wonder what he goes home to at the end of a day. Leaving the office I pass the switchboard operator who is passing the time reading a story to a baby girl on her lap.

Scoot through cold around corner, up street, across Mass Ave. traffic, into warm empty bank. Always seem to get teller Camille Anastasi and relations get frostier every time. She seems so happy with other customers, I must be dower and business-like with her to be making her so nervous and unfriendly. Today she doesn't even look at my face, seems scared and angry at once. No smile when I wish her a merry Christmas. Now I wish I'd been friendlier and more open in the past. Afraid she doesn't like me anymore, if ever she did. And strange that I like her best in the bank. Maybe she is secretly in love with me (even though I don't remove my hat indoors).

Have ants in me pants so take an unnecessary trip to the grocery store. Every dog on Pearl St. barks at me except the sweet Irish setter, and they all make me jump. One big doberman near Putnam it's lucky was on a chain or it would have put its teeth in my neck. The little nasty dog all the way down the street who even

barks on a good day waits quietly until I see him, then waits some more until I say Good morning and then lets loose. I don't like you much either.

All our mail is bills, telephone, gas and electric, addressed to Bob. Although they are as much my problem as his, I leave them unopened near the telephone after peaking through the slot to see the gas bill. Twenty seven dollars, not bad it seems to me but later when Bob leaves his figurings on the table he puts an exclamation mark next to gas. From most people I would take it as a comment on how much gas I use, being the one home all day, and admittedly I spare nothing to stay warm. But from Bob it seems like a neutral comment, no reflection on me, almost a political statement about the price of gas. His judgements are confined to ideas and morals and he conscientiously avoids attacking individuals. Any little annoyances we feel about each other we both have sense enough to control.

I have practiced through sunset watching the colors behind and among the buildings of Boston's skyline and reflected on the Hancock Tower descending into darkness. Midnight creep is what Ronnie calls a lonely night until you reach midnight and go to bed, taken from Dylan's Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest. First listen to radio, nice classical guitar and then a Christmas detective story, three department store rats

attempt to solve the case of the kidnapped store Santa. One rat's voice is a nasal Long island accent, the story is only so-so except for a scene depicting the trials of a little rat tailing a big man's shoes through a crowded department store, high heels and black Oxfords.

I try filling out a summer forest service application trying to make myself look good on paper. List jobs I've held over past ten years, about fifteen, having little or nothing to do with forestry. My college degree in literature won't get me far in the woods either. Doesn't look good but it looks funny and Bob who's cooking dinner gets a laugh from it. All that experience on the flower market isn't going to interest the forest ranger much. And I can't remember the names of over half my supervisors and sometimes not even the name of the company I worked for.

Still only nine o'clock. Nothing interests me, nothing has anything to do with what's on my mind. Try John Keats but wherever he's coming from I'm not going, try Chuang-tzu but that do-nothing stuff sounds adolescent once you've mastered it. I pull out some of my own old poems and read those written in the two years before coming to Boston. I'm amazed at how entertaining, witty and sometimes powerful they are.

My mistake when I tried to make that book was in pruning most of them out. Take a few really bad ones out and it is a book almost anyone would enjoy reading

in occasionally. Feel bad about not writing poetry anymore when I had attained a certain craftsmanship over the years. The poems provide hours of entertainment for me tonight. Maybe I will make Janie Huzzie Bows after all, there is enough material if I don't insist on "great" poems only.

## After the Snowstorm

It's the bright day after a snowstorm. I procrastinate for a couple of hours reading in Janie Huzzie Bows. I'm afraid the poems are, as Rylin said, young poems but I find that if you accept their youth there is much to admire and enjoy. Brew a pot of tea and at last get down to work but it is laborious, I have again begun to take it too seriously, laboring over the sentences, rereading and correcting words, searching for the best words instead of finding them quickly, trying to catch the spirit of the snowstorm and losing it because I try too hard.

After each completed scene I procrastinate before entering the next and even become apprehensive about how to approach it. I excuse myself for rising and boiling more water or standing in the window or eating by saying I need to recall the events before writing them. The phone rings and it is Liz to ask if I'd like to go to lunch this afternoon with her and Evan. We arrange that they'll come over soon. Go back to writing and as I'm pouring more tea, the loud buzzer startles me.

As I descend stairs to answer door catch Evan's face in the window but can get no reaction from that enigmatic personality. Open door to them and they enter, no physical greeting, Liz always looks much shorter than I have her in my mind. They want to come



upstairs but they thought because I'm wearing my wool hat I'm ready to go out now. Without my jacket? Well, you never know with a woodsman like you, Liz jokes. They offer to remove wet snowy boots but I repress my inclination to say yes and we sit at kitchen table, look around apartment, stand at window and I tell backyard stories. Brew tea for everyone.

Evan is central as a weak line in a hexagram crucial for holding together two strong lines. He is utterly unaware of his role, he's like the baby of the family, just doing and saying unself-consciously not knowing how much the older members depend on his spontaneity when they are burdened with their pasts. Liz is up for spending time together, doing today what we never did last night, so we decide to see a movie and Evan chooses *Thief of Paris* from a meager list.

I take them through the neighborhood to the Orson Welles, bantering and telling stories all the way, really enjoying each other. Evan and I set a brisk pace that Liz struggles to keep up with. I often test Liz, first by telling her the definition of a man and a woman from *La Bonne Annee*. She says So, then a woman is someone who goes all the way and cries sometimes too. There's a pale afternoon moon in the sky, I make snowballs. Evan and Liz tell me about *Mary Hartman*, Liz knows I hate the show. Sometimes we walk apart, sometimes together, talking or in silence, as is the Larkin habit.

We roll along like kittens to the theater but the movie isn't there anymore, Evan misread. So we decide to see *Cousin, Cousine*. On our way I show them flying (using only the muscles of your legs to take short muscular steps low to the ground, bend the knees a little, calf muscles most important, and let your body sway musically right and left, extend your arms if you like). Evan and I talk poetry, rating the relative importance of poets is important to him. Liz takes no part in words about words.

The movie doesn't start for a while so we eat at a soup restaurant in the same building. During dinner I find three promising pennies and throw an I Ching hexagram but I can't identify it. Liz mentions that Mitchell Ashbery knows all the hexagrams by sight in a flash and wouldn't throw one until he'd first studied the whole book. Mitchell's like that she says displaying admiration for him and the knowledge from intimacy. At another point Rudy's little boy passes with his mother and Liz tells an anecdote concerning him starting with *When I was seeing Rudy*. Both allusions to former lovers make me flare up dangerously inside because now I too am a relic lover. I await her next lover to whom she will describe me in the past tense.

After dinner we browse in a bookstore waiting for the movie. Liz plays by picking books for people she knows, one called *Life on the River* for me. There is no

money left to buy Jude the Obscure. We get into the theater and no one tears our stubs so Evan goes out to hawk our tickets, leaving Liz and I alone to choose seats.

Awkwardly we agree on a row and Liz walks in three seats. Without premeditation I flop down a seat away from her, so I will be near the aisle. It's only afterwards I realize this is construed as an affront by Liz, that I prefer not to sit next to her, and I sense she's a little hurt. I hold my seat though, mainly because I prefer it, but also because this distance will relieve tension. We await Evan in almost complete silence. I occupy myself by looking at the other patrons, Liz leans her head back, sighs, and closes her eyes. When Evan returns his face registers surprise at our seating arrangement but he says nothing and takes his place between us.

I enjoy the romantic comedy *Cousin, Cousine* a second time, and listen for the reactions of Liz and Evan. Generally Liz's laughter syncopates Evan's and mine. We are not laughing at the same things. She takes special pleasure in the scene where the lovers tattoo each other's bodies and then can't get the ink off in the bath. I sense Liz's mind ranging over many love affairs for parallel experiences. Afterwards both Evan and Liz say they enjoyed the movie.

I am pleasantly surprised that Liz wants to continue our day together and says What should we do next? Go for a drink? But we have no money left so we

agree to stop at Liz's for a check and go to the supermarket to cash it. Then buy hot chocolate and brandy to drink at her house.

We walk along Mass Ave., Liz and I in an abandon unusual for either of us, recalling some past memories that have to do with places we pass. I throw a snowball softly at Liz's ass, a clear signal that she recognizes. I am ready for even a sexual reconciliation. Now you have to throw one at Evan she says to me. Then I clown by throwing snowballs high into the air and catching them, we are insulated from the rest of the drab world. We recall the time an egg flew from the sky and almost hit John and how Liz insisted she felt it coming before it arrived. Curiously Liz has had this dream: she and Rylin are talking on the telephone, and Liz is holding a balled sock in her hand. She says Here, catch, to Rylin and throws it across the room. It disappears into the air and a moment later Rylin says Ah, I've got it, it's beautiful!

At the house Evan plays piano, Liz writes a check, and I pet Dina who is in heat. There is some indecision about going to the store, too cold for Liz, getting late for me, but Evan resolves all by saying We didn't enter the house right the first time so we have to do it again. On the way I walk apart from them, and then test Liz again with the scene from *La Bonne Annee* when the woman throws her temporary lover out when her real love returns from jail by saying A man can love someone and

still live his life but a woman can't. Liz says she understands very well, asks if I do. I say Perfectly, and I disagree. She laughs.

Back home we sit around lazily drinking the hot chocolate and bad wine and playing with the cats. Not much to say, and as we say less the cats become more important. Liz decides to work out a while and goes to the living room to exercise, playing records. Evan and I strike up a conversation about poetry and music, our personal styles compared to the canonized forms, and after some hesitation I tell him about my book of poems and that I'd like him to read it sometime. He agrees to it enthusiastically. The energy of our talk reaches Liz in the living room and she calls out Why don't you talk in here? So we go in while I'm listing the influences on my poetry to Evan, which interests me more than it interests Evan or Liz. Evan and Liz argue about Little Walter's harmonica playing which I must admit is great, no bullshit like most harp players.

Evan is changing a record and Liz is returning from the kitchen when I decide to go, above all other mistakes not wanting to overstay my visit either for them or me. I go to the door saying goodbye but touching no one. As I go out I see Liz's face, she yearning for me, I for her, and both so sad at the awkward pass our love has come to. Tonight, as I reclined on the couch and Liz exercised, I conceived a strong desire to kiss her

lips, to see what they are like, to feel her response, partly because I recall how rarely she liked to kiss, making some excuse but I am fairly sure she reserved them exclusively for Marcus. But Evan is there and Liz's face is a blur twelve feet away in the living room. We wave goodbye.

I stand on the landing almost five minutes, unable to take the step outdoors, something important incomplete. I call Liz, Liz! and she comes running to the door, thinking something is wrong. I lean in and put my lips against her lips, feeling them receive the sensuality in their subtle way. She's first surprised and then glad for the touch. I then go out, tripping against the door and laughing at myself. I hear her say Thanks for doing that and realize for the first time that although she broke off our relationship as it was, she desires our reconciliation as much as I do. The snow is deep in the playground I played basketball in last spring. How is it that kissing Liz Larkin once means more to me than an entire night of love with any other woman?

Shortly after I get home, while I'm reading in Janie Huzzie Bows absently, Bob White returns red-eyed and drunk. He announces his state apologetically, reminding me of the days long ago my first year at college I was the floor junkie, every night staggering down the hall to my room through the gauntlet of judgmental laughing eyes. I've been wondering when we'd have this roommate

talk about Bob's unhappy dissipated year, and perhaps I talk too much to be encouraging or of any help. He lights up though when I say that in retrospect some of my most difficult periods have been times of the most growth and that I'm almost wary of the smooth times.

## Children of Paradise

Bright day, walk on sunny side to the liquor store for beer, my skinny lady is sweet to me and calls me dear the way I like it. Walk home speedily, a little cold.

Because of yesterday with Liz and Evan, I am behind a day in my work. First I eat tuna fish sandwiches and drink beer, breakfast time for anyone but me. Settle down to write. Everyday the writing gets more belabored and today it takes all day, with long breaks for procrastination. While eating read the hexagram I threw with Liz and Evan. It is no surprise, Influence or Wooing. It furthers one to take a maiden in marriage. The superior man makes the people feel welcome by being open and receptive to their advances. No changing lines. The hexagram suggests to me that Liz and I may be in harmony.

During writing my mother calls to wish a happy new year. Says thought I was ill because I didn't call at Christmas. Slightest reprimand. I receive her call joyfully and tell her things she likes to hear, that I've been applying for jobs. She suggests Olsten's and Manpower, Aunt Ro doing well through them. She puts my father on. He is cool and businesslike I think a little miffed I didn't call at Christmas after he was so kind at Thanksgiving but I make light conversation and we hang up.



The sun passes over the house, Bob White is in and out, day off from work, and pretty soon it's nearly dusk. I'm feeling rushed because I want to make Cassandra's play for the Boston New Years Eve celebration. Still want to practice, wolf down a sandwich and gulp a beer while I play notes faster than Charlie Parker. Maybe that's why he played so fast, because he was always in a hurry. Bob asks what I'm doing tonight, depressed because he's not doing anything, but I don't invite him along and besides I'm not really looking forward to this city wide communal celebration much as I thought. I rush out of the house to catch a train and at last find the building where the play is in progress.

The room is full of adults and a thin semi-circle of children who are the play's participants. Cassandra's company of actors on stage, and very fine actors too, funny and able to make the cityscape that is the play's mise en scene believable. I stand just inside the doorway but as people press in behind me I move along a piano until I'm far into the room. Catch sight of Cassandra in lavender tights. At first she acts self-consciously but as she gets into it she is soon as good as the other actors, carried along by the strength of the play, whoever wrote it is very talented. When she is seated alongside the children she has instructed in their parts her true light shines forth. She is gentle with them and sensitive to an amazing degree to their fears and desires. As the play

progresses and she gathers color and confidence from the other performances, she is quite pretty at times, her awkward body and small face and head. The play is almost a greater joy to we adults than to the kids. As a whole, it is a little too sophisticated for kids, but in its parts perfect to participate in. A juggler does a tremendous feat, juggling two balls and an apple while eating the apple.

After the play I hang around waiting for Cassandra to see me. I get an up close look at each actor and actress and all but the middle aged witch seem vaguely aware of my presence. I stand leaning in a corner on the piano watching them one by one emerge from the dressing room, now in their everyday personas, so different from the stage identities. They have in common their identities as actors and there is a loose comradery among them although they will clearly separate to enjoy New Years Eve in their own fashions.

At last Cassandra emerges from the dressing room. She kisses me in her impetuous way but with a willfulness that says she will not allow circumstances to prevent her from showing her love for me. For, you see, her lover Ramona follows right behind her. Cassandra asks You remember Ramona? and Mona and I shake hands, a gesture I initiate out of a formal friendliness that serves the purpose perfectly, signaling that there is no hostility, a live and let live approach. However my

peripheral vision tells me Mona is dressed quite handsomely, a lovely light emanates from her and she fears my big maleness might steal Cassandra from her tonight.

Cassandra is pleased that I tell her I found the play charming and I noticed how gentle she was with the children. This last comment causes her to lower her eyes in the shy pleasure of receiving a compliment. Between Cassandra and I there is some testing as to whether we are to adventure together tonight or not, and I leave plenty of space for her to go her own way. She mentions Stan Stafford playing to some poetry but she has some things to do here first. The sequence of events is perfect and I say I'll meet her there if she gets there, if not that's fine too, and I begin to leave. As an afterthought Cassandra runs up the stairs after me and roughly and impetuously pushes her lips against mine and wishes me a happy new year.

The cold night air is freedom although as I cross the Public Gardens I see thousands have swarmed into the downtown area. No one can get into a performance unless they arrive a half hour beforehand but I am in plenty of time for Stan's in a church on Boyleston. A janitor trying to shift a mat has trouble finding a moment when someone is not standing on it.

I enter the performance room, a small room, and there are all the dancers of City Dance Theater, it turns

out that they are the “Words That Dance”. The moment Rylin sees me she comes to me and gives herself to my arms, so lovingly and completely I am surprised, almost like a lover, and she kisses my cheek, something she never does. I’ve always found her especially attractive in heavy stage makeup. During the long embrace I move one hand to between her shoulder blades as a sign that I recognize something is different about her approach to me, it hearkens back to the night she off-handedly asked me to sleep with her. I am in my element here, children of paradise. Our embrace is long and consuming and if Rylin’s love did not feel so spontaneous and encompassing I’d almost think she was doing this to make someone who might be watching jealous.

I initiate our disengagement saying I had no idea you’d all be here! Rylin thinks that’s very funny, as if it should have been obvious. Her face is seductive in eye liner and mascara for the performance. I ask her if it’s a good show and she says Yes, very good, it went well for the first performance. Tom catches my eye and we move to hug, there being no hard feelings about our argument over a month ago. Never have I been welcomed by City Dance Theater in this fashion, them coming to me and taking me in as if I were a dear companion long missed. I want to tell Rylin I have at last finished my book of poems but she is off again preparing. Raymond and Carol sit nearby and I want to greet them but there is no

sign from them, they both keep their eyes fixedly off me, especially Carol, we are so shy of each other when really we like each other very much.

Nearby Stan is talking to a woman, I drink in a good long look at him until he looks and we greet each other, again shyly, my old fear of him stemming from his greatness as a musician. I remember Stan's reputation for trying to sleep with every woman he can lay his hands on and I imagine he's making arrangements with the woman who's pretty in a general way. When they've finished Stan goes by on his way to the stage and takes special pains to catch my eye. Our eyes catch an uncomfortably long time, a very long time indeed, and he seems to be trying to communicate something to me, or question me on a topic he has on his mind but I don't know what it is.

He takes his place, bearded, big and black in red knit cap on the platform near the stage. Michael Hardy, Rylin's husband and the lighting man for this show, wears the same red cap. Michael's work takes him close to Rylin and he kisses her. She is his wife. I wonder if he observed Rylin and me earlier and what his reaction was, jealousy or comprehension that we are just good friends, or has he perfected his detachment from Rylin's extracurricular love life.

It then occurs to me that Stan observed us too, perhaps he's surprised to imagine me as a lady's man

although he would be mistaken if he did. But the incriminating evidence is there, living with Liz Larkin four days after I met her, and his knowledge through Ronnie of the amazing circumstances attending, going to his Stone Soup concert with Cassandra who was very obviously devoted to me, and now Rylin's greeting, even my close friendship with Ronnie who he has gotten to know better recently and in whom, if Ronnie's account is accurate, he may see the same strong sexual drives as his own. That I could be the best friend of Ronnie puts me in the same sexual league but he would be far wrong. It is during my ruminations on eye contact with Stan that the woman he was talking with sits down next to me. Stan eyes us often from his platform perch and she soon takes a seat in another part of the audience.

The little room is filled way past capacity when I hear my name called. It's Kathy Dugan, one of Clare Macatti's faithful dancers and a friend of Liz's, who climbs across a table to sit by me. We kiss and she asks what I've been doing in her heavy Boston working class accent. She has been working on some dances, good to see she's doing more than taking classes. She is uniquely well dressed as always.

The lights go down on a packed house for a series of dances done to a poem recited by the dancers in the abstract computer voice reserved for poetry these days. Stan plays modern music to go with it. The performance

is well choreographed but I've seen this kind of thing before, like a computer was an important member of the company and squared off all the passions. It is cold. But Rylin dances the best I've seen her in a year though the form does not enhance Carol's style.

There are people packed into this room in places from which they couldn't possibly see the performance. It's short though and as we all clear out I feel the same crisis with Kathy as with Cassandra, how to separate without hurting or being hurt. I hang around to see what Rylin and Tom are up to but they're all busy undressing, dressing and packing. Kathy immediately gravitates toward Clare so I take the opportunity to make a break.

Good to be outside away from complexities of relationships in artistic Boston. Along the Gardens groups of teenagers smoking weed and drinking beer, groups and couples rushing between events. Beams of light intersect high in the air, a half moon and stars. Horns of traffic beep furiously, loud yells of rowdy adolescents. I decide to walk through the Gardens to Charles St. to see poetry reading, then get subway home early, out of this confusing gathering of people. Walking along Charles St. toward the meeting house where the reading ought to be I pass a café downstairs from the sidewalk, and there, sitting alone drinking coffee, smoking cigarette and reading paper I think I spy Evan Larkin. But his face is so still in the paper that I can't tell

for sure, so I enter the café. It is him and I seem to have reached my destination in people tonight.

When he sees me there is no look of surprise or particular joy, coincidence registers no emotion on his face, takes it matter of factly, this kind of meeting is the kind a Larkin takes as a matter of course. I invite myself to sit at his table and our conversation is fitful at first. I ask keenly Where's Liz, but she went to bed soon after work. Beyond her being tired, she knows herself well in regard to these events but Evan disagrees, that she knows herself well that is.

I question him about his life with Liz which he finds difficult, she requires so much energy, her sense of impending doom absorbs it, and her life style is forming in Evan bad habits he says. Inertia, unable to work. I don't tell him so but living with her had the same effect on me. Our conversation turns to Evan's life in London. An interesting account of a life squatting in abandoned buildings, getting food handouts in restaurant kitchens, playing piano for dance classes for pocket money. Finally a clergyman took him under his wing, fed him, let him live at his house, and this I recognize as the homosexual relationship Liz told me about. I wonder why he continues to live without money. He has an aversion to work and he claims Liz doesn't like to see her little brother have to work although it severely crimps his independence.



I persuade him to come look through Boston Common for the Aeolian harp, and as the restaurant has gotten quite crowded, we begin our search. Nobody has seen it, few have even heard of it, the instrument played by the wind. In turn people ask us if we've seen an open liquor store. We search for an information booth through the crowds, glaring lights, bands and boozers on the Common and they don't know where the Aeolian harp is either.

During our walk Evan mentions that Stan Stafford has been courting Liz. Liz is always asking how he likes this man or that man, including myself, that touches on her life. I realize that was the look in Stan's eye earlier this evening, he was looking into the eyes of the man who lived with, and perhaps still loves, the woman he's courting with whatever sincerity. We are rivals. It was somewhat to my advantage that I was innocent of the same thoughts at the time. I cover up how upset I am at Stan's persistence by joking to Evan, Well, you know what the I Ching says, the difference between courtship and seduction is perseverance.

We return through the bacchanalian Common to give the Aeolian harp a second search. We fail to find the mythic harp so we start back along Charles St. to catch the subway home. On our way Evan talks more about the state of his life and inability to work, lack of money, and even one so flighty as me grows alarmed.

He buys a quarter pint of scotch in a bustling liquor store from the giggling counter girls and asks for a toast. To another Larkin, I toast wryly, and for the first time he looks slightly askance at something I've said. We are about to climb to the subway when, almost at once, we think how fine it might be to walk home. So we buy more scotch and head down to the river.

I have doubts about starting this adventure but once into it, warmed by the scotch and plodding meditatively through wind and snow, I'm glad we came. We stop every so often to sip the alcohol and talk. I stop often to scan the winter beauty of the land and river and Evan stops with me. A single other adventurer wanders far ahead of us and we soon lose sight of him. We walk in silence feeling for where the snow is packed hardest to support our weight, usually in the tracks of skis.

I lead most of the way. I joke about the times I dragged Liz and John down to the river with me in the middle of the night but Evan says this is the kind of thing he would do on his own. We come to the B.U. bridge and I lead him down to the river, running ahead in deep snow. Evan falls behind and lies down in the snow while I wait on the iced-over river. He says how peaceful it is.

The last leg of our journey begins. We talk about Ronnie who Evan said he immediately liked and then disliked. We go through the grove of sycamores and cross into the neighborhood. I say one of my attractions

to Liz was the way she caused me to look at things I wouldn't normally see. This when Evan points out the rows of streetlights. He says Yeah, she's my big sister but she's cool.

We reach the crossroads where we separate and Evan invites me over saying there's more drink there. I decline though, not wanting to presume upon Liz. We part at exactly midnight, as fireworks shoot up from Boston high over the roofs. Evan says Happy new year and he'll be over to borrow my book of poems. I say Happy new year to you too. What I say next I've thought about for a long time, the effect, saying it through another person, but I say And if Liz wakes up, say happy new year to her and tell her I love her very much.

## Coda

Wake up late in morning to heavily frosted windows, freezing overcast day but not much chance of snow, layer of clouds not thick enough. Life is complicated as a city life is apt to be.

Last Saturday returning Liz's call I felt full of love for her. Full of love, yes, but with little to say. How can this be? From me to her, and from her to me, a wellspring of good wishes for the other's health and happiness. Sincere. But the conversation itself was a strain. I made an effort to instill it with life, camouflage the gray silences that aren't necessarily bad in themselves, I remember how Liz likes to sit together silently in a café and there is no awkwardness for her, but in this case the gray silences were the spaces of things we dared not or could not share with each other. We cannot be completely open to each other, her about her lovers, me about my dreams of travel and work out west, and my lovers. Yet, even in the mutual silence, knowing each other so well that we know what the other can and cannot hear, there is a gentlest love. There is a smile and a sadness in our eyes, in my eyes at least, for who can be certain of another's feelings?

I know how good Liz felt about that phone conversation by the warmth of her voice, how it can overflow and hum with fellow feeling. And by the way

she called me Bobby at the end. Her three names for me: Bob, when we are serious, having an argument, just business, speaking to others; Bobby in grooming and crooning and gentleness; and Ronnow in sexuality and play. And a fourth name, like a cat has a name that only the other cats know, the secret name that connects the Fool's existence with the World, one the Larkin clan bestowed: Obo.

It is Bobby she uses in hanging up but can she, is it possible in such a discerning person, be unaware that really we have nothing to say? So it is I am content to seed time with perfect ending after perfect ending, the perfection can spawn no new life, I end the old year perfectly with the emotional message sent through her youngest brother at midnight, through deep snow. My problem now is that I cannot go on, not feigning good feeling, but showing only good feeling and hiding the bad.

I am dreaming of my life out west, working outdoors, big, clean, unentangled in the web of city relationships, new men and women, new mystery, new land, new adventure. Life goes on in cattle country, big sky, a sunset every day of the year, many a lonely waitress, why strive when I can enjoy life just slouching along in the low life. But just as I'm making plans for this I seem to again be awash in friendships. Too much

thought about this woman, in five years, less perhaps, I'll look back benignly on a difficult time gone by.

Stand near stove heat, last notebook of writing open before me, considering where to go from here. I have no ideas for stories or a novel, and I haven't written in a week. It is beginning to vaguely occur to me how my past and future writing will merge in the present when the buzzer downstairs buzzes.

Ronnie's tan bulky jacket in door window, pleasant surprise, come upstairs. His impulse to go into my bedroom but I seat us at kitchen table. Open bottle of wine, drink and eat nuts and raisins. Ronnie off from work early today, no patients to examine, feeling his freedom like a kid out of school. My notebook open that I examine for material that needs censoring. He says the entry I read to him Saturday night was rich and flowed. The compliment surprises me, I had thought he was a little bored.

The first part, ruminations about Liz Larkin and me and other Boston couples, Ruby and himself included, fascinated him, but the details about day to day chores did not. Thinking that I want to hear only praise, he spreads his praise like jam across the whole work. His distinctions come clear only in his face, perhaps a little discomfort struggling to find the right way to put things so as not to offend, the method of doctoring he has chosen, when I lightly cross examine him about specific

parts. My mind contrasts him to Larry whose concentration and commitment to my work are so intense, and whose discernment as a writer is such a pleasure.

Ronnie mentions that some lines about him and Ruby gave him much restless thought afterwards, lines in which I reported Ruby saying she never loved Ronnie at all, and my comment that she's trying to convince herself of something. It seems a testament to Ronnie's love for her that he feels such an unselfish unhappiness to hear such things, to hear of her confusion when he never denied that there was something to their affair and could still be a friendship.

In a misguided line I suggested that maybe Ronnie never loved Ruby and they were only experimenting with an ideal. Ronnie recalls he felt it was mean to say. Mean, I think, as in average, mediocre, a lower level of being. Mean, he means, biting, snappish, premeditated to hurt, unkind. I explain it away with the zen of writing, that sometimes, writing so fast, you miss the truth, your clarity gets clouded and you are derailed. Ronnie accepts the lie unquestioningly but unbelievably. Looks down into the notebook and continues elsewhere.

The truth is that I have been hurt by Ronnie in the past and the old pain sometimes guides the pen. I often write harshly about Ronnie, his ways with women, in a pinch he will inflict a little pain on his friends to achieve

his purpose. Although friends, I feel in competition for women, who can gobble them up faster and most completely and it takes much energy for me not to get turned and turned about in his rough, go gettum ways. On the one hand he has been a good friend, his loyalty in the material and earthly ways of friendship, but he is dangerous and unruly.

I read to him from the notebook about Liz Larkin, something I am wary to do because I know how reckless he can be, like a fit of epilepsy, with his knowledge of my feelings. Yet, it's a two edged sword, if he's aware of my sensitivity perhaps he will bear it in mind when he acts. The section in question is a day I called Liz, she a little seductively invited me over but I didn't go sensing the timing was off. Before the story ends Ronnie is blaming me for not throwing caution to the winds, going to her, loving her, ecstasy! The power of such a philosophy is almost overwhelming. But the story ends when Liz calls to say she's very tired and we accept each other, no misunderstanding. Ronnie says he sees my wisdom. I see my wisdom is a dubious thing, dainty, and based on delicate premises.

We continue drinking wine and talking about how our separate situations in life have suited our needs perfectly. He has plenty of money without which he could never have devoted himself to cello, work would have crushed him. But work was my ticket into life, to



see what the world was like, and money would have smothered my only means for sating my curiosity. I would have been lazy, undisturbed and spoiled.

He wants us to have lunch so, almost daring myself, I suggest we invite Liz and Evan to eat with us. Ronnie looks at me doubtfully, a little surprised that this spontaneity is in my and Liz's repertoire. Evan answers and in the background Liz's response to my offer is an unhesitating Yes, almost as if she's been waiting a while for this. Evan echoes the enthusiasm and says they'll arrive in twenty minutes which turns out to be an hour.

Waiting, we drink and talk, and I am unhappy that we have taken up our old roles, me generally teaching and holding forth on my ideas, and Ronnie questioning and listening, claiming to enjoy my flights. But something is wrong. I have nothing to teach, just new ways to speak old truths, and I feel Ronnie has a new knowledge that my performance is preventing me from benefiting from. It will not be a spoken teaching, the only way I will understand is to give up control, a control that he himself in part devilishly thrusts upon me. When he returned from California last autumn he said he, Ronnie Kunitz, had nothing to say and I knew he had jumped a level in understanding. He says to me he hopes I'll start writing poetry again. The buzzer buzzes.

I signal Ronnie who starts down to wait up here. I can see Evan but Liz has located herself where she can't

be seen until the door is opened, a stage entrance. I make no physical greeting and Liz touches my sleeve to show her friendliness and to acknowledge my distance. I follow them upstairs where, seeing Ronnie, Evan rushes in shod but Liz asks if she must remove boots. No sense now. Ronnie greets them with hugs and adds his usual stroking of Liz's face, kind of his way of copping a feel, with the innocent and lecherous balance he's so artfully cultivated. Liz feels friendly toward him but too sensitive and discerning not to know all his tricks and not be slightly offended by them.

They sit around the table while I sit slightly apart on the arm of the easy chair. My place is that of Prospero but I feel I lack the power. Ronnie surges into a battery of painful questions for Liz about her back, colitis and dancing, and Evan and I sweep to her defense. There is talk of John also, Evan fills in Ronnie and they reminisce about London. Liz has meanwhile drifted into my room, her eyes wandering out the window. We all prepare to leave. Evan gulps down a last two glasses of wine, I clear up the table fastidiously, Liz says she likes my new blue-striped shirt and we four follow each other downstairs.

Outside Evan and Ronnie walk ahead while Liz and I go behind. We have trouble figuring how to take the icy trail, like two lovers who can't quite get adjusted, and then walk in the middle of the street. Curious to know if

she and Evan are happy together. Yes, it's good for her but she thinks difficult for Evan, but she's definitely happy he's there. I don't corroborate her guesses with my knowledge that Evan does find it difficult. Liz tells me she's to buy a car soon and get a license. It's strange news, a step toward becoming more worldly.

Liz picks a corner table with a big curling couch around it and we sit while she goes to buy cigarettes. Ronnie and I go in first so we're in the center, then Evan vacillates about sitting next to me or Ronnie and with my vibrations pushing him toward Ronnie, he wavers then falls next to Ronnie. Liz returns and slides in near me, knees bumping. Walls painted with figures of fish, mermaids and divers.

The conversation but for a few rough spots is easy going and amusing, everyone enjoying themselves. At one point Ronnie plays mischief by mentioning Stan Stafford and says lasciviously Stan would have liked Liz to come hear him at Pooh's a few weeks ago. It causes Liz to blush, perhaps they have slept together, perhaps not, perhaps Ronnie knows, perhaps not, but of all of us the strain is greatest on me. I act slightly bewildered, like I never heard of the liaison before this, but ask no questions, just look at Liz while feigning the mildest interest, not looking for an answer.

Liz says to Ronnie Why do you do that kind of thing?, Ronnie is reveling in his stupid mischief-making,

and I'm trying to stay calm, unpossessive and convinced of the love between Liz and I regardless of her affair with Stan. Liz's blush makes things rather clear but I still feign ignorance. She signals twice to me by closing her eyelids softly, like a lover saying It was nothing, we'll talk about it later, don't make a big thing of it now.

Evan locks me in highbrow talk about Tarot symbolism that neither of us knows much about. Ronnie laughs uproariously at our pomposity. When Liz gets up to use the bathroom Ronnie's eyes follow her body, taking pleasure in her movement and form, as he always has. My eyes follow Ronnie's eyes to Liz's body and back.

While she's away Ronnie happens to ask me something about the forest service which Evan overhears even though I shush him. Liz is just sitting down so to cover up I make a big commotion to get out to take a piss, it distracts Evan and Liz thinks it fun to obstruct me like I've obstructed her in the past until she's peed her pants. Ronnie has fortunately caught the hint and when I've returned nothing has been revealed. I keep my plans a secret from Liz knowing anything we build together will be dashed the moment she thinks I'm leaving. I wonder on this occasion and others in the past whether Evan really doesn't notice things, too absorbed in his own cares, or if he's just very discreet.

The remainder of the meal we pass discussing music, Liz humming a sweet tune by Mozart she remembers from her childhood. The waitress has been quite serviceable but rather frustrated in her attempts to read the group's desires through me who from appearances it seemed to her was the leader. But from the moment we sat down my strength to respond ebbed away in the unpredictable surging tide of emotions I was caught in. Now, when she brings us our check she is still inclined to hand it to me but I haven't even the strength to lift my hand, I am utterly emasculated and at last she gives it to Liz.

We stop in Hundred Flowers Bookstore, reached through the restaurant kitchen, a cook cursing us, to browse. I feel like a teacher on a class trip. We start along Pearl St., I lead and walk alone, purposely to avoid contact, absorbed in the task of walking on ice. Ronnie follows with some pretty funny banter about me, perhaps to cheer me up.

Liz needs groceries so we wait outside, I tell Ronnie I think I'll go home and rest a while, sleep actually I add sarcastically. He says Don't be like that but agrees to part here until tonight. Evan had sort of planned on hanging out with us but this neatly rearranges his plans. Liz emerges with ice cream sandwiches for us all, winter treat. Ronnie hugs them goodbye and we continue down the street.

The sky is clearer now but not my mood. I walk a few feet behind Liz and Evan, just to be away from them, I ache so much from overexposure to the emotions they engender. Liz is aware of this and hesitantly falls behind to be with me but senses she's not wanted. I take a quick, off-hand leave at my door not wanting to show them my combination of depression and disappointment, but Liz takes time to ask how I enjoyed the afternoon, she feeling a little insecure about my behavior. It was o.k. I say just convincingly enough and she calls me Bobby as they depart.

Upstairs my apartment waits, calm and serene as before I awoke into these dreams.