

ACME

The Ladder

A LESBIAN REVIEW

MAY, 1967

Something Special?

● A LITERARY ISSUE

ADULTS ONLY

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purpose of the

Daughters of **BILITIS**

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING
THE INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

- ① Education of the Lesbian, enabling her to understand herself and to make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic, and economic implications - by establishing and maintaining a library of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public meetings on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by providing the Lesbian a forum for the interchange of ideas within her own group.
- ② Education of the public, developing an understanding and acceptance of the Lesbian as an individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices - by public discussion meetings and by dissemination of educational literature on the Lesbian theme.
- ③ Encouragement of and participation in responsible research dealing with homosexuality.
- ④ Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposing and promoting changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group through due process of law in the state legislatures.

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The Ladder



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THE LADDER is regarded as a sounding board for various points of view on the homophile and related subjects, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the organization except such opinions as are specifically acknowledged by the organization.

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To some extent this is an experiment. THE LADDER has not gone the way of "Pedbook" or "The Ladies Home Journal" with the everlasting "continued-next-month" thing. However, this novella by Jody Shotwell impresses us so much that we feel compelled to share it with our readers. It is expected that the entire work will require about four months to complete, barring news of such great import that we cannot ignore it. If you are accustomed to passing your copy of the magazine on to friends, we suggest that you save these issues and order additional copies from San Francisco, or send the names and addresses of your friends to our office so that they may receive copies of these issues. We wish to make it easy for all our readers to enjoy the continuity of the story.

The Shape of Love

A SHORT NOVEL

by Jody Shotwell

(1) SATURDAY 6 A. M.

This morning, as every morning, that cerebral rooster of yours goes off at break of day. No matter what your marathon of sleepless nights or the drugs you take against them, come dawn, you are awake. A hideous habit. Like the two that follow immediately upon the awakening--thinking and feeling. To facilitate the one and comfort you against the other, you go in quest of coffee and a cigarette.

From bedroom to living room you go, quietly, snatching on your way the tortoiseshell cigarette case from the table beside the sofa where Angel lies sleeping. She has thrown off the coverlet and lies, one leg bent, bare to the thigh. Other mornings you would replace the coverlet. Other mornings you would bend and kiss that lovely forehead or that cheek. Not today. Today there is something to think about and something to do. But no thinking and no doing, until the coffee and the cigarette.

You take the coffee back to the bedroom and put it on the nightstand. The ashtray is filled. Disgusting. Had you smoked all those cigarettes? Probably. The fuzzy taste in your mouth confirms it.

In the bathroom connecting your room with Scotty's, you brush your teeth. Your tongue, too. You do it with your eyes closed because you don't like much the way you look this morning. New hair-do notwithstanding. Mr. Dennis said, "Sleep with your hair wrapped in toilet-paper." You thought he was joking.

"No, really, my dear. It's the only way."

You had a sudden vision of women all over the country going to bed with their heads swathed in toilet paper. You giggled. "Sorry," you said. "Not I."

Angel giggled, too when you told her. That was yesterday, before the Thing happened. She didn't say, "No woman I sleep with wraps her head in toilet paper!" She just giggled and looked as though she ought to say it. A week ago, she would have.

Ironical. A week ago you wouldn't have noticed whether she said it or not. Or cared. Your disenchantment, so incipient for awhile, was fast becoming a thing to deal with. The good moments, the laughter and the love, were ringed around with truant resentments. One of you had failed the other, somewhere. But which of you--and how? Now it is out of your hands. There is nothing to be solved. You are reeling like one who's had a tiger by the tail and suddenly let go. No, more like a rider on a runaway horse, smashed to the ground by a low-hanging branch. The wild ride is over and you lie stunned. That was yesterday. But yesterday is what you aren't thinking about--just yet.

Your teeth are brushed and you venture a look in the mirror. The hair is fine. Short and chic. "My dear, you look ten years younger!" Mr. Dennis said. A sensitive spot, at the moment. You disclaim, silently, the intention, but you wonder about your sneaky unconscious.

Actually, you'd run to Mr. Dennis in some kind of revolt against the nature-girl look. Which is to say, the look you've been cultivating since Angel. It started with the disappearance of your elegant chignon. "You frighten me, Julia," she said. "You look so, oh golly, what?-unapproachable."

"Didn't keep you from approaching me!" you teased. But you whacked the hair off to shoulder length, and for Angel's sweet sake, left it hanging. The lip-

stick went next.

"You have absolutely the sexiest lips in the world. Please leave off the lipstick."

So, when you weren't at the shop, you went around bare-faced and loose-haired. It wasn't really you. Three days ago, came the revolution and you wound up beneath the merciless shears of Mr. Dennis.

So now, the hair looks fine. But other things, not so fine. For one, your eyes are red. Have you been crying? You have. It doesn't help the cause. But then, there is no cause, except, perhaps to look your best as you go under.

You open the other bathroom door and look in on Scotty. His face is so beautiful in sleep. He looks like Miles. and so tall, your beautiful nine-year-old baby! You close the door quietly. You get back into bed and reach for the coffee. Then you light a cigarette and settle back. Perchance, now, to think? But how can you think, when you are feeling so much? You have to try.

First, think of how you feel. Search out the bruises. Palpate for possible fracture of the ego. But first, try to shake that boulder on your chest; quiet the trepidation in your stomach. And submit for analysis the ancient jealousy burning in your marrow.

You drink more of the coffee and concentrate on the jealousy. Examine it, horrified, as you would a boil on your nose. Something attached to you, obviously. Composed of your own intrinsic materials, but distasteful and embarrassing. Your emerald-eyed dragon. How did you put it in that verse so long ago? "O, I am enslaved by an emerald-eyed dragon!" Yes--but you thought you had him chained. Or better still, slain and buried in the grave with Ron. Now he comes springing forth like the Hound of the Baskervilles, growling and savage.

So there it is. Alive, and you didn't handle it. In five little minutes, you unlearned every bitter lesson. Yesterday. Now you have to think about yesterday.

Friday. The day you stay home from the shop. Scotty off to school, you kissed Angel awake.

"Come into my room."

She arose and came, her bronze hair tousled and her bronze eyes only half open. You helped her unbutton her silly nightshirt and you slipped out of your robe and into bed beside her. She was warm with sleep and her lips tasted faintly of scotch.

All of the motions were correct, the responses befitting. Only, something was wrong. She got up and sat on the edge of the bed.

"I've just got to have a cigarette."

You lay there looking at her. Her smile was strange.

"What happened to you?" she asked.

Continued on Page 24

THE "REALISTIC" NOVEL

by Valerie Taylor

Notes for a work in progress (an interchangeable sequel to virtually any gay novel written by a man).

What has gone before:

Beautiful Broccoli Cavendish, tired of living in the limbo of lesbianism and engaging in twisted passions and degrading lusts twenty-four hours a day, has run away from her room-mate, Precious Signoret. Precious is a world-famous opera singer who never wastes any time on rehearsals but gives nightly orgies (catered, yet) in her luxurious New York penthouse apartment. Outwardly feminine, with a size 44 bust and an inexhaustible supply of black nylon lingerie, she is really a vicious butch who snarls "I am the man!" when in the throes of passion. Broccoli decides that she herself is really a good girl, capable of normal love. She flees with only a suitcase full of Dior clothes and a handful of uncut emeralds. Can she find a place in the happy, normal world? *GO ON FROM HERE.*

Like any average young girl seeking employment, Broccoli takes a suite in the Hilton Fifth Avenue and trudges from agency to agency, looking for work. Finally her money is all gone. She seeks escape in a small, dirty basement bar where, after consuming six double Martinis, she is accosted by an uncouth male with evil designs. She is too drunk and too desperate to resist. Luckily, a tall handsome young man in Brooks Brothers clothes rescues her and takes her home to his luxurious apartment. He

is none other than Hilary Gregory, head of a world-famous talent agency. After plying her with food and sympathy, he makes mad love to her. She responds ecstatically and has eight orgasms. (Describe in detail.) Now she knows she is capable of normal love.

Gregory gives her a job in his office. She can neither type nor

Valerie Taylor is no stranger to most readers of THE LADDER.... We are most pleased with this information from her on how to write the realistic heterosexual novel, based on instructions for writing the "realistic lesbian novel," which apparently is no joke. Most of the paperbacks on the stands today can only bear this out.

in Broccoli's face. "Oh God," Hilary says, "this is getting monotonous." He gives Broccoli one hundred thousand dollars in Government bonds and gets her a job with his friend, world famous theatrical director Wolfenden Plantagenet.

She makes a lot of money and moves into a luxury hotel, but she hasn't gone to bed with anyone for 2 1/2 days and a frantic longing for pure normal love overcomes her. So she embarks on a series of affairs.

(Note: be just as realistic about men as the male authors of lesbian novels are about girls. All the men Broccoli meets are murderers, drug addicts, sadists and communists who operate blackmail rings to entrap innocent Congressmen, but they all have permanent erections and make love right around the clock, inducing joyful response in Broccoli.)

Finally she becomes involved with Raleigh Roebuck, only to find that he is the owner of a world-famous brothel specializing in flagellation. In the fine old Horatio Alger spirit, Broccoli works up to become the head flagellant. (Put lots of blood and screaming into this, in case a few Mickey Spillane fans have wandered into the wrong bookstore.)

One night, who shows up in the torture chamber but Hilary Gregory. He has been looking everywhere for Broccoli. She realizes that she has really been cherishing his love deep in her heart while being laid by 83 other men. The evil Desdemona has conveniently committed suicide. Broccoli goes home with Hilary and they make love all night. This time she has NINE orgasms. (described with tumescent adjectives). Now she knows she has been redeemed by the pure love of a good man. As she falls asleep in her lover's arms she feels a momentary pity for poor, sexy, wealthy, beautiful Precious Signoret, lost forever in the evil passions and secret lusts of the lavender half world.

THE END

TWO POEMS

by Sten Russell

THE SILENT GENERATION

Here I stand, beneath the sky --
Hatless--barren--washed out--dry
Of all feeling, except hunger
Felt to justify my life.

How long can words beat unfulfilled
Within this person's breast?
How long can beauty once surmised
Be trapped and hidden here --
Growing dimmer -- year by year?

The streets hold no joy for me.
Each thing I see or touch or hear
Is compounded daily -- fear on fear.
Each sign is false.
The mike bleats lies.
My soul will sicken till it dies --
And becomes one with these muted sheep
Following sleep-walkers in their sleep.

THE FAITHFUL SOLDIER

I hunger for one look at you, my beloved.
I ache with the desperation of one long
deprived of love in any form.
At first I want only to see--you--across
the room--the sheen of the new dress--
the long lines that are you.
I will contain myself--I will not cry out--
but only whisper your name.

It is you I have waited for this long time--
I can wait longer.
And then--I'll see you throw back your head
and laugh---because you are glad I'm
back--you are happy to be here--and
--expectant.

Lesbiana

by Gene Damon

Humorous, but dangerous, downgrading of women as human beings still exists in this country. We are all familiar with the little digs, the "little woman", "women drivers," "just like a woman," which surround us as such a familiar part of daily life and conversation that women are guilty of using the phrases themselves. I think it is dangerous because now and again I run upon some forceful reminder of what it was like for women in the world just a short time ago. For example, what it was like for women in the reasonably enlightened United States of America between 1800 and 1860. The answer to that is admirably supplied in "Anti-Intellectualism and the American Woman: 1800-1860," by Barbara Welter, in the scholarly quarterly, MID-AMERICA: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW, for October, 1966. This review is published by Loyola University and should be available in all university libraries and many college libraries. Miss Welter is apparently on the faculty of Hunter College in New York, and she has examined over 40 articles and books to gather her damning evidence. Read it and shake in your boots.

The field of popular non-fiction has seen quite a spate of books on homosexuality in the last few years. They have varied widely in usefulness (wildly might be a more appropriate term). They do improve, however, as knowledge grows in the field and no one could seriously deny the superiority, for example, of Donald Webster Cory's, THE LESBIAN IN AMERICA, to Jess Stearn's sleek but sleazy, THE GRAPEVINE.

Bryan Magee, a British journalist, has, in ONE IN TWENTY, N. Y., Stein and Day, 1966, topped the lot of them (both the male and the female titles of recent years) for a simple, basic reason; he took the time to carefully research his living material for his book.

He uses a logical format, and an order which seems the

most reasonable for either homosexual or heterosexual consideration. His first section covers the basic historical, social, psychological background material which is applicable to both male and female homosexuals. The second section is entirely about male homosexuals, and the third section entirely about Lesbians. He is careful to show that there are as many (or more) differences as similarities.

At least 75% of the book is not news to anyone who has lived actively in the homosexual subculture, or anyone who has read extensively on the subject. There is little point here in going over the "old hat" bits which all of us know, but it is worth mentioning that the book is presented reliably (almost entirely) and so readable that it is excellent for recommendation to "others" who lack knowledge and inquire for it. A bright fifteen-year-old could read and understand the book, and since advertising media notoriously strives for a thirteen-year-old level, Mr. Magee has come close to maximum saturation potential.

The points for which he deserves praise need individual covering. He leaves out any sensationalism, yet he doesn't miss covering anything. Oddly, he brings a compassion to his prose which is conspicuously lacking in similar writings by admitted homosexuals. There is a particularly touching chapter when Mr. Magee recounts his own moment of truth, his realization (in the middle of a gay bar, no less, in Europe) that "these people" are exactly like heterosexuals, i. e., they respond with loves, hates, likes, dislikes, needs, etc. Now we know this, but it does no harm for a heterosexual to describe this kind of experience for the benefit of other heterosexuals.

There are flaws in the book, most of them caused by things he could not possibly have corrected. He cannot become, even for an hour, a homosexual, and this must always hamper some of his vision. He cannot, certainly, become a woman and a Lesbian, which is a double strike against insight now and again. The errors he makes seem to me to be caused by these things which cannot be held against him.

The only major point he makes which will meet with widespread disagreement from most homosexuals and Lesbians (most I have known at any rate) is that he says he found a vast number of those he interviewed wishing they were heterosexual (or that if they could live their lives over, they wished to be born heterosexual).

Mr. Magee concludes his book with words which might have been copied, in a sense, from the theme song of the homophile movement as a whole:

"The aim of liberal minded people should be to obtain for Lesbians, as for male homosexuals, not social approval -- that would be unrealistic; and irrelevant even if achieved -- but social acceptance; and, within a framework of acceptance, indifference. In a word, toleration."

Those of you who wince at that last word, toleration, would do well to examine the almost universal homosexual attitude toward the heterosexual. We do accept them, are often indifferent to them (when allowed to be) and primarily, we tolerate them. If this were a ditto situation, we would indeed have no need for a homophile movement, for within the implications in Mr. Magee's closing remarks are the legal and social reforms we seek.

For readers who have read extensively in the field of Lesbiana, it is always good to find a different approach to the everyday problems many of us face. The subject of family adjustment is part of the theme of *THE GOLDEN PLAIN*, by Roger Bordier, Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1963. Basically this is the story of Laurent, an architect, and his love affair with the introspective girl, Sli. In his attempt to understand her, Laurent uncovers the causes of her withdrawal: the untimely death of her brother, Jean; and the overt Lesbianism of her older sister, Agnes, who is a married woman with children. Laurent must prove to Sli that death belongs in the past and that her sister's Lesbianism is completely acceptable. He succeeds and thereby provides a fictional handling of a circumstance not too unusual in the world around us. Agnes is a sufficiently major character, and her viewpoint is enlarged upon enough to consider this an important book.

There will probably never come a time when all of the past books have been examined and dismissed in the light of Lesbian literature. Just when I begin to think that surely there can be no important undiscovered treatments from the past, one pops up. Henri Barbusse, 1873--1935, a minor but critically important writer, with undesirable political leanings which have obscured his literary career, is undergoing a revival in England. His 1908 book, *L'ENFER*, has been translated by Robert Baldick and issued as *HELL*, by the

London publisher, Chapman and Hall, 1966. In checking back I find that it was first translated by J. Rodker in 1932 and published as *THE INFERNO*, by Joines and Steele in London. It has never appeared in the United States so far as I can determine. It is an allegorical treatment of the human condition with the narrator a peeping tom looking through a hole in a hotel room wall. He witnesses many things, including a Lesbian love scene. For complete collectors only, but interesting enough.

The English speaking countries sometimes appear to be working against one another. Many important books appear in the United States which never appear in England or Canada and this works, too often, in reverse. One of the most major and important of Lesbian titles in the last twenty years has not yet come out in this country. The is *PARADOX LOST*, by Marianne Sinclair, London, Chapman and Hall, 1963. It is doubly irritating since Marianne Sinclair's husband, Andrew Sinclair, is regularly published in this country. *PARADOX LOST* is a first novel, and suffers the flaws common to all first novels, but it is also a Lesbian novel which belongs in every collection of the subject and it has been simply ignored. Marianne Sinclair was 18 years old when she wrote this book and it is made clear on the dust cover that she is the Novel's heroine. For once there is no "fiction disclaimer" to deal with. But, while the novel's heroine, Anabel, is the catalyst, she is a pale figure beside Chris, possibly the most engaging fictional character since Beebo Brinker.

Most of you will remember Beebo's memorial seduction scene in *I AM A WOMAN* (by Ann Bannon, Fawcett Gold Medal, 1959). Now here is how Marianne Sinclair introduces Chris:

"On one stool, Chris sits. There is such ease in her that she is unnoticed. The ambiguity of her many natures makes her more whole than anyone in the streets of Paris. She has a style of her own, a coolness to the outer world that chills the conflicts within her. Her mouth has compromised so long between a grin of ingratiating and an equivocal sneer that it seems only to attract what it will also repel. She has changed the grace of her body into chopped masculine gestures, so that she moves with precise curtness in an economy of beauty. The way she lights a cigarette with a flip twist of the wrist, smokes it pinched between thumb

and index, snaps her head back to inhale is studied, unnatural, but it is in no way affected, for it is now her being, the essence of Chris."

The world of Chris and Anabel is the nightclub, "The Four Winds." It is not an exclusively Lesbian club, but a conglomeration of all types and kinds of people. Much of the book is devoted to short acid sketches of the inhabitants of the club. The patronne, a fat old sister, laments the prevalence of Lesbianism, but she likes Chris better than anyone in the club.

The relationship between Chris and Anabel cannot last -- and the reader knows this from the novel's first sentence. Anabel will go on into another world. Chris will remain, perhaps she is still there today. One advertisement for the book described it as the story of "An innocent young girl of 18 who falls in love with a corrupt and seasoned bitch of 40." There are several things about that ad which are misleading, and the primary one is the vowel in "bitch."

I have been guilty of a major oversight. A few days ago I was informed that the big best seller of 1966, VALLEY OF THE DOLLS, by Jacqueline Susann, N. Y., Bernard Geis, 1966, is quite substantially Lesbian. I apologize to all of you readers, and I will review it in the JUNE, 1967 column. Sorry about that... especially hate to miss a big one, even if it is reputed to be very poorly written. Can't see the forest for the trees...

*It is raining tonight -- my latrines are full.
My people have placed a sand-box for me.
How nice!*

*I hate weather. People make weather.
Only a human could demand these changes
in the elements. Who but a human would want
a wind to blow away their smells? Who but
a human would need rain to wash away their
sweat? I spit on them. I wash myself and
consider them. I shall be very nice. They
need my calm. They need my demands.*

*In their way, they are very good -- not nice --
but good.*

- Ben Cat -

PREJUDICE

by Marge McCinnon

Finding work had been easy even as traveled friends had said it would. If you wanted to "earn twice what you're earning, go west!" But it had been hard enough finding a place to live because of Barney the Collie. The motel that finally admitted them was a complex of run-down, ramshackle boxes of clapboard. When it looked as though they were sure of getting out of it and into a private one-bedroom house, the landlord remembered on second thought (after his introduction to the dog) that his sister-in-law had been thinking about it. "But," he said, "if she don't want it, you're the next on the list."

They never heard from him again; they never expected to.

Emptying fountain pens and using up stationery, letters went home telling about the country, "land of the fruit and nuts," they said, "where even the weather is queer." They roared at the hackneyed outdated phrase as though having just then made it up. Despite having left one of the most inclement periods of the year in that part of the country geared for it, they ribbed the cold California nights and mocked the rainfall. "We come to sunny Southern California for sun and what do we get? A country that's all wet." They laughed fervidly at the pun and repeated it often. When the rains stopped they began going out to look for a house again. It was time to get out of the motel once and for all.

One afternoon in early Spring, the blonde came in announcing she had found a house for them where Barney was welcome. It wasn't fancy but it was clean and had a good, warm back porch in which Barney could sleep comfortably at night. A Chinaman had rented it to her, she said, but he was clean enough and came from the Hawaiian Islands, which was ours, so she didn't think there was any reason to turn down the house, Chinaman or no Chinaman.

They hadn't more than hung up their clothes in the closet of the newly rented place when Barney began pestering them to take him out for his walk.

"No, Barney," said the brunette, "We've been looking too long and too hard for this place. We're going to make a day of it here. Tomorrow we'll take you out. Now you'll just have to settle for a tether in the front yard."

Tomorrow, being Sunday, they got up late, disregarding Barney's cold-nose nudgings. Later, as they were sitting looking over the Sunday paper, the door rattled lightly under a timid knock. Blonde looked quizzically to brunette, shrugged and, donning a blue chenille robe, answered the door. A tall girl in her early teens stood there, holding a crockery pot between her hands. The girl was a very dark Negro with a smile that burst on that darkness like a sunrise.

"My mother wants you should have this for your lunch," she said, addressing the pot timidly as she spoke. "Mother says new neighbors always gets broke in this way."

The blonde, gripping the pot gingerly, thanked the child extravagantly.

"Who was it?" asked the brunette as her friend came back into the room, "one of the native opportunists in this fair land of opportunity?"

"I think we're in the wrong neighborhood," said the blonde, immediately after which they set upon house-hunting with a vengeance. Some weeks later, after having returned the crockery pot and thanking the donor rather more than necessary, and after having found another place, the girls moved again. The house was at the rear of a larger more substantial one. There was a small fenced yard for Barney, and there was privacy abundant. The landlords in the front house were almost fellow countrymen who had, some years before, come from a cold winter even as had the girls, country east of the Continental Divide. Brunette and blonde were glad now that circumstances had prevailed upon them to find a more suitable place to live.

They began taking diffident little trips to the famous satellite towns, driving up one small street and down another gazing at people painstakingly, saying how "wouldn't it be funny if we saw a movie star"

adding "so what if we did, they're the same as we are," and unwittingly, "they're just a bunch of blaze people in search of orgies."

Now they were becoming, if not native (God forbid! they said.) acclimatized. They found the easiest routes to laundromat, super market and veterinarian. All could not have been more suitable except for one thing, the mattress which, being too soft, they said, was unsuitable. As one must spend a third of his life in bed, if not more, it was necessary to get the comfort, taking it on themselves to furnish that comfort. To ask the landlord so soon after moving in was unthinkable. Who knew what their landlord, spilling over with California lore, might take it in his head to think if they even so much as suggested a mattress? So, venturing out on their own one Saturday morning, they found an out-of-the-way shop on a side street. The shop smelled of silence, suggestive, the lull before storms. The mattresses came in different sizes and shapes: round and kingsize row on row they were, unoccupied, lifeless. A squat man with dark-rimmed spectacles riding a Roman nose emerged from the rear of the store. A shadow of beard cascaded from a pair of stunted sideburns.

"Something for you ladies?" said the man. "Like maybe a mattress? Two mattresses?"

The girls nodded wordlessly.

"What kind you got in mind? foam rubber? innerspring? single or double size?"

Instead of answering, the blonde marched to the red and pink striped mattress and sat on it prim and resolute, a little stiffly as though afraid it might not hold her weight.

"Three-hundred and twelve," said the man.

"I beg your pardon?" the blonde said, and it was hard to tell if her irritation came as a result of the easy quoting of figures or because of their enormity.

"Three hundred and twelve coils in that mattress," said the man, "Has maximum body support. Firm. Resilient."

"How much," said the blonde; her voice was stone.

"Forty-nine ninety-five."

"What else you got?"

"Anything your heart desires, lady," he said. "Want a king size, we got a king size."

"No," said the brunette, "just ordinary."

"How's about this here one over here. Good springs. Thirty-nine ninety-five. Worth every cent. You bet. Soft. Firm. Whatever you like. Solid comfort."

"Well..." the brunette floundered deliberately; I didn't expect to go that high."

"How high you want?" said the man. "To tell you the honest truth, thirty-nine ninety-five ain't high. For a good, good sleep every night it's worth all of it."

"I don't know," the brunette said, hesitating purposely, "I just didn't expect to go that high. Twenty-nine ninety-five maybe, but not thirty-nine."

The man shrugged so the collar touched the sparse hair at the back of his neck. "You ask a lot," he said. "But so okay. For you I'll make it thirty-five. It's a big cut, but for you, I'll do it."

"Twenty-nine ninety-five is what I really expected to pay," the brunette persisted. "I really didn't expect to pay any more than that."

Again the man shrugged. He twitched his nose. "So okay, honey, I'll make it thirty-two fifty but no less. For this price it's a steal. A real buy. You got thousands of nights of sleeping comfort on that mattress."

For thirty-two fifty the girls bought it. On their way home the brunette said, "I can't stand them. I simply can't."

"Who?" said the blonde.

"It's so easy to Jew them down," said the brunette.

"They're always bargaining, trying to get something for nothing. I don't know why they don't go back where they came from."

"Don't you know it," said the blonde. "And they're so dirty minded. Did you get the inferences? Just plain foul-mouthed."

"Did I!" the brunette said, "but what can you expect? These California woods is full of them."

"Like the niggers," said the blonde irrelevantly, "you give them an inch and they take a mile."

The girls used side streets all the way home in order to avoid the heavily-trafficked freeway. They felt good now, despite the unpleasant encounter, and it wasn't long before they were parking in front of their place. Walking one behind the other to their rear cottage; and just as they passed an open window to the big house in front, they heard a voice wild and metallic saw into the crisp air.

"I don't care what you say, Archie, those two you got in our cottage are as queer as a thirteen dollar bill. Can't stand the likes of them. They're all coming west now. A regular epidemic of them. We're getting all the scum. Used to be we could live clean." There was a low masculine mumble and: "Yeh, but just because they pay their rent on time, it don't mean I have to speak to them."

The girls moved resolutely down the path to the cottage. Entering their place, they raised the shades and turned down the thermostat and put up their coats without a word. Barney barked frantically in his yard.

Her back to the brunette, the blonde said, "I don't see how people can judge us like that, without knowing us."

The brunette opened the door to the backyard where Barney vaulted into the room and sat wagging his tail at their feet.

This story shocked us at first reading. So many of us live in a world of containment and do not see the prejudices which we hold and yet, feel so cursed by the prejudice that we feel from others. We are most pleased to include this work and we hope that it will help those who live elsewhere to understand some of the news we print from San Francisco where ALL minorities are trying to live with each others' problems and work for solutions together.

Thank you, Marge, for answering some of our mail in your very blunt, yet veiled style.

Suspended Ride

by Lennox Strong

I saw her first in the early fall, too early for the suit she was wearing. It was a later bus than the one I usually caught. I remember spotting her at once and saying to myself mentally, "What team do you pitch for?"

She was tall, 5'9" or more, and she sat with the ill-concealed discomfort of a woman more used to pants than a skirt. I watched her for the 20 minutes or so she was on the bus with me. I was more than a little surprised at the sordid location when she got off the bus, and wondered a moment more about who she was and why -- and forgot her -- at least then.

Then in the fall, my hours changed and I took the later bus each evening. She rode with me, in separate seats of course, and I frequently speculated to myself about her life.

Long before we spoke as familiar strangers, I knew some of her habits. Her hair was that shade of brown we call black and her skin was too white, with pale lines of strain around her mouth and eyes. Her face was oval, and her eyes a dark hazel to complement the sharply defined nose and chin. She wore her very curly hair close cropped and smooth on her head. She was, in fact, by all standards as beautiful in the face as a woman can be. Her body and mannerisms might be another topic, for she lacked the poise of beauty. Her hands were enormous and she had wide, straight shoulders and almost no hips. In this she would be beautiful to some and not to others.

One night when the bus was full; and we had passed the nodding stage, we sat together without speaking. Behind us two little sub-teen girls were quizzing each other on their Spanish lessons. It was impossible not to listen to their squeals and giggles. Somewhere along the way, she laughed aloud and I looked at her.

"I don't remember feeling as young as they do," she

said, turning her luminous gaze directly toward me for the first time.

"I don't either," I lied, for I felt at least 4 or 5 at that minute, trying to smile, check my heartbeat, and avoid looking directly back into those eyes.

We talked then, easily, and became friends slowly throughout the long winter. We were only bus friends, didn't exchange names until long after we had discussed music, books, philosophy, religion, her family, my family, feelings about a thousand things.

It was a hard winter, and the 20 minute bus ride often lasted an hour. She was married, to a man in what is commonly called "a high calling" and she had five children, though she was only then in her early thirties. She fervently wished she would have no more. It wasn't hard to see that she was unhappy, though she did not say so in direct ways.

Now, looking back, it isn't hard to think of her as married, but at first it was almost shocking.

A bus world is an isolated world -- you are there and so is someone else, and you don't know each other away from that bus and so you don't pretend, or dissemble, there is no reason. It is a sympathetic face, and you like the face, so you talk and it is a peculiar kind of intimacy. I hadn't told her I was gay, but I didn't have to. I had long since learned how to make this unmistakably apparent to anyone even faintly discerning.

The overtime weeks came as Spring rolled around and I missed the bus many days in a row. She called me at work, for the first time, and we talked a moment. I told her why I was missing the bus and that I would be catching it again soon, and that was all.

So it went along like this, more and more talk and we were close, and if there were real emotional touches I ignored them or put them down on the slate as my imagination, not hers. We built a pattern, and we stuck to it. Free talk, no impossible questions.

She called me early that morning, to say she had the car for a change, and would I like to ride in something less crowded than the bus. The wind blows all the time in my city, and it was active as usual that afternoon. We met on the corner, by the post office, and walked the five blocks up the hill to the parking

lot. I walk fast, but I couldn't match the stride she found comfortable. When we reached the top of the hill, the last few feet, she reached back and pulled me up the last steps, laughing into my face with the wind blowing her hair sharply away from her temples.

Somewhere along that ride, near the worn palisades on the Paseo, she asked me for a cigarette. I gave her one and she stopped the car. I started to light the cigarette for her, and she cupped her hands around mine and turned that burningly beautiful face toward me and said:

"I love you -- very much, you know that don't you?"

I lied, of course, and said that I didn't, and the necessary impossible things that had to be said, and we both lived through the rest of the ride home -- without melodrama.

I changed my schedule, deliberately and cowardly. It's been quite a few years, and she has gone to another city, perhaps many others by now. It wasn't possible, of course, and she was married, and so was I -- though that might have been considered different by some. But it was all there -- all that has to be, even when it cannot be. And sometimes in the winter nights, when it is dark enough for faces to shine back in the bus glass, I see two faces instead of one.

MIRROR

Mirror--empty pool of reflection--
Illuminator of surface qualities--
Panel between myself and the beyond:

Break your quick-silver
And run down the wall in
Never-ending rivulets--

Deflecting my personality
Into a thousand tiny eyes
Recording for one brain--

Seeing through walls
Into the hearts of men--

Catching on line, on form,
On Light, on shadow--
Ripping through to the
Frantic heart of life.

-Sten Russell-

The Passing

a poem by Thom Kavlick

Night has come again
I lie alone with only thoughts;
I feel the autumn breezes blow
through the open window,
warning of the frightening cold to come.
The sigh of summer
running from encroaching wrath.

Love seems also to retreat yet
unlike the warm days past it
shall not return in spring.
We've judged my love
and you have gone.

Like the summer
you
have also run,
and I have pleaded for your flight.
"Escape the coming bitterness"
I said,
"not only of winter's bite
but of the love
misunderstood."

I'm sorry now;
I lie in desolation.
My voice was strong and stern then,
yet trembles now
as I attempt to speak.

I cannot call you back
the words refuse to form.
The love we shared within this room
still glimmers in my mind.
Yet as the fruits of summer trees
fall
and are forgotten,
Love too must drop
and die.

MARILYN

by STEN RUSSELL

In last month's issue, we published two pages of this work. The third page got lost along its way from the Editor's messy desk to the printer. We regret this deeply. Here is the last line from page two of the story -- now try to pick up the thread and read on to the end.

I understand you don't have to be Jewish to have a "Jewish Mother." I had one and didn't know it. When the book came out on

how to be a Jewish Mother, I was deeply offended. I had and I still have very little sense of humor on the point. Real Jewish mothers have been the kindest to me -- the most real in an unreal life. One grasps at straws, builds superstructures, gets ironic and fails to laugh at the right moments -- but we progress -- laugh oftener.

Mother would say, "You're seeing too much of Marilyn." I would ask, "Why?" She would say, "She's taking too much of your time." I would say, "What else have I to do with it?" "She's using you giving you nothing." I became interested at that point ... sat up in the old hard-back kitchen chair and looked at her. "Umm-- you think so?" She would sputter and I would close in, trying to solve an ancient question in my mind. "She doesn't have to give me anything, Mother. She is." Then she would cry and I would be bewildered. She would say, "I don't understand you." I would answer, "Is it entirely necessary that you do?" Then she would look at me in cold, hard hatred, You are like your father."

I would ponder that -- a pity I never knew him. Was I really like my father? Was that really so bad?

"You are stubborn like your father," she railed. And stubbornness settled all over me -- confusion, hatred for this poor benighted being I had to protect, be responsible for.

Marilyn went away to college. I worked two years and did the same thing myself -- and found more Marilyn's, more riddles. My mother pursued me. I fled into failure. She did not know she was destroying a daughter she had trained, raised, to take care of her in her old age--a sort of personal social security card.

The school authorities caught me at last -- sent me to one of their best psychiatrists. He was much ahead of his time. I promptly fell in love with him.

But he could not help me then. He thought my problem was in not accepting my homosexuality. It may have been a large problem, but I could not accept that until I got rid of the hatred, the guilt I felt about my mother. I had to leave...or die. It was unfortunate -- he was a beautiful man, a good doctor.

Cross Currents and miscellany

We have received a number of nice letters, but there has been a complaint about the lack of fiction and so with this issue, we are pleased to bring you a whole mess of it and that is about how we feel about it. (Not the material -- just the preparation of it and the presentation.)

We are so very pleased with the Jody Shotwell manuscript, yet a bit apprehensive about the serialization of it.

We have several long, long stories and we appreciate them, but we must see how this serialization goes before we can adopt this sort of thing as a practice.

We have a whole book of excellent poetry which we wish we could print. It is excellent, but we simply cannot squeeze so much into our 32 pages. At this time we are not geared to any publishing ventures other than the magazine except for one thing -- an offering which will soon be available to you and of which we are most proud. In mid-summer we will publish a bibliography of Lesbian literature. This will be a listing of all known books in the English language in the general field of literature, concerned with Lesbianism or having Lesbian characters -- novels, short stories, poems, drama and fictionalized biography. We are working on this now and we hope to secure a good printing and bindery job at a reasonable price so that you may secure it for your library at nominal cost.

For this particular issue of THE LADDER we wish to thank a hired typist. (Of course, we paid her -- but she was particularly fun. She put an ad in the L. A. Free Press which is the "underground" thing hereabouts. She said that she was tired of doing insurance policies and "spec books," so this was a fling at the outer -- the turned-on, etc. Well, she got it. The first call was from THE LADDER. The poor gal empathised so much with our Novel that she hated to charge her usual fee -- but she has to eat and go to her classes and do whatever else young people do.

We are not being difficult, but, if anyone of our readers within 40 miles of Los Angeles is in the typing business, this is it! Get in touch. We'd rather hire our own.

This month we are not printing "Readers Respond" so that we can get you up to a proper pitch on "The Shape of Love." We are not printing anything about politics or religion or cats. But if you look very closely, you will find all of these things within the fiction and the poetry because, as Ben Cat has observed to us, life is pretty much made up of politics, religion and cats. Next month we will provide those things which most please people who do not want fiction and poetry -- thus, somehow, around the months we will please everybody. (You may all laugh with us now....)

Did all of you see the CBS Reports, "The Homosexuals?" We left a rather important meeting here to rush home to the "tube." One very wonderful male friend of ours asked if we would write it up for THE LADDER. No, we will not. We can only say that it was a step -- a small step -- ahead. Ten years ago it couldn't have been done at all, much less as half-good as it was. Perhaps one of these days they will do a Report on Lesbians. That will be an event that we will report in detail.

By the time you read this issue of THE LADDER, Regional Conferences will have been held -- preparation for the National Planning Conference which includes all Homophile organizations. Of course, the DOB, representing the only all-female group is, as usual, outnumbered, but we will be there and we will be vocal. Reports on this will be forthcoming.

We particularly hope that this issue of THE LADDER will encourage you writers to submit your creativity to us. THE LADDER is a copyrighted magazine. Material published in it is protected and then is available to the author for subsequent publication with our permission. (All this means is that credit must be given to THE LADDER and the DOB.) We would like to have an "all-lit" issue every quarter. We can do this with your help.

While we are talking about "YOUR MAGAZINE" let us ask that you let us know what you want. We can be very flexible...within the area of good taste and general interest. Let us hear from you. So much for "folksiness." On to our novel.....

THE SHAPE OF LOVE.....

Continued from Page 5

"How do you mean?"

"I've never known you to be so--urgent."

"I felt urgent."

You had. For the first time in weeks. But now you felt filthy. Or something. It hit you suddenly. It had been cold. As though you had used her and she

had let you. Nothing more. It was a sickening feeling and you knew what it meant. Ilga. The dark Dane with the sloe eyes and the thick neck. And yes, of course, the positively enchanting accent. Angel said Ilga looked keen in dungarees. That was when she came back from spending the day at the Horse Show with Ilga. Things got a little clutchy inside you that day. But not so much as the day after, and the day after that. When every sentence Angel spoke began with "Ilga says." You'd smiled and nodded through it.

Now you try a smile again, but it doesn't come off so well.

"Well," you say. "Time for all hands to hit the deck." And wrestling, ingloriously, with the tangled sheets, you almost did. Angel laughed, and that untensed things somewhat.

So, the next few hours are pleasant enough. Like a picnic on the edge of a precipice. The Great Dane isn't mentioned, at least not aloud. You do things around the apartment. Angel wants to rearrange the paintings over the sofa and you show her how to do it. First, on the floor, so that you can shift around and survey for balance and proper placement. You are only Lonnie's Girl Friday, but you'd learned a thing or two.

Later you spell each other at the ironing board, the French records on the phonograph. Both of you repeating after the hollow-voiced instructor, "Fermez la porte" "Ouvre les fenetres." Angel had been to Paris when she was sixteen. Six years ago. Now she wants to go again, with you. Now, one of the "Ilga says" things was, "Ilga says she would like me to go back to Europe with her." That was one of the times you made with the smile and the nod. Which was admirable, since what you wanted to do was shriek, "But you always said you wouldn't go with anyone but me!"

Everybody wanted to take you to Europe: but nobody did it. Perhaps Ron might have, one day. If you hadn't thrown her out, finally, and if she hadn't died.

So you iron and practice French and after awhile, you think of dinner. You are in the kitchen, scrubbing Idahos for the oven when the telephone rings. Angel answers. "Sherrell residence." Musically. She always answers this way. "My live-in maid," you say.

You dry your hands to take the call. You stand in the door-frame between the kitchen and the dining

room, and Angel is saying, "Did you want to speak to Julia?" And then her face flushes and she glances up at you. And looks down again. "Oh," she says. "When? You mean tonight? Now?"

How do you describe that instant of precognition? An ice-cube down your back? Octopus tentacles around your heart? Angel is saying, "Just a moment," and she raises her eyes to you again. "Do you mind," she asks, "If I have dinner with Ilga tonight?"

You come in on cue with the proper line. "You know you may do as you please." A deplorable line. What Angel calls "Mother-talk." But it's the best you can manage, and after you say it, you turn back into the kitchen and stand there. Frozen. You hear Angel say, "I'll be there soon as I can." And before the receiver clicks down you are running through the dining room, through the living room, and into the bedroom. You almost close the door on Angel's face.

"What's the matter?" she asks.

You are trying to freeze again, but panic is beating with wild wings and no way to escape. You are opening and closing drawers, aimlessly, keeping your back to her so she cannot see your face. She comes up behind you and tries an embrace. She is talking, cajoling. The way she talks to her mother sometimes.

"Now why don't you just relax? Don't get so excited. Be a good girl, there's nothing to worry about."

These aren't the words she is using now, but the tone is the same. You don't even hear the words, only the tone and the sound of your own panic. The picnic is over and the ground is sliding away beneath your feet. You twist out of her arms.

"Why don't you go, if you're going."

She went. And somewhere, between the time she leaves and the time you knock yourself out with the pills, you glance back at yourself. At Julia, letting herself down. At cool, cool Julia, with her slip showing--down to her ankles.

You didn't look long. Not last night. But now you have to look. And what you are seeing is some very visible handwriting on an invisible wall.

(2) Saturday - 7 a.m.

Saturday morning in May. May is the best month and

Saturday the best day. This has been true as long as you can remember. Combine the two with the early morning streets of the city you love beyond reason, and your heart twists. Play your inner discord against such a backdrop as this, and you tear your heart right out.

So, let there be a point to the poignancy. You are walking the early morning street because you had to get away from where Angel lay sleeping in your living room. You are trying to glue yourself together and it couldn't be done there, with the possibility of Angel awakening and seeing you all unstuck. Full of things to tell you about last night. Bubbling over, casting you into the role of room-mate, chum. Ignoring your delinquency and so negating her own. A ruse, transparent and, at times, endearing. But not now. As though your bed were burning, you jumped up and dressed. Slacks, jersey and sneakers. Tossed your wallet and cigarettes into the burlap bag. You had to get out of there and go somewhere and look at Julia Sherrell plain, before another word was spoken. You wrote a message on the blackboard in the kitchen. "Going for a walk. Be back soon."

We all have our resorts when things get rough. Yours is the long walk. Ordinarily. But there are walks and walks.

Some just for blowing off accumulated steam. Some loaded with more combustible material. And a couple that might be considered crucial. It started a long time ago, when Kay said, "I can't see you any more, Julia." And wouldn't tell you why. And left you with a heart full of frustrated questions. You took a long walk that day, and brought back from it the necessary resignation. Plus a fear that sent you scurrying for cover when any woman looked at you. Sent you back to maybe the right world for the wrong reasons. Including the marriage to Miles that might or might not have worked, had he lived past the experimental years.

Then the big walk that ended in that first decision against Ron. That time it was you who did the leaving. Until now. And, of course, Angel hasn't left you, yet. Not officially. And that is what this walk is about today, in the Saturday May morning.

You turn toward the Parkway with some fringe thought of the cathedral. Last week you started a new painting. Gothic arches against a brilliant red-yellow sky. "I must get up to see how the sun hits the

arches," you remarked. Angel laughed her tender little laugh. The one that went with the look that meant, "Now aren't you the cutest thing to take yourself so seriously."

Painting isn't really your thing. But Angel was playing with oils and you had to try. Sometimes you feel that you have the detestable compulsion to stick your finger into every pie. A needling kind of suspicion that Angel might want to have this one thing for herself.

"Damn" she said, plaintively, when you tried something new. "No matter what you do, you do it better than I!" When she took you ice-skating you amazed her by staying on your feet. When you played your first game of billiards, you won. And other things. And she applauded. But somewhere, you were certain, she resented. You were glad when you goofed out on the horse-back riding. That was definitely her thing, not yours. So that eased your conscience a little about the painting.

You head for the cathedral, but two blocks on you change your mind and go like a homing pigeon straight over to Philip's house. Sanctuary. Whether Philip is home or not. God oh God oh God, how many oceans of tears have you wept here? Enough to float the house away. Five years of it, and all for Ron.

"How did you endure it?" you asked Philip, when it was over. "You must have been pretty damp and pretty sick of the sound of her name."

"Sick of her, babykins. And what you were doing to yourself because of her. Not sick of listening, ever."

But some days, like today, talking wasn't what you needed, and crying not what you intended. Philip wouldn't be home today, so you let yourself in and say "Good-morning" to Cheetah, the silver Persian. She looks at you with somber emerald eyes, permits one light caress, and disappears. A lady who knows when someone wants to be alone.

So here you are again, in Philip's house, where the door is never locked and the music always going. (To keep Cheetah from being lonely when Philip is away.) And everything piled every which way everywhere. You put the kettle on, and when it whistles you brew strong hot coffee and clear a place on the couch.

To whom do you address yourself at such a time? Dear doctor? Dear Abby? Not Dear God. You did that, inadvertently, once. It was a little like rubbing the

dust from an Aladdin's lamp and having a genie pop out at you. It was the day of your Ron-walk. That really Pilgrim's Progress kind of day. You were slaying your first dragon, so of course it was the toughest.

"We slay our dragons, one by one," Philip said.

"But life is so full of dragons," you complained. "Slay one, another jumps out."

But that one was, in truth, a dragon of a different color. It bore the name of love, and that kind isn't so easily slain. You walked, that day, and then you got on a bus and stayed until the end of the line. And then you walked some more and found a tiny park and a bench. You sat on the bench and thought about how to exist without love but with dignity. You thought of Ron's lips in the night and something howled inside. And it came out sounding like, "Oh God, what shall I do!" It nearly shocked you off the bench, as though you had uttered a profanity. You have an ethic. It

is unscrupulous to go in time of trouble where you don't go in time of peace. But there it was, and something happened. Like an instant answer to a completely unpremeditated prayer. For a horrible moment you thought you would bawl. Right there on that park bench with people in their Sunday clothes strolling all around you.

You beat back the tears and left that place. Walked, filled with resolution and yet incredibly lighter, back to the bus and then went home. And when Ron called, you said what had to be said. After several hours the telephone stopped ringing. And that, for the time it kept, was that.

Sitting now, in Philip's living room, with no one to address except yourself, you think, "Had that victory kept, I might not have needed this one. Nor any victories, ever again."

You turn and regard yourself in the mirrored wall behind Philip's sofa. Portrait of Julia. Too thin, and not young enough. Not young enough for what, everything being relative? Well, for one thing, not young enough to compete with Ilga. You said compete, for God's sake! Since when did you, Julia, compete for anything, ever? You look at yourself very severely. You get up from the sofa and contemplate your full length self in the mirror. Out of juxtaposition with nine-year-old boys and pixie-faced girls of twenty-two, you don't look especially like somebody's mother. But

you are. Scott's. And sometimes Angel's. Her mother-away-from-home. Not that she should have needed one. Marian Linden was very much of a mother. Too much of one sometimes, Angel thought. Funny. When Angel was just that young somebody who was Viv's friend, you remarked, "If I had a daughter I'd like her to be just like Angel." And you'd walked across the room to where she sat and planted a kiss on her forehead.

Later she told you. "I thought I would absolutely perish! I didn't wash my face for a week."

"Why, darling?" you asked. "I'm sure you must have considered me an antique--"

"An antique! You don't know how I worshipped you from afar. I couldn't stand it, sometimes, the way Ron treated you..."

Incredible, that this enchanting child should have had any thoughts about you at all. Enchanting child? Well, she was enchanting. She is still enchanting, in that place where the eye and the ear meet with the imagination and you forget the blood and bones and all that lies beneath the ginger-freckles and gold-bronze hair. She was enchanting in the way you were the glamorous sophisticate. And both of you bewitched just long enough to weave the snare and bind you together. If you allowed Angel any delusion at all, here is where it was. For as long as it took her to change your image.

But where she felt you had cheated, you never had at all. Much much later, when she said, "You intellectualize love right out of existence," you had no argument. You hadn't practiced to deceive. So you laughed and said, "'Tell me, where is fancy bred, in the heart or in the head?'" A rhetorical question. Poetically excellent, biologically unanswerable, psychologically ridiculous. And Angel was acute. Because if you analyze love, your own love, that is--it was never there in the first place.

You hadn't meant it to be there. You were sick of love. Of the hurtful, destroying unanalyzed love, which was the only kind you knew. Ron was gone, but the pain was there. Still there, biting and burning inside you, when you discovered Angel again, two months after you sent Ron out of your life.

She was huddled against the bar like a waif seeking shelter from the cold. You came in at the end of the long, grueling Convention day, with your party of out-of-town friends. You didn't see her at first,

but when you spotted her across the murky room, you excused yourself from the table.

"Angel! Are you here alone?" You were shocked at her appearance. Dirty blue jeans and her freckles dark against the pale, thin face.

"Yes. I left Viv. Four days ago." She blurted it out.

"Good. I'm glad to hear it." You were equally abrupt. But your words played back to you with too heartless a sound, and you added, "You endured enough, too."

So you take her back to your table and introduce her to the celebrity in your group. You ask her to join your party, but she begins to shrink away.

"Could--could I buy you a drink, later?" she asks.

"Why, yes. I'll come to the bar--afterwhile."

You sit with your friends and engage in conversation with Doctor Wardell. But your eyes wander to Angel across the room and you see that she is talking with Tracy and Ginger. You feel less anxiety then, because you have noticed Viv on the dance floor and you were afraid.

Dr. Wardell looks at her wristwatch and says, "Time for the old lady to be in bed." So the party begins to break up and then you go to the bar.

"I meant to tell you before," Angel says. "You look very nice."

"Thank you." You look at her, sharply. "But I don't like the way you look, Angel. Where are you staying now?"

"At home. At the Worcestor." No one would imagine that this little scarecrow lived in a penthouse apartment overlooking the square. You wonder how she gets past the doorman.

"My mother isn't there," Angel adds. "She's still at the shore."

You aren't surprised. You have yet to meet Marian Linden, but you are positive Angel could not escape her presence in this condition.

Angel puts a drink in your hand. "Just this one," you say. "Then I must leave. I'm very tired."

"You don't look tired. You look very nice."

"You already said that. But thanks again."

"Oh, did I? Oh..well, you do!" And she giggles, breaking up the starkness of her pinched little face.

Ginger gives you her seat. "I didn't know you knew Angel," she says. "How are you, Julia? We don't see you very often."

"I haven't been here--for a long time." This was a place to stay away from. If Ron plotted to encounter you, this is where she would come.

"I'll drive you home," Angel ventures. "If maybe you'll stay--for a little while?"

In the end, you stay until the place closes, and by now you are light-headed with whiskey and exhaustion. Angel bears you off to another place and you hardly notice the transition. Only that here, as in some crazy dream, you and Angel are dancing together and she has become a different Angel. In this limbaic fantasy, the timid mouse, the shy diffident creature, is transformed. She is holding your hand, caressing you, and speaking words from lips no longer pale and trembling.

It is dawn when Angel stops her car in front of your apartment. The crisp air has cleared your head a little and the fantastic girl of your crazy dream is gone.

"Would you like to come in for coffee?" you ask.

"Would it be all right? I mean--won't we disturb your little boy?"

"Scotty's with his grandmother, in the country. Come...."

You talk until sunlight streaks the room. Between cups of coffee you get out of your clothes and into your pajamas, and you are sitting curled up in a corner of the sofa while Angel sits cross-legged on the floor.

"Funny," you say, after awhile. "When the four of us were together, you never spoke one word to me. Now look at you!"

-to be continued -

DAUGHTERS of BILITIS

INCORPORATED

MEMBERSHIP in Daughters of Bilitis is limited to women 21 years of age or older. If in San Francisco, New York, or Chicago area, direct inquiry to chapter concerned. Otherwise write to National Office in San Francisco for a membership application form.

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NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS and San Francisco Chapter:
3470 Mission St.
San Francisco, Calif. 94110

Los Angeles Chapter: P. O. Box 727
Manhattan Beach, Calif.

New York Chapter; P. O. Box 3629
Grand Central Station
New York 17, New York

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS, INC.

3470 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif.

Please send *THE LADDER* for _____ year(s) in a plain sealed envelope to the address below. I enclose \$_____ at the rate of \$5.00 for each year ordered.

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I am over 21 years of age (Signed) _____