

The Ladder

acme

A Lesbian Review

75¢



Season's
Greetings

DECEMBER, 1967



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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Clyde's Hearth

by Jan Addison

Sid tightened the last bulb and the lights came on. It was a good job. The sort of fat, dense tree that Ardis loved, lots of starry glitter, showers of foil icicles, and the colors of light and ornament nicely scattered. She moved one tinsel star, looped up some strands of foil that a cat could reach and eat and then throw-up. Just exactly, now, as Ardis and Clyde would like it if they were to be here. IF.

She flung herself into the well-hollowed recliner, kicked moccasins off her aching feet, and was suddenly cold to the bone. Of course. Twelve-thirty, and the building's heat went down at midnight. And she was dog-tired, a brute of a day at Union Utilities, half the population blowing fuses with their wild outdoor decorations, emergency crews to schedule without end, and the normal free Saturday cancelled in the name of The Holidays. Store sales-girls, poor devils, weren't the only martyrs.

Why had she knocked herself out tonight, with no letter, no phone call, no real idea at all that Ardis would come? In the highball glass at her elbow were only dregs and pea-size bits of ice. Brrr! She hauled herself up and went down the long room to turn the kitchen switch under the kettle. Hot buttered rum, that's what she'd warm up with. Just like their first one together. Pretend it was beginning all over again. Recklessly she went back and set a match to the fire laid ready for tomorrow. And tomorrow, full of no more hope-she'd blot that out with sleep. Drink to-

night until nothing was possible but around-the-clock sleep.

With the hot, clove-fragrant glass beside her, she let her head fall back and watched the fire between half-closed lids. One good thing about these old buildings, even with their heat curfews they had fireplaces that let you burn real logs, not gas or electric imitations. And of course lots of room, too. Twenty-foot living-dining space. Bedroom for a king-size bed. Real tub instead of one of these sitz-bath deals... What rosy hopes of sharing it all when she rented it!

Rrrrring. The phone!

Barely setting down her glass, she was across the room saying "Yes?" in a pulsing voice several tones lower than normal.

"Is-is Lutie there?" came a bleat. "Ooh dear, musta got a wrong number."

Sid's slam of the handset punctuated her blistering curses.

No, Ardis wasn't coming. With her Saturday free, she'd have been here by now. And this no letter, no phone-call business. In fact, (face it, fool!) letters have been fairly scarce lately. Was she simply cooling off, breaking it gently? Or was there somebody else...

Sid tossed down a long draught. Somebody else with Ardis tonight, as she had been six years ago. That mad night when Boutique North had been ordered to keep its doors open till midnight, with Manager Ardis Murray working right along with her driven staff. Choosing Assistant Sid-

onie Carr to help with closing up, to the noisy relief of those set free. And to the silent ecstasy of Sid, who for months had been scheming for some dignified way to crash the barriers around an office-bound Manager four years her junior. Sometimes she'd imagined that Ardis Murray had a special eye for her, but you learn (mostly the hard way) not to let your wish be father to many thoughts like that.

But on that Christmas Eve, Sid knew even before they double-locked the plate-glass door and faced the sleet blasting in from the Lake that she had been *chosen*. And so, as they yelped at the first onslaught of ice and huddled into turned up collars, she'd said without effort, 'Do stop at my place, it's only around a couple of corners, and get unwound before you drive home.' And Ardis: 'What a wonderful idea!'

And there had been hot buttered rum beside the electric grate, and Kiki doing his best purr, a voiced baritone gargle, over his ground-round. And then-All barriers down with a crash. And on Christmas morning, Ardis still in her arms, sleet no longer lashing the windows, all the warmth in the world under the chocolate satin eiderdown.

Ardis had even glowed over her stark bachelor tree, with only plain red and green spheres, sparse lights, candy-canes. And then the stretching of a loner's supplies into an hilarious lunch, to lengthen their heavenly day together before going out for a late supper.

And the re-christening of Kiki! 'That's a poodle name, and he's like a St. Bernard,' Ardis protested, watching the heavy tiger kitten's slow, sedate, aldermanly approach, his grown-tomcat paws making his gait slightly bow-legged. 'It's as bad as a circus pony's name for a champion Clydes-

dale!'

'Not guilty. The name came with him. He's a gift, you see.'

'Then let's give *him* a gift! Hello, Clydesdale.' The solemn, usually indifferent tiger rose on his hind legs, front paws lovingly kneading Ardis's thigh, and gave his best baritone gargle. So forever after, of course, he was Clyde-for-short.

Six perfect years in Ardis's bigger, farther-north apartment. Or five and two-thirds, to be scientifically accurate. And as nearly perfect as is humanly possible, in unbroken intimacy between two hard-driven wage earners, to be scrupulously honest. Especially when the superior earner is junior, and the senior is subordinate through mere chance of job juniority. (Am I slightly sozzled? But if seniority is a good word, why not its opposite?)

Hell, why should anyone be so obsessed with providing for her own old age? Have such a thing against the risk of being dependent on her junior? No use beating that dead horse. If you're made like that you can't fight it. So the chance to be Office Manager at Union Utilities, half a thousand miles away but at double your current salary, was as compelling as a legal sentence. 'Just till I can salt away enough to know I'll *never* be a burden. -And maybe something might open up for *you* there, it's a big city. And if I'm Office Manager-'

Any suppressed desire to be the superior for a change? Oh hell, hell, hell! Because now here the switch came. Vacancy for an assistant O.M., salary almost equal to Ardis's at Boutique North, and hours more regular and less strenuous. (Except, of course, when the small fry went on strike, and 'those in executive positions' must stand ready to meet all emergencies, day or night. But that seemed a pretty

remote threat).

So why didn't Ardis jump at it? Why, in fact, would she go into reverse and dredge up all manner of objections? Unless there *was* really someone else up there now . . .

The rum tumbler was empty and she was cold again. Another, quickly? Or-call Ardis. Rout her out of bed at one a.m. Sid was on her feet, the phone an irresistible magnet. BUT. She stopped dead half way down the long room. Suppose you didn't get her? Suppose she wasn't home. Which would mean, in someone else's bed. Because even if this wasn't Christmas Eve, being Saturday would amount to the same thing, with Sunday a certain holiday.

Not needing to look up the code or any other number, she went on and carefully manipulated the direct dialing. She heard the multiple small ticks, clicks, pops, and then the ringing of Ardis's phone. As familiar as the sound of her own apartment buzzer, after all the times she'd listened to it.

Four was the average number of rings before an answer. Six—perhaps she was in the tub or under a shower. Eight . . . ten . . . twelve . . . She counted thirty-two before she gave up. The wet drops on the phone stand were tears. Suddenly she began shivering, deep, bone-shaking shudders. Hot shower, then another hot drink big enough to knock her out past noon tomorrow. With luck. Without it, a season in hell.

She mopped the phone stand with a Kleenex, and then her face. Then, moving as her mother had moved at seventy, she crossed and set up the fire-screen. If only she had Clyde to bed down for the night! But one couldn't start hunting apartments with a cat-satchel in hand. And Ardis couldn't bear to let him go. She *said*.

Let someone else enter the scene up there and let's see what happens. Oh, darling dignified lumbering old Clyde. All her handy Kleenex tissues were by now steaming on the dying logs. Get a fresh fistful before mixing this last Mickey Finn drink.

The door buzzer buzzed. Who the hell at one-thirty? Lone women don't trustingly press release buttons, especially in these old buildings with no switchboard and no doorman. She slid the communication switch. "Who is it? What do you want?" she added as a reply did not come on the instant.

"It's just a couple of friends," said a voice she would have known in Antarctica. Her heart somersaulted. But—a couple?

Her own voice sharpened. "Sorry, your name, please. We've had some ugly tricks played, random buzzing to get into the building."

"Oh, Sid! It's me. And Clyde."

Her answer was a crazy wordless cry and a wild stabbing of the release button. Then she dashed to turn on the kettle before dashing back and out to the single elevator. It was already humming its way up.

When its door opened, there actually was Ardis, grey with cold and exhaustion, a heavy suitcase beside her, the cat-satchel in her hand. Sid seized the suitcase, and her other arm scooped Ardis and her burden across the corridor into the big room. Once the door was closed they clung, kissing, half crying, until a plaintive howl came from the satchel Ardis had dropped.

"Oh, darling!" Sid choked. "Throw off those frozen things and let poor Clyde out while I mend the fire and fix something hot."

Speechlessly docile, Ardis took off her coat and opened the satchel. Clyde came out with innate mistrust and



THE LESBIAN IN LITERATURE a bibliography

By Gene Damon and Lee Stuart

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refused to admit he had ever seen Sid before. But Sid, rebuilding the fire, mixing vast buttered rums, and running hot water over the frozen giblets of her small Christmas turkey, was too busy to feel rejected.

Inside a quarter hour they were sitting before bright logs sipping scalding and powerful drinks, and Clyde was rather noisily chomping turkey liver. "Now then, for God's sake tell me!" Sid ordered. "How did you get here?"

"I'll try, but I'm pretty bushed. I'll clear things up in the morning," Ardis drank deep and yawned splittingly. "Big Boss Brotherton came in just as I opened this morning and said that Boutiques North and Southwest were going to stay open till midnight *tomorrow*. (No, today isn't it?) *Sunday*. No previous notice, absolutely no warning. The girls were *rabid*. I was too tired to give much of a damn about anything. I *thought*."

She paused, drank again, went on: "Haven't told you while things were hanging fire, but I've been dickering with your U.U. ever since you wrote about that vacancy. They came almost up to my old salary and I put in a sort of half-hearted application, with references. Ol' debbil Pride got in the way of my just snatching it and coming down here fast. Not nice, after your really unselfish reasons for not going on working under me, is it?"

"Ardis! Don't, *please*. Just tell me what's happened!"

"What's happened is that Brotherton lit a slow fuse and I blew up in his face at nine-thirty this morning. Told him where he could shove his whole half dozen Boutiques, but not me with 'em because I was getting out as of that minute. Told him to keep a month's salary in lieu of notice but if he held out for more I'd sue him."

"Seven rousing cheers! Did you throw the new job at him?"

"Hon, who mentioned any new job? I just cleared out." She held out her empty glass for a refill, and Sid asked, "Look, have you had any dinner?"

"Oh yes, of sorts, at a Greasy Spoon, but it isn't food I need. Hurry back and listen."

Making record time as a mixer, Sid settled again. "And-?"

"I went up the street and phoned from a public box. Told U.U. I was much interested. So, it seems, are they. Had heard from all my references, and-provisionally, of course-promised to meet my Boutique salary if a Tuesday morning interview proved satisfactory and I'd start full-time work on January second."

"Oh, darling! That means you're here tomorrow, and Christmas, and have all next week to get moved?"

"Uh-huh."

"Hallelujah! But I still don't know how-how *did* you get here? I held my breath for an hour after every plane and train and bus was due that I could get a line on—"

"I drove, of course."

"Drove? Five hundred miles in this?" She gestured wildly toward the window, through which, now that the building heat was quite gone, the arctic seemed to seep in.

"Yup. I wanted to be here," Ardis murmured drowsily. "So did Clyde."

Clyde was already dead to the world on the warm hearth. Ardis was less than half awake as Sid half-steered, half carried her to the bedroom. There she began gently to undress her. But-nothing but sleep to-night! She herself would bunk on the living room divan, to give Ardis complete rest. But there was tomorrow (no, today, what was left of it) and Christmas. And after that-God willing, a Happy Ever After.

Before she was asleep, Clyde plumped heavily onto the divan and settled solidly into the curve between her knees and breast.

LESBIANA

by Gene Damon



It is hard to praise a book which begs damning, by its arrogance, its cruelty, its contrived and over-used plot (sired by Thornton Wilder, out of Grace Metalious), but praise it must have. *THE FLAMINGOS*, by Robert Somerlott, Boston, Little, Brown, 1967, is a first novel, with most first novel flaws, but with more romance, sheer fun and adventure than we usually see these days. There are few flamingos in San Antonio Tlaxtalapan, a forsaken, hot jungle town on the coast of Mexico, and very few Amer-

icans-and it is with these latter rare birds Mr. Somerlott is concerned. They are, alas, typical stereotypes: the much married and beautiful aging bitch, with a couple of children to add to her "burden"; the young man on the run looking for a pad; the distinguished, intelligent and gentle male homosexual, who provides the pad; two old maids in a folding bed, from a small town in Kansas, festering from a lifetime of not looking at the truth of their relationship; a vicious dyke, using her money to buy cringing at-

tention from the natives and her power to cheat a welfare project for the town; the attractive, crippled war veteran, running from a marriage that couldn't have worked; an enigmatic impotent slob, and his very frustrated wife, etc....

There are, perhaps, a dozen other characters, it is a long book, and the old tired, tried and true method of alternative bits and pieces is used to tell ALL of their stories. Major interest here should focus on Matthew Selkirk, a professor and translator of note, who has run away to Mexico to name his home, Casa Xanadu. He has lived alone for three years, growing ripe, so to speak, for the presence of Clay McPherson, who, believing himself guilty of a justifiable crime (the reader will fervently wish he has committed it) calls himself Touch Crockett. Their relationship reaches an unpredictable conclusion, and this is surprising in this generally predictable book. Along the way you get to like Matthew and Clay very much, and they are the book's nicest characters. Mildred and Angela, the two teachers from Kansas, are a rather sad pair and a pretty good look from a male author of what sexual repression can lead to in personality disintegration. Mildred, bitch though she is, is an object of pity. Angela, well many women have had the misfortune of having an Angela to care for, and about, in vain... Miss Mercy, the roaring one, is so overdrawn that those with a sense of humor will laugh-the rest of you will form a "Kill Somerlott" club. After we have seen the Peyton Place side of all of these people, we move on to Thornton Wilder. The cast is far too large to have all of them dumped off a bridge into a ravine, so instead we have a dam break, and drown most of them. Only the "good" sur-

vive, as chosen, and probably rightly, since he is the author, by Mr. Somerlott. You won't agree with all of his choices, but it is a good romantic book while you are reading, and he handles dialogue like a master. Next time around he may find a less contrived cast-we can hope so.

Not too many years ago, one homosexual short story in a collection of stories was the most a reader could hope to find. There have been several collections recently with two or more (most notably John O'Hara's inclusion of eight pertinent stories in his last collection). Graham Greene's delightful male homosexual story, "May We Borrow Your Husband," was used as the titular tale in his latest collection, *MAY WE BORROW YOUR HUSBAND; AND OTHER COMEDIES OF THE SEXUAL LIFE*, N. Y., Viking, 1967, and London, The Bodley Head, 1967. Having read the story too many years ago to properly remember it, I picked the collection up and found a very welcome bonus. There are two Lesbian stories in the book as well. The first, "Chagrin In Three Parts," features a male narrator overhearing a subtle seduction in a restaurant, between a grass widow and a sod widow. It is an old-fashioned comedy and seems dated, but it is very funny. The second story, "The Over-Night Bag," is primarily about a man who claims to have a dead child in his hand luggage on a BOAC flight from Nice to London. His seat-mate is a large Lesbian named Tiny, on her way home to "cuddly Bertha" in London. Underplayed, all the way.

A sober book by Wainwright Churchill, a clinical psychologist, *HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG MALES*, N. Y. Hawthorn, 1967, contains, despite the title, in-

formation of general importance to all homosexuals. He considers present heterosexual society "pathological" in its attempts to wipe out homosexual behavior. He uses the rather simple approach that since homosexuals have always existed, and apparently will always exist in any society, the logical thing to do is revoke all of the laws governing such behavior (except, of course, for those which prevent violence and harm to minors). He pleads very very strongly for "the right to be different," at the same time making it very clear that such behavior is learned behavior, and not inherited. He differs, of course, from many psychologists in not finding such activity neurotic, psychotic, or socially undesirable.

On the other side, a book which masquerades as serious, *THE CROSS OF LASSITUDE*, by Jean Colebrook, N.Y., Knopf, 1967, is rather vicious in its unspoken assumptions. The author deals with five delinquent females, and for some weird reason she has chosen Lesbians almost exclusively. Now what she has to say, few will quarrel with (she is anti-homosexual, but no more violently so than many before her); but her subject choice implies that there are no delinquent heterosexuals. Miss Colebrook, a social worker, is a good writer. She is talented enough, in fact, to do a good deal of damage with this harshly sentimental book. The innocent general reader will be left with the impression that Lesbians all take dope, are sadistic, drink too much, occasionally have screaming fits, prostitute themselves miscellaneously, and are all named "Baby," "Frankie," "Harry," "Pug Nose," and "Beppo." A very stacked deck.

Usually only angry people write let-

ters. The letters I receive are no exception to this, generally blastings about books I have "slighted" or "erroneously" reviewed. But I do get one serious question over and over again: "How do you find these books?" The answer is easy, but the finding isn't. The best source of initial information is found in the book reviews in some twenty periodicals, with the emphasis on those slanted toward book dealers and librarians. But reviewers are a chimerical lot, and a book with a good deal of homosexual activity and characters may well be reviewed often without mention of this aspect of the plot. On the other hand, sometimes reviewers will mention very slight homosexual content in a manner which would lead you to believe that the book was primarily homosexual. At best, the reviews are just the beginning, and you have to read a long time to learn to interpret the reviewers. Even then, you must read many books which just might be pertinent, to find those that are. This includes not only those "suspicious" titles supplied by general reviewers, but the category novels, where statistical incidence is higher. These would be all school and college novels, all segregated institution novels of whatever kind, all highly feminist novels (or conversely, all very male-oriented novels), most large-cast, several generation family novels, and most multi-cast isolated situation novels.

William Herrick's magnificent first novel, *THE ITINERANT*, N. Y., McGraw-Hill, 1967, is a good example of a title where the reviews made much of the homosexual content, and the book really is a very minor title. This is a very good book, though, and no one reading it is wasting her time. The hero's first wife is a Lesbian, but

she occupies only a couple of chapters in the book. There are several references to other minor Lesbian characters and the hero has a brief adolescent homosexual affair himself. Reviews have been fairly good, and most medium and large public libraries will have this.

Successful women, particularly those who are eminent in careers generally pursued by males, are always fascinating. Malvina Hoffman, one of our most famous sculptors, had a second book of memoirs published just before her death in 1966. *YES-TERDAY IS TOMORROW*, N. Y., Crown, 1965, is subtitled "A Personal History," and this is just right for the general reader. She does not spend all of her time discussing her sculpture, though she does give a chronological history of her important works. Much of the book is about her personal life, and, as would be inevitable, she knew a great many famous people in the various arts. Among others she discusses Grace Frick and Marguerite Yourcenar, Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein, Pavlova, and Mercedes de Acosta. Miss Hoffman's earlier book of memoirs, *HEADS AND TALES*, was published in 1936 by Scribner's, and has been reissued in recent years and is also readily available. Again, these are titles very likely to be found in your local library.

THE COMPANY SHE KEPT, by Doris Grumbach, N. Y., Coward-McCann, 1967, is going to disappoint an awful lot of people, those who rush out to buy it hoping to find out all about Mary McCarthy, whose biography this attempts to be. I expected a better job from Miss Grumbach (she is the author of *THE SPOIL OF THE FLOWERS*, Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, 1962,

a fairly major Lesbian title, and *THE SHORT THROAT*, *THE TENDER MOUTH*, same publisher, 1964, a college novel with some male homosexuality included). Unfortunately, there isn't a scrap that's new in this book. Anyone who has kept up with McCarthy's own writings, and her much publicized private life, can skip this book. She identifies a good number of McCarthy's fictional characters—but, no, she doesn't tell us who Elinor Eastlake (Lakey) from *THE GROUP* is in real life. In fairness, how could she?

Edna O'Brien, who is acquiring a reputation for unusually good portraits of women, down to the very bone at that, is not a really good writer. This is unfortunate, because all of the necessary ingredients are present in *CASUALTIES OF PEACE*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1966, N.Y., Simon and Schuster, 1967, except real talent. About glass sculptor, Willa, and her servants, Patsy and Tom, a poorly-mated couple. Willa is a jump or two from the border of insanity, and is, at the beginning anyway, a wildly frustrated woman. Early in the story, she makes a very subtle physical pass at Patsy, which Patsy ignores, and during this time, Willa recalls her "first" experience with a woman. This was a brief adolescent affair with a cousin, Pauline, which was complete, but passive on Willa's part. I have deliberately emphasized the "first" above, because there are no other specific references to female lovers of Willa in the book. Miss O'Brien's most successful works seem to be her short stories, and from time to time in her novels she so isolates an incident (such as this one described here) that it seems intended for that shorter, less demanding form. (And for the questioners about

sources, here is another one, once a writer hops into the field, you have to watch for subsequent trips—thus this writer's earlier Lesbian short story, "Sister Imelda," caused me to read this novel—and now, almost alas, I must go back and read all of her novels.)

Am removing spring
With wine, you see.
Hurter of hearts go away!
My love, a desperate child,
Rejected in classical tradition,
Does not like the sight
Of mothers in the park.

THREE POEMS BY DEE

The dialogue continues
Although in silence.
Your eyes say —
My eyes say —
Your eyes say —
The same thought
The same conversation
Sometimes continued lovingly
We chatter, smile, are warm.
But this is the same.
Our togetherness foreverness
Dialogue.

I see you come into the bar
Like two young, lithe tigers
Golden heads glowing together
The laughing arrogance of one
Matching the sullen pride of the other.
On one a long blond mane
Falling, flying to the shoulders,
Black lace sweater, innocence.
The receptionist face, innocence —
The walk — the walk of a cat —
The height and pride of a princess
"People never like me at first

They say I'm stuck up — too good for them."
Yes, only when assured your beauty
Like all beauty, its own excuse for being.
Do you offer charm or wit or friendship.
The other with you is as bad.
Her hair a little darker,
Shorn too brief to ever bear
A compromising curl.
Black vest, boy's pants and shoes.
Who was it, caustic, called you
"A little boy in his first long pants."
Your eyelids lowered, your mouth turned down.
You are both sans sunglasses.
Do I only imagine those four bright eyes
Are shining, glimmering in the dark?
And yes, you are right,
I am happy, eager to see you.
A young drag butch and her girl?
No, not true!
You stalked in from the forest.
You are every bit as wild and free and tough
As you like to think you are.
You are two beautiful golden children.
Twins and comrades and lovers.
You stop at my table and we chat.
You do not miss the brightness of my eyes.
And think, "She still cares,
She wants her still."
Should you say it aloud.
I'd swear I did not know myself.
I love you both, that is true,
Feed on, drink in your beauty.
You are a glorious act of God.
(What would my Baptist mother say!)
You are as free and true as a thunderstorm,
And no more to be judged.
You move on through the room,
Which is a little brighter now.



RANDOM THOUGHTS

FOR THIS TIME

by Ben Cat



To be the Christmas Cat is a very special thing. Humans have many, many Christmases . . . Cats may have nine, sometimes up to twenty, but they have to make do with what they get and sometimes their human companions waste a few of their precious celebrations.

I, Ben, have been very fortunate. My girls have cared for me on some holidays when they hadn't time really to care for themselves. In my own demanding way, perhaps I have made them know that whatever their problems might have been, mine were greater, for I had no way of solving mine without their help.

One of my girls is in some sort of work that starts messing around with Christmas in July. By the time Thanksgiving comes, she is likely to make great noise about the hypocrisy of the season, the worship of profit, etc., and sometimes she gets quite carried away with the idea of not celebrating Christmas at all. She says that by the time the holiday rolls around she is already thinking about Easter and Mother's Day and it is all a fraud and a disillusion or a snare or something.

Fortunately, she loves my other girl and she loves me and she loves our friends . . . so when the DAY comes, there is always some seasonal decoration and presents and good food

and good companionable revelry.

As a true cat, I must say that I get very nervous each year. It is necessary to my well-being that I know somewhat how things are going to turn out. For example, I am writing this in mid-October so that it can get to press in time for the December issue of THE LADDER. At this very moment, things are less than holiday-like. My people are giving up smoking. There is prognostication about impending death from smog where we live. (I have been sneezing lately.) There is a miserable sort of war between humans going on. My girls know some soldiers. Sandy says that if Jesus was the "Prince of Peace," he sure never made King.

Nobody ever asks me, but I do have some opinions about these things. What matters most in all the world is that people have enough to eat at the time they want to eat it and it must be what they want to eat. Any reasonable cat could tell you that. After that, I think we must concern ourselves with washing . . . I have quite a bit of a problem with this, but it is part of my general time consumption. Bathing should be available for everyone. Love should be generously interspersed at every possible moment. (Perhaps demonstrative affection is

a better way of putting that.) It would please me very much to think that all human-type children could fare as well as I in these three essentials. Sandy says shelter is important, too, but I think that will be available if the other three requirements are met.

* * *

There is some sort of problem about race that has got a lot of noise around here. I suppose that this wouldn't occur if people were as nice to each other as they are to pets. I am an American Shorthair. I have never felt any discrimination from any cat-lover even if they might be breeders of very special types. Some people don't like cats at all. But those who do, seem to be able to like *all* cats. Is it possible that those people who like only certain types of people are deluding themselves and, in reality, they don't like people as a whole, including themselves?

My people have said to me that Christmas is for children. I cannot pick a quarrel with that. I shall happily become as a child and I hope that all of our friends do the same.

As I contemplate all this, I think the Divine Planner made a big mistake. Perhaps New Year and its things should come first and after a while when all was settled and the budgets were drawn and the bonuses were spent and the new taxes were levied, then we could take our Christmas Day and thank whatever Deity we observe that things were no worse than they turned out to be. As it is, we celebrate in a sort of devil-may-care, apprehensive aura. People's world is a fiscal world and they talk a lot between parties about how they are going to pay their bills. This year some are "living it up" because the holocaust is "imminent." People make bombs, super bombs, atomic bombs,

hydrogen bombs. Cats are at the mercy of this nonsense. Cats just have to put up with whatever their people may decide. But that doesn't mean that Cats don't have opinions.

I have checked around the neighborhood and have found that 80% of the adult Cats believe that people are mentally ill. The other 20% think that people do not exist (that is because they don't have permanent homes). My Cat control group believes that people, as a whole, male and female, are in some sort of competitive situation that causes them to lose all sight of personal enjoyment or enrichment. They buy books that they don't read. They buy records that they play only once. They subscribe to magazines that pile up on any flat surface. Most of them watch television and quarrel with what they see. Some listen to radio and quarrel with what they hear. My own people fit into all these categories, but it is pleasure to me to know that they *do* have greater goals and that they spend much time achieving them. My whole survey makes me sad and I am glad that I *am* a Cat and that my life-span does not require my participation in nearly so much beginning-and-end as people's will.

When I set out to write this column, I had hoped to give you all a Christmas message. Let me hasten to get at my chore. I have looked up all my references because I don't trust some of the preachers that I've met lately. I have selected several "texts." To begin with, there is Matt. 4, 16 where it is said, "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." Next is Matt. 7, 1 where it is written, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." I, person-one Cat, suggest that this

whole Chapter is good reading.

Cats do not necessarily observe the teachings of Christ, but, when the Book says, "And behold, the *whole city* came out to meet Jesus . . ." you can bet that *we all* were there.

As a non-working part of the economy, I have much time to study the errors and truths of humans. I have found that their Jesus was a very tolerant type. Perhaps that is why we are still celebrating his birthday. He had a message about an ideal that Man may aspire to, but few ever reach. I have observed that those humans who *do* seem to come close to this ideal from time to time are reviled by those who do not. Christ said, "Beware of men." Perhaps he meant that men would make all sorts of judgments and purposes which would not be of God, but rather of Man. When I attend some of the meetings that my girls hold in our home, I think that what they are contending with are Man's laws and Man's opinions. They are certainly not those that were proposed by Their Christ. What does a Cat know of Christ? A Cat can listen, a Cat can observe. From my fine old 1898 translation from the Greek of the New Testament, I can read, "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of this own household." Chew that a minute! Heresy! But it is there . . . Matt. 10, 35/36.

I hope that at this Christmas time you will not read the "old, old story," but that you will range around the texts and pit some of them against your "prehistoric heads." Try to understand this Man whom you honor at this time of year. Before you get

blind drunk at the Christmas party, before you spend your money up into next February satisfying the urge to herd, consider how it would be if your life were as short as a cat's. You wouldn't have so much time to compromise your honor. You wouldn't have so much time to wait for a change. You wouldn't have so much time to rationalize your position. You wouldn't have so much time to criticize action when you think waiting would pay off better.

When any of you people who like to condemn such wonderful humans as my girls and all their men and women friends who fall into a category which you can name in many ways, but do not understand, I care enough to quote again: "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things that come out of him, those are they that defile the man . . ." (St. Mark 7, 14-15.)

This is about all a Cat can handle and I have been working on it for a long time.

I am going to rest now for a week or two so that I can enjoy all the celebrations. You should all do the same. We are all beloved and somewhat right in our own ways.

Peace and Good will to all Cats, Women, Men and Dogs.



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LET CHICKIE COME OVER

by Flicka Moore

"Red Rover-Red Rover-Let Chickie come over!"

Gravel flew out from under Chickie's feet as she raced like a demon across the school yard and crashed with all her might into the many-armed monster that had called her. Writhing like a giant snake, the line of kids whipped around, hands straining to stay locked against Chickie's steel strength.

"We got her-we got her!" screamed a jumping boy, and the whole line yipped and screeched wildly. She hadn't been able to break through; Chickie was theirs, they had won her fair and square. What a prize!

They watched her to see what she'd do this time. You never knew with Chickie. She was queer, strange, peculiar. Funny things went on in the back of her head. As they joined hands to challenge another runner, they were happy. They knew they'd win them all now. That is, if Chickie-they watched her, wondering.

Chickie stretched out her hands and four or five in the line tried to grab them. "Come on, you guys-we have to map our strategy." She was teaching them how to win and they knew it. They listened so hard, their ears flapped.

"We have to get some of the weak ones first-the girls. To build up our strength."

"Jane Ellen!" squawked one of the boys. Chickie frowned. That was treading on sacred ground. If anything ever

happened to Jane Ellen-"Naw," she said. "Eleanor-that's a good one."

"OK!" they chorused. It was all right with them. Chickie knew what she was doing. They spread out, not too thin, and planted feet in gravel. "Hold wrists!" Chickie whispered fiercely.

"Red Rover-Red Rover-Let Eleanor over!" They began building up their numbers, and their strength.

But pretty soon all the weak girls had been captured and the ranks voted again for Jane Ellen.

Chickie couldn't stand out against her own logic. She knew she was trapped. She also knew what she'd have to do: bunch all the girls in the middle of the line, put herself among them, and somehow signal Jane Ellen to come only to her. Girls were not as rough as boys, and the impact of the run would be broken more gently. Somehow she would catch Jane Ellen and it would be all right. Nothing would happen.

"Red Rover-Red Rover-Let Jane Ellen come over!"

Jane Ellen gathered herself together carefully. Her dark, shiny curls bounced crazily on her shoulders as she ran. Chickie gasped, then bit her tongue to keep herself quiet. Jane Ellen was churning across the yard and her eyes were shut tight! Shut! Chickie's stomach began to burn and she tried to drag the leaping, shrieking line to the right with her, then to

the left. But it was no good. She couldn't follow Jane Ellen's unplanned, zigzag path.

God! Give me one little piece of one little prayer—let Jane Ellen open her eyes. But she was still running across those miles of yard—heading for disaster—and Chickie couldn't scream. Her will stood out in big drops all over her, pulling Jane Ellen toward her—pulling—pulling . . .

Then there was a gigantic collision down at the end of the line, there was a little cry of fear—Jane Ellen! There was somebody on the ground and boys and girls scattered like seeds, bending over somebody, milling around, scared.

Chickie shook off the frightened hands and ran to see what she knew was there.

"You knocked the air out of her!" somebody said.

Chickie bulled her way in and dropped to her knees. Jane Ellen was dead, oh, Jane Ellen was dead. Her long silky lashes swept her cheeks and her hair was all dusty. There was no hope.

But Chickie carefully laid herself along the length of Jane Ellen and found she was still warm. Then she could bring her back! She must! Chickie gently fitted her mouth to Jane Ellen's, closed her eyes, and tried to breathe the way Jane Ellen seemed to be breathing. But it was so weak, that breathing. Would it work, what she was trying to do?

"That's not right," said a boy over her head. "That's not the way you do it."

But Chickie lay on that softness and pressed her lips fervently to Jane Ellen's, feeling her warmth rise up and surround them. Chickie lay there and dreamed, breathing carefully; thought of her mother, remembered a warm

lake where she had gone swimming last summer. She thought of delicious things, and found she was breathing faster, as if she had been running again. Had Jane Ellen begun to revive? She looked into the face under her, but the eyes were still shut. Oh Jane Ellen—when are you going to come to?

"What are you doing, you monstrous child!" Miss Madder's grater voice clattered down all over Chickie and she raised her head with a start.

"It's artificial restoration, Miss M—"

"Get up from there this minute!" For some reason, Miss Madder's face was the color of a beet. "Respiration," she added sternly.

Chickie pulled herself away slowly, stood up finally and faced Miss Madder.

"You're more likely to kill Jane Ellen that way," Miss Madder said as a chorus of laughter broke out to back her up.

Chickie looked at them all and felt horrible. Then she gave a quick glance down at Jane Ellen. Her eyes were open—she was smiling! Chickie held in the glad cry she would have given had she been alone, spun on her heel and dashed across the yard and out the gate.

"Charlene! You come back here—" Miss Madder's voice made hardly a dent in Chickie's ears because she felt wonderful now. Jane Ellen had smiled, and Chickie was all warm inside. Her legs were weak but she wanted to run and run. Somewhere inside she felt very strange and she wanted to go back and throw herself on top of Jane Ellen again and stay there forever. But that was probably not the kind of thing you confessed to anybody, so she kept on running. Tomorrow she'd have to face

Miss Madder again, but she knew she could do it and not break down, because today she was as happy as she had ever been in her life.



AMERICAN WOMEN

AND THE LADIES GATHERED

by Lennox Strong

(Editor's Note: This article is the second in a series devoted to American Women of unusual achievement.)

Communal societies have played a minor but interesting role in our national history. Some have been very famous, such as the New Harmony group in Indiana in the 1800's. For the most part these groups have been sexually integrated; at least both sexes have been represented even in those which did away with conventional forms of marriage. However, in that bastion of male supremacy, the Sovereign State of Texas, in the late 1800's there was a wholly female communal society. This was Martha McWhirter's Sanctificationists. (Despite that male image of the State of Texas, that fine state elected the first woman governor and has the oldest women's college in the United States west of the Mississippi River as well as having the largest women's university in the United States.)

In the little Texas town of Belton,

in 1866, Martha McWhirter, a married woman with twelve children, formed a semi-religious group solely made up of women. Most of them were married women from the town's best families. They believed that they were sanctified by God. Men could join the group, but had to be "sanctified" and apparently none of them felt that they were, for men did not join the women. This meant the end of many marriages in the community and, understandably, the group first met with some resentment and resistance. Despite this the group did grow larger and stronger with the passing years. Martha was a dynamic woman and she believed in plenty of hard work for all of the members, which may have had something to do with their success.

For a time they were housed in a private home, but as the group grew larger, this became too crowded and they built a hotel. At first the hotel was just to care for their own members, but later they turned it into a commercial enterprise. Since they

offered the then rare combination of good food and clean beds they were very successful with the hotel and the profits helped them support the increasing membership.

By 1892 the group owned, besides the hotel and much inherited property (from deceased members), three farms in the area. Two of the farms were rented on shares, the third was worked by the women of the group. In winter the farm was used for rug weaving, and in the summer they grew produce to supply the hotel and their own needs.

The women maintained themselves without any outside help. They had their own dentist, shoemaker, etc. Education was encouraged and for that time the reading of the group was unusually advanced. In the summer of 1880, the entire group visited New York, in three batches, each party staying one month. Smaller portions of the membership travelled to San Francisco and Mexico City.

The purpose of these (and other later trips), in addition to education, was to locate a new site for the women. They had a very large membership (reaching at times to 50 women)-too many for the confines

of Belton. However, when they did move, it was to Washington, D.C.

They sold their, by then, enormous properties in Texas in September, 1899, and bought (for \$23,000, a huge sum for those times) a large brick house at 1437 Kennesaw Avenue, Washington, D.C. With their reported \$200,000 soundly invested, the remaining members of the group lived out their lives in the Washington house. Mrs. McWhirter died in 1904, a feminist far ahead of her time.

The most amazing accomplishment of these women is their record of peaceful co-existence. Though most of them started life in a straight-laced and strictly heterosexual atmosphere, they managed to meld beautifully and successfully into a society designed by and for women only.

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SCENES IN A BAR

I

The girl over there in the corner alone
With too much hair piled on her head
And an ashtray full of dead butts before her
She holds her drink
As if it were her only contact with reality
She keeps staring at me
Have you noticed that girl over there
She's lonely

II

She brushed against me
There was a sudden warmth where our thighs touched
And she looked long into my eyes
Then the crowd surged forward
I never saw her again but I remember that moment
I remember what her eyes said

III

There was a famous beauty in the bar last night
We all admired her properly
At a distance
Watched her draw those gloves slowly over her long fingers
Yes lovely said the others
But I had seen her eyes

IV

That gay boy
Twitching his butt while he danced
Like he wanted to sell it then and there
To the lowest bidder

V

That girl in the bar
You know she had three fellows with her
But she looked at me
And I looked back
"No babe not you"
Then reached for your hand

by Maura McCullough

TEMPLE OF ATHENE

by Hilary Farr

PART I

"Orion, next station stop Orion Junction. Change for Thornton, Cawdor, Clive, Glen Raven, Windrim—"

Like a floodlight of a new color that chain of names transformed the steady ribbon of midsummer fields and hills to the backdrop of how many excited arrivals and departures. The college junction. How incredible to have forgotten. Could she still make it?

Everything lay ready on the seat opposite for her arrival in the city. Theodora jerked on her white beret before the narrow strip of mirror, crowded a paper-backed mystery into her overnight case, scooped up gloves and coat, and plunged along the aisle and down the steps in much the headlong fashion of ten years ago.

The porter, just ready to lift his stool, broke into protest. "Only Orion, ma'am, you're for—"

"I know. Changed my mind." She quieted him with coins from her suit pocket as he clambered back into the moving vestibule. Then she picked her way along the uneven brick, head down against the gust of heat and cinders the heavy coaches sucked behind them. Climbing the steep iron steps to the footbridge, their sun-baked metal hot through her thin soles. She had time to take in and be dismayed at her folly. Her appointment was for four o'clock. She should have gone on into the city as planned, checked her bag and really freshened

herself at the Campion of the University Women's Club, and come back by a suburban that would have got her to the campus in ample time. Now she would have an hour and a half to kill in Windrom, and unless the old station had undergone a transformation she didn't expect, there would be no place for either checking or tidying.

To be sure she could wallow in the luxury of an old familiar arrival, of wandering the campus and reviving undergraduate memories, but at the cost of dumping her things and cleaning up in the student cloakroom of Administration. If, indeed, that bleak haven offered even liquid soap and paper towels during summer vacation.

Fine preparation for a job interview with a new and unknown president. If this sort of sophomoric reflex was likely to recur, she had better not risk rejoining her alma mater.

She picked her way down the long opposite flight to the suburban platform, and climbed aboard the local that stood waiting. Well, the milk was spilt, one might as well forget it and enjoy the ride. Choosing a seat on the shaded side by an open window she settled herself on the hard rattan for the slow half hour run.

It was really odd that while buying her ticket last night she hadn't once remembered this Orion connection.

It showed how little reality there was as yet in the notion that she was coming back to Radnor. How had it been when she visited last? But of course. Arriving from the north she had not come by the old route at all. And that whole weekend, with Centennial and dedication overshadowing everything, and hundreds of alumnae swarming campus and town, had been no sort of real return. The new library and Amelia Earhart Hall, construction scars around the raw as newly sodded graves, had changed even the campus from the cloistered, dream-steeped little world of undergraduate days.

And now there would be even more profound change. Indeed, otherwise one would not be making this trek across four states for the possibility of teaching here. If old Hanny, bless her, were still holding them to No Cuts, cap and gown for seniors at daily chapel and two fateful proms per year . . .

Ann Leno Van Tuyl, according to Alumnae Record and assorted educational literature, had ushered in a New Order. And a good thing, too. Senior honors courses should be pure joy to teach. And smoking in the dorms, informal monthly dances . . . "Thornton-Thornton!"

She looked out the window and could barely recognize in these vistas of asphalt and bright newly landscaped developments the sleepy old outpost of landed estates. Then off to the left she spotted Millionaires' Hill.

She flinched and turned away. The one episode in her college career—in her life, almost—which could still make her feel shame. To have scarcely thought of it these ten years was beautiful evidence of wishful forgetting. Not the crazy incident itself, not so much even having lied out of it,

though lying was one of the few sins in her self-imposed decalogue. But having still trusted Jinx Legman when everyone else in college already suspected . . . Jinx, expelled the next week for staying out all night with a waiter. A waiter. And everyone suddenly seeming to know that she and Jinx had been out of bounds together all the preceding Saturday, and to think that she was in on the plot. And because she had lied the once, nobody believed her protest of innocence on the other score. How Jinx must have counted on that round-eyed innocence as a blind. For months. And all the while . . . She shuddered with distaste.

But even now she knew there had been two personalities in that girl. The thin headlong devil-may-care hoyden she'd loved to break bounds with wasn't a little slut who would sleep with an Oyster Bar waiter. . . . I'd have felt it and sickened, she thought defiantly. That of all things I'd have seemed and loathed. With me she was different. Where is she . . . what is she now?

Still, it was good to have had that last wild silly day, for she had never again felt so really young. What with the Jinx scandal, and then immediately Dad and Rita Baird . . .

Thornton Station had passed unnoticed, these gentle slopes were Cawdor. The country club roof still showed, though only a fragment of it now through lush treetops. And there to the right beyond the windbreak of evergreens would be the fairway of the seventh hole.

Peace and stillness possessed her. The stillness of an overcast April day in spring vacation. She and Celia hunting the strayed ball together and coming suddenly on that rift in the trees that showed them the Elsinore

Ridge miles away through through the pellucid sunless air. 'Oh, Dr. Tritt!' She could still feel herself breathe it with all the hushed fervor of nineteen and of joy breaking through wretchedness. And then the thin hand on her shoulder, the wood-dove voice saying, 'Could you make it Celia? I've been wanting you to for a long time.' And her own magnetized turning, raising her face to Celia's drooping height. And the first still kiss.

The first of how many quiet aching kisses ascetically spaced over those two years. In Celia's dim room at night after light bell had hushed the corridor, or out in October moonlight or February snow . . . Celia had been angel, mother, mentor, tiding her over the Rita business, teaching her to understand so much, nattering at her fear of all emotion. But so exquisitely conscientious. Victorian scruples-and hellish hygiene! By twenty-one, once started, one needed to go on and break over. Also no doubt at forty. It must have been tough on Celia too, gentle idealist melting with thwarted maternity. Still at fifty writing from Idaho about this or that beloved student.

Clive station now, blessedly the same. Settled and mellow. The grand old trees still stood, the crescent of gabled shops had resisted or quietly absorbed the garishness of chain stores. The people on the platform were the same too, settled and mellow. How good to be back among them, their easy unobtrusive good clothes, their modulated voices hardly breaking the drowsy summer stillness.

She brought up with a sharp inner laugh of derision. Was this she, who had always been so scornful of staid propriety? . . . But damn it, I'm sick to death of raucous voices and razor-edged consonants! And the silly pre-

tentions of little prairie-faculty wives. If this be snobbery, make the most of it.

Those two women in earnest talk out there were the epitome of everything she would like to be. The one seen full face, in gingham and saddle shoes and light cardigan, was neither young nor beautiful, but generations of breeding and assurance looked out of that face, so serene and at rights with the world. And the other presenting a tall tailored back had less placidity, to judge by her terse erectness and economy of gesture, but she could do things, manage an estate, cajole lavish philanthropy out of a fat suburb.

At the conductor's call the tall woman turned from her companion with a final urgent word over her shoulder. And as she came, quick and half smiling at the thin double pipe of starting signal, Theodora's breath and pulse suffered the check that always marked emotional impact. For that dark woman in gray linen and panama hat matched some half conscious imaginative pattern for which she seemed to have been waiting a long time . . . if I had created her, if I had dreamed her up for something I was writing, I couldn't have made one detail more exactly right . . .

During the few seconds it took the woman to mount the steps and appear on the coach platform Theodora sat up and leaned forward with lips parted and eyes on the open doorway. The woman paused, glanced into the car ahead and then into the one where Theodora sat, and chose the latter. Was it chance or her own hypnotic gaze that brought the woman's eyes to rest a moment on her face? Theodora let her own eyes remain fixed. It was not after all too crude to stare for an instant in admiration at a hand-

some stranger in perfect tailleur, smart panama revealing a swan's feather above the left temple.

No seat ahead of Theodora's was entirely vacant, and the quick dark eyes scanned a dozen possible seatmates with the same discreet economy that marked her gestures on the platform. Theodora dropped her own eyes and with her foot moved her small case against the wall. . . . Sit with me! she willed tensely behind her mask of composure.

Though she was the only person in sight with coat and case, and she had often enough herself been put off by such impedimenta, the woman paused with a questioning glance and at Theodora's slight permissive smile sat down beside her. Theodora bent her head over her bag in a pretended search, to hide the warmth she felt rising in her face and the betraying light she knew was in her eyes. The blood whispered in her ears. Could the woman have felt a reciprocal attraction at sight?

Why not? The air between them seemed to transmit a familiar dangerous current. But a woman like this . . . forty at least, and a personage even in a place like Clive . . . Again why not? If it had been a distinguished man who had singled her out to sit by. Luggage and all, would anyone have a moment's doubt? Should she risk speaking?

The conductor came through and with a smile of old acquaintance extended his hand for the woman's fare. She gave him not one but two worn commuter's tickets. 'I'm going all the way in,' she said in a low rich voice that stirred Theodora's nerves afresh. She knew she had better not use her own voice just yet.

And then the woman drew from her bag a sheaf of small pages dark with

crowded notes and began to study them. And instantly the current that had seemed to flow between them was checked, that dynamic force was concentrated like a burning-glass. It was as if a transparent door had closed between one and a vivid fire, and in the outer chill Theodora shivered with reaction.

. . . After all, serves you right. To fall a-trembling like an aching girl at sight of a stranger's face! You, Theodora K. Hart, Ph.D., applicant for an assistant professorship in Anthropology. Of course it's this *Recherche du Temps Perdu*, beginning with the station-call at Orion, that has plunged you back into moon-calfing . . . Oh, be honest! It's a warning you're ripe for trouble. If you've a brain cell working you'll go on into town, sleep the night, and skip the interview and the danger of complete reversion to campus adolescence. A woman's college is no place for you . . . Ride on into town with her, eh? Nice rationalizing!

Glen Raven. All but there. In fact, over the trees ahead she could just catch the red tiles of the chapel carillon. Her face was cool now, her pulse normal, and an aftermath not unlike humiliation left a flat taste in her mouth. She turned her head enough to see that the panama was still bent over the sheaf of notes. The woman knew how to concentrate.

Out the window now every street and roof was familiar, but they were a mere panorama stirring no more dream-swift recall. She sat quiet until the brakes hummed for the Windrom stop and then moved coat to arm with as much economy as her seatmate might have shown, reached for her case, said "Pardon" and got to her feet.

"Oh! I'm sorry." The woman rose and in one quick movement was in the aisle letting her pass.

"Thank you," she said, and risked an impassive look. The dark face was impassive too—but not the eyes!

Pulse and breathing paused so completely that Theodora panicked for what her traitorous face might show. She felt the tiny muscle along her cheek begin to quiver, and strode down the aisle in sheer flight. As she reached the brick of Windrom platform her face was hot with the wave of reaction . . . At least I'll never see her again . . . But was it relief or frustration that filled her?

There were a half dozen parcel lockers in the station now, and gratefully she shed her burdens and crossed the sun-baked plaza. Once in the by-streets she walked in a deserted village drowned deep in green mid-summer shade. These dark translucent naves beneath great elms and maples, how thin and bright by contrast they made midwestern shadow. It was nearly three and hot, not a soul stirring along the streets; the old houses beyond their fragrant lawns drowsed in an enchanted stillness, even insects were lazy and muted. She moved slowly, hypnotized by the half uncanny solitude, the sense of being the one sentient thing left in a world where time and motion had magically ceased.

And then she too was absorbed in the spell and stopped altogether, blind and tranced, thinking: *I have come back.*

A lawnmower whirled somewhere and she waked and walked on, glancing at windows to make sure her somnambulistic pause had not been observed. At the campus gate she looked down the long vista of Center Walk and thought: Nothing has changed . . . nothing . . . The new buildings were softened now by shrubbery; ten years had left the older brick and mellow stone unaltered by a single shade.

Then a quick-moving figure in yellow came around a corner and turned left toward Shackleton, and Theodora turned right and moved quickly herself along the outer path behind screening bushes. She didn't want to be caught mooning about, an hour before her appointment. If she took the back walk behind Presser and Chapel to the playing field she was unlikely in mid-vacation to meet anyone. Now through openings between buildings she caught fresh vistas, saw the new library and Earhart already absorbed into their setting, and thought: Nothing is the same. Least of all me . . . Consciously she attempted to recapture old moods, to remember where she and Celia had wandered.

Instead, perversely, she saw the Midway flooded for skating and against the background of Harper towers Marion's cool ironic sophisticated face . . . Marion's face more sophisticated and less cool in the safety of their bohemian attic on Kimbark . . . Marion who taught her everything Celia had left untaught . . . and except in 'that narrow province of delyte' had left one so unnourished . . . And then in inevitable sequence her drab office at Northwestern, and Roddy Lister's challenging blond impudence. The all-Ravel program at Ravinia, and she and Roddy driving slightly drunk down Sheridan afterwards, Roddy's proposal—no, proposition!—and the nauseating end of that month's farcical engagement . . .

She came out on the playing field and looked once more over it, down the slope and away to Elsinore across the miles dappled with shadow of tree and cloud. How many times she had come here knotted with pain and tension and felt it all wash away leaving her light and free.

She stood now feeling taller and firmer, buttressed by her full hard successful years. The cloying reminiscence on the train, the hot intoxicated encounter with the dark woman were not wiped out but shaken into place, a part of her pattern but nothing to warp her out of her mature orbit. Why shouldn't she come back here to this unworldly loveliness and quiet, even to a lush emotional campus climate? She knew now, and well, what it was all about. Conscientiously she had followed the dictates of intelligence, proved to herself and others that she could have men if she wanted them, and men's jobs. What point to more struggle? What a divine relief to give up holding her own against men's departments and men's committees, and against conceited cubs of students who thought flirting was the way to pass her courses. Plague the lot of them! She would come back here where she belonged, shoulder to shoulder with other women who belonged here too, wanted to be here. As for emotion, it would come, of course. Colleagues . . . older students . . . Well, let it. She could handle it now, and them, and herself.

A small fresh breeze wandered up the valley, riffling grass and leaves, lifting her hair. She pulled off her beret and stretched her arms wide, breathing deep. So it was settled. If she were offered the job she'd take it, even without any special financial or professional advantage. . . . I've done what the 'mature' say one ought to do and want for long enough. I'll do what I want for a change . . .

She looked at her watch. Time to go back and see about freshening up. With a last happy look at the smoke-blue of the distant ridge, she walked briskly around the gym toward Ad-

ministration.

A deeply tanned handsome youngster, bare-legged and sandaled, rose from a typewriter in the outer office and led her through a half-glazed partition—that was new—to the secretary's tidy desk. The president's secretary, no longer old Fanny Tyler, thank goodness, met her with outstretched hand and genuine smile. A homely charming woman.

"Miss Hart? Sit here, won't you? We have bad news for you, I'm afraid. Miss VanTuyl was called into town by an emergency and can't be here for a bit. She asked me to phone her the moment you arrived. You'll excuse me." She dialed the operator and gave a mid-city number. For a moment she murmured briefly and then handed the instrument to Theodora.

"Miss Hart? This is Lenox VanTuyl." The voice was low and clear. "I can't tell you my regret and embarrassment at delaying our appointment. Will you please be quite frank as to how much you'll be inconvenienced if I can't be there until nearly five?"

"It will be no inconvenience at all, Miss VanTuyl," she said with the ring of sincerity. She had thought of calling Mable Waring if she were through in time, but on a Saturday evening in a social calendar like Mabel's that would have been a long chance at best. "I have few friends in this region any longer and no one knows I'm here. I have literally no plans."

"How providential for me. I wonder then if you would be my guest for tonight? That would eliminate the need for our trying to do business at all before dinner, and we could talk at leisure this evening."

"That sounds delightful," she said, and was surprised at her own spon-

tianity. Getting caught for a long social session with one's superiors was the last thing she would ordinarily choose, but the woman had a winning voice and manner.

"Splendid. Then Miss Harlan will take you to Maplewood, and you are to make yourself completely at home. I shall be there as soon as possible."

"Please don't hurry at all," Theodora begged. "I shall feel completely at home anywhere at Radnor, you know. And it is very good of you to take me in."

"The goodness is the other way about, I assure you. Till I see you, then."

Miss Harlan led her along the familiar paths and across the side-street to the ample Victorian house. Someone—Lenox VanTuyl, perhaps?—had had it stripped of cupola and gingerbread trimmings and painted a warm cream. She would never have guessed it could have such simplicity and charm. As they went she learned the most discreet minimum about President VanTuyl's emergency, some delicate intercollegiate politics that had brought a fellow administrator down from New York by plane. It could have sounded very impressive. Miss Harlan made it as casual as the weather.

A limousine, not new, was standing in the drive and a spare negro in livery approached and inquired with a Harvard accent about Miss Hart's luggage. Theodora gave him her station locker key and went on. At the door a gray haired woman straight out of Trollope welcomed them with the dignity of a hostess, and Miss Harlan went back through the mellowing sunlight by the way they had come. Mrs. Curtiss led her up a wide easy oak staircase to a front corner room.

"Warren will have your bag here in no time at all," she said comfortably,

"and you can have a good rest before dinner. Miss VanTuyl just phoned that she'd try to get the five o'clock but I urged her not to rush. It's so warm, and she's been on the go since eight this morning. I try to make her take a little care of herself," she went on with efficiency, "and I knew you'd had a long trip, so I planned dinner for seven-thirty. I thought I'd tell you because old Radnor girls always think of dinner at six, like the dormitories."

Theodora laughed. "Yes, we do. I suppose all campuses are the same. I think a nap is a wonderful idea, and perhaps if you tell Miss VanTuyl I'm resting she will too." She knew by the smile that without conscious intent she had won Mrs. Curtiss's heart, and her own warmed. She did feel very much at home here, though in Hanny's day she had never penetrated beyond the drawing rooms downstairs. It was hard to remember that she was here for a critical interview with a president she had never seen.

When her bag came she spent a luxurious half hour in the huge old fashioned bath and was just about to stretch out on the chaise lounge when she heard the car come into the drive again. She crossed to a north window and peered idly through the leaves. She heard the voice first, more arresting than on the phone, as lovely as the stranger's on the train.

Then she saw the gray linen suit, the panama. . . Oh God, she whispered. She went back to the day bed and sat down, lit a cigaret, propped an elbow on her crossed knee, and took herself in hand. What was so dreadful about it? She had met an attractive stranger and they had exchanged a pretty unmistakable mutual flash. She had been guilty of nothing worse than a sharp turn of color. (Blast her

vasomotor reflexes, would they never grow up?) But tonight the advantage would be hers, she would not be taken by surprise. And after all, Lenox VanTuyl had definitely given her the eye. Did the president of Radnor go about doing that indiscriminately?

She froze. Miss VanTuyl must have recognized her. The woman would have had a photograph from the Chicago placement bureau, or could have looked her up here in any one of four annuals. All bad likenesses, but still . . .

The light went out of the afternoon. She dropped her face on her hand and let humiliation wash over her. The glad eye indeed! Mere tentative recognition, and of course that should have been mutual. There must have been pictures of the new president in all that spate of alumnae print at the time of the inauguration. There were. She struggled for recall. No use. One dim recollection, a blurred print of some academic portrait. But infinitely worse than her own stupidity about that was the knowledge that there had been no mutual attraction at all. Mere recognition, and incomplete at that. She turned and stretched prone on the daybed, mind resolutely cold.

She was after all Theodora K. Hart, Ph.D., applicant for an assistant professorship in Anthropology. She would get through tonight somehow and leave early tomorrow. If she got the job she need see little of the President. There could still be the unworldly peace of Radnor, the friendship of colleagues and students, the solace of Elsinore across the placid valley.

But the prospect had lost its warmth.

At seven she began with minute care to work on her face, her hair, her clothes. Thank heaven for the dress-blouse tucked in on the chance

of dinner in Mabel's imposing ménage. She clasped the heirloom chain of dark sapphires that worked magic with her crazy changeable eyes. Just now the eyes were blank slate, and the thin-cheeked, wide-mouthed mask that looked back at her palely above the flattering collar was a coldly impersonal young assistant professor's, nothing more.

Good. Just hold it.

She stepped back and took stock of the ensemble. And it struck her that though too slight, too neutral in color for resemblance, there was still some basic kinship between her wide shouldered rangy height and the president of Radnor. A thin-paper edition. With all the vulnerability of thin paper. But the covers weren't limp, thank heaven. She gave a last glance to the back of her sculptured and disciplined haircut, and had just sat down for a cigarette—from Marion's gold case, this was an occasion to do it justice—when the light knock sounded.

. . . This is it. She straightened shoulders, lowered a defiant chin, opened the door. She got a lightning image of cool tailored frock, swan-feathered hair swept strongly in a crest, and then—

Surprise, complete and utter, and the something more that gave her again for an instant those dark hazel irises unbelievably luminous. Then composure dimmed the light.

"Miss Hart!" The voice was more arresting than she had yet heard it, for all its control. "How amazing—and what fun that we're not complete strangers after all." The strong fingers tingle against her palm.

"Yes!" That was all she was equal to, but she knew it was enough. Her body felt very straight and tall, the line and color of everything shimmered before her eyes, she set her foot on

each stair with easy sureness. Beside her Lenox VanTuyl was touching with light humor on the Trustees' meeting at Clive, the summons to town, her furious preoccupation on the train, her chagrin at the broken engagement, her pleasure at this final outcome. Theodora could nod or smile or utter small courteous sounds without breaking the spell of delight.

At the foot of the stairs Miss VanTuyl asked still with humor, "Have you any particular convictions on the subject of alcohol?"

"Only that within limits it's one of society's better institutions."

"Good. That will give Warren scope for his juleps." She paused to speak quietly through a swinging door. "It's not too often he has it. Never during the year, of course, for there are still black marks in the student handbook against even sherry much as I may wish we might educate them to a gentleman's moderation."

"I know. But think how many freshman larks and glorious apocryphal anecdotes would be done to death. I'm afraid, Miss VanTuyl, you want to Force our Young Girls into Maturity." Her voice was a wicked parody of one sentimental old Smithie's of her own day—she might still be on the faculty. From the president's irrepressible chuckle she judged that Smithie was, and that her mimicry had been appreciated.

Either she was emptier than she knew or the juleps were stronger than they seemed. Hers drifted her into a state of dreamy beatitude that left her reluctant to move from the wicker varandah chair at the call to dinner. Warren in a white jacket served silently and Mrs. Curtiss was not in evidence. Theodora had a moment of being awed by this formality, but it passed swiftly. With the delicious food

there was sauterne, biting cold. She found herself thinking in colors: deep green solitude on the way from the station, high summer blue looking across to Elsinore, and not the silvery gold of candle flame caught in the pale wine...

They talked music, books, plays with the eagerness of old friends who have not for a long time had the chance to compare impressions. She felt she was talking well, sustained in confidence by the knowledge that Miss VanTuyl was talking better, her range broader, her judgments unconsciously authoritative, her phrasing terse and brilliant. Pausing with a spoonful of raspberries garnet in the candle light half way to her lips, Theodora thought: This is not reality, this is a flawless dream... How odd to have no fear of waking. On the screened verandah again with only the dim glow from french doors behind them and intermittent glow from cigarettes, they talked at last of business. What subjects, how many hours; experience; rooms; salary and advancement. Over the lawn fireflies gleamed and dimmed like pallid reflections of their cigarettes, katydids gave back a dry mockery of their dialogue. It was still a dream deep and clear as dark water.

At the door of her room returning Lenox VanTuyl's warm good night she lived another moment in pure color. This was the live translucent crimson of raspberries held in a silver spoon.

(To be continued)

LEE

A muggy August night had left us slack-mouthed;
Limp and dull, we hunted seats in smoke-mist gloom.
And then we saw her.
Tending bar in faded yellow manshirt, chino pants.
She slumped by beer taps, slopping glasses full;
A tight rage lurked beneath her frozen face
Which fell in angles to the jaw.
She glanced a misanthropic greeting
Fron underneath a ragged frame of hair,
And flung our drinks across the bar.
We held our mugs wet-fingered, letting beer go flat.
For we preferred to recreate her history;
By guess and chance we tried to reason meanings
In the leathered weary lines about her mouth.
But Lee remained a puzzle.

As the end of year loomed nearer
We would see her there each time we came,
An angry shadow at the horseshoe bar,
The strangest of us all.
In idle moments when no drinks were ordered,
Leaning on bent elbows in a virile grace.
She watched drinkers and the dancers,
Always silent and alone.
A roughened hungriness enclosed her,
Like a mottled shroud for some fierce dying animal.

On one chill night the bar closed late.
And those of us still there went on to eat.
Sitting apprehensively across from her we watched
As Lee,
Who clutched a dented spoon in taut coarse hands,
Slashed at her coffee.
Deaf to the light talk circling through the group.

Later they told us of her:
Ten years back the girl she loved died flaming with their home;
But Lee, still scorched by lonely loss,
Carries even now the dead girl's Bible,
And with clouded bitter eyes she smiles at children,
A tortured eagle.
Trapped in a world she does not want
And cannot understand.

by Maura McCullough

Readers Respond



To the Editor:

I'm sorry I missed Valerie Taylor's letter in the June issue and only picked up the debate in the answer in the September issue by Lennox Strong and Terri Cook, whose careful research and arch gallantry provide a good defense against complaints but don't solve two problems which might better be dealt with in open acknowledgement of differences in attitude and taste.

First the more specific issue of the books chosen to be reviewed in *THE LADDER* by Gene Damon and others: Valerie Taylor and I obviously share a taste for reviews which serve the concerns and accomplishment of the book or poem rather than the sexual and moral bias of the reviewer. Lennox Strong and Terri Cook are right to protest that *THE LADDER* is no place for general articles on poetry, but surely there is a compromise between the kind of reviewing *THE LADDER* now offers its readers and general literary reviews. For novels, stories, and poems in the Lesbian field which are serious and accomplished works, there could be reviews not simply concerned with the number of pages devoted to Lesbian scenes but instead with intelligent consideration of the work's insights and techniques. For material of interest only because of its subject matter, surely even briefer notes than are now supplied by Gene Damon would do. One of the problems for a writer who deals with Lesbian experience is that the general press continues to treat such work only for what is considered "sensational subject matter." When a Lesbian magazine not only imitates but exaggerates such distortions, it does nothing for the cause it professes. General reviews of good books that are Lesbian in content would improve the quality of the magazine, minimize criticism that it is simply an advertising vehicle for specialized pornography, discourage none of its present readers, and perhaps attract a larger audience and more contributors.

The second, more general issue that comes out of the answer to Valerie Taylor is the statement that Lesbians "must contribute on two levels; as citizens of the world first and then as Lesbians." Militant minorities are a characteristic of our time, and certainly people who are willing to devote free time to a magazine like *THE LADDER* are apt to be among the most militant. I have great respect for people who are willing to give themselves to causes, though that respect doesn't always extend to the methods used or the opinions expressed. There are very few people who actually live with primary attention to being citizens of the world. To claim such allegiance is, I imagine, more often a

gesture toward a good ideal than an actual and time consuming commitment. I take more seriously the call to Lesbian arms, which is offered as second only to world citizenship. It is a more practical demand, since it is possible that a good many more *LADDER* readers have an opportunity to be full time Lesbians than full time citizens of the world. Some of us, however, are also Jews, Negroes, Japanese. Some of us are mothers, teachers, doctors, politicians, factory workers. Any person is a member of perhaps a dozen minority groups with problems that need solving. The defensive, militant attitude often expressed in *THE LADDER* that all Lesbians have a duty to serve the cause must alienate a number of readers who choose to use their time for other purposes in which they are more interested, for which they are better suited. Any cause must have its leaders and dedicated workers, but it also needs the wider support of people who give only occasionally. These people, because they are greater in number, can do as much to change attitudes and even laws as those who are dedicated. They can if they are not put off by either rigid views or unreasonable demands. Freedom of sexual identity is not as important to some people as fresh air, fair wage practices, education for handicapped children. They still read; they still vote.

Sexual orientation in a book, as in a person, is only part of its value. The sexual orientation of *THE LADDER* should, of course, dictate its subject matter but not the range of its comments or the quality of its contributions.

Sincerely yours,

Jane Rule



Of all the old festivals.....that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. There is a tone of solemn and sacred feeling that blends with our conviviality and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment.

- Washington Irving



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