



A Whetston is No Keruing Instrument,
And Yet it Maketh Sharpe Keruing-Tolis

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S t a f f

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Untranslated

Dear, I cannot translate you,
 I cannot hold your changes long enough
 To make them turnings on paper.
 I try to translate you,
 Try to bring out of the darkness
 Your evanescent gleamings.
 You hold yourself
 As some mystic candle
 Up out of the darkness.
 I grope after you,
 Seeking to make you
 Turnings and words,
 To make you conform to a set scheme
 Of words and phrases.
 You refuse to be drawn over
 To the webbing of words—
 You stand a burning light
 To the darkness of me,
 More beautiful as you stand,
 Untranslated.

—Richard A. Thomas, Jr.

Kid

JACK CROSBY

He was just a kid—a quiet sort of kid who was always thinking about something and at the wrong time. He came on board at Tampa, and you could see at first glance that the last place on earth he belonged was on a dirty little tramp laker like the **Fairport**. He had a sort of far-away look in his eyes, as if he were now about to realize some long dream or vision or ambition of his. The first mate, Moline, met him at the plank and showed him his quarters back aft. We were all red-leading, and the sun was hot as hell; so we paid little attention to him until after mess that night. Then the crew stood around and started popping questions to him. Surrounded by that gang of riff-raff, Swedes and Dagoes and Jamaica niggers, the kid looked about as much at home as a sailor in church. He told us how he happened to be there: his father was an orange picker, and times were so hard that he couldn't stay in school. He told his yarn like he was privileged to be able to command the attention of a real crew on a real ship. He had an air of a boy in a dream, as if he had some kind of unearthly reverence for this crew of low-lifers just because they had seen a few places and had knocked around on the sea a little. The crew was the typical bunch on an Antilles tramp steamer—just a bunch of trash; but the kid seemed to see in them some sort of realized ideal.

He stayed to himself until we left Tampa, and he got along all right until it came his time to stand wheelwatch. He was given the dog watch, from twelve to four o'clock, day and night, and was at the wheel when I got up to take a smoke that first night. It was too hot to sleep, and I had to go on at four, so I walked up to the wheelhouse to draw a carton of cigarettes. I had just got up the ladder to the boat deck, when the old tub lurched way over to the starboard and commenced to turn around. The ballast shifted, and the ventilators started swinging. The mate on watch came past me, swearing like only a first mate can. I followed him on up to the bridge to see what had happened to the kid. He was standing at the wheel like he was safe at home back on the farm, not giving a damn about the ship or the course. Pritchard, the third mate, ran up to take the wheel and knocked him down in a corner. He just lay there till the mate got the ship back on the course and then jerked him up. He looked up at the mate with a kind of puzzled expression in his eyes, like a dog that's been whipped and can't understand why. The mate was still cursing, but when he saw the kid's expression he cooled off a little.

"What the hell's the matter, kid? You were eighty-one degrees off course. Do you want to go back to Tampa?"

The kid just pointed way off to the right where the light on Lobos Kay was blinking. "It's that light," he said. "I was just watching it and thinking about home and mother and all." He stopped and swallowed.

Pritchard calmed down and said real gruff-like, "Well, don't let it happen no more." Then to me, "What the hell are you yammering at?"

I got my cigarettes and left. In a little while the kid turned in; and when I went back for coffee at six o'clock, I could hear him in the foc'sle, whimpering like a whipped puppy.

We were six days getting down to Porto Rico, and those days were hell on the kid. He had the wheel one night when we ran into the tail end of a West Indian hurricane—the deck load shifted, and the old tub pitched like a cork; but the kid stuck at the wheel and spun and fought it like a real quartermaster. He stayed sick all the way down. It was pitiful the way the crew treated that kid. One dirty little rat of an A. B. named Slim Dearman took the kid in on that old one about the salt meat being good for sea-sickness. The little fool took it all in trustfully, got some sow-belly from the steward, tied some string on it, and swallowed it. When he tried to pull it back up—well, he had only thought he was sick.

We hit San Juan about ten o'clock in the morning and the way the sight of land affected the kid was something for the books. He lost that kind of greenish look and his eyes began to look a little brighter. When the stevedores along the dock began yelling Spanish back and forth, the kid just stood there on the forepeak sort of smiling to himself and not saying anything. He seemed to see right through those dirty natives and to be looking right straight into the promised land. I guess the kid was one of these romantics you read about, always looking for something fantastic and unreal. Just the realization that he was in a foreign country was enough to set the kid to dreaming. It was that way all through the Antilles. The mere names "Virgin Islands," "Martinique," "Jamaica," or any of the God-forsaken holes down there were enough to life the kid's mind out of the **Fairport** and send it to wandering. It was hot down there and the food was lousy. I guess it was the food that started the kid off. We had potatoes and beefstew every day, and the men were always griping about it. The dessert was a toss-up between cold spaghetti with grape flavoring on it and prunes. The deckhands were always kicking about the fact that the officers had chicken (sea-gull, they call it), while the crew always had meat and potatoes and prunes. I guess it was this eternal squawk that led the kid to do it. Anyway, one day he was cleaning the grease off one of the winches, and I wash fish-oiling the deck, when the Captain stopped to ask the kid how he was getting along. With the hot grease all down his back and the sun burning down like hell, the kid just smiled and said "O. K.," but that the crew was pretty dissatisfied with the food they got—because the captain got chicken, and they got the same truck every day. The Skipper laughed a little, then said:

"Son, they wouldn't appreciate anything better; but if you say so, we'll try them out."

The kid beamed and thanked the Old Man and went back to work. They brought the mess in that night, and sure enough there was a pot of chicken. I sat back and watched. The first man on the table, Sam Howell, grabbed up the pot and stood there looking puzzled. He gave it to Slim, and Slim was holding it kind of perplexed when the Bos'n, a big blond squarehead named Gus Benson, leaned over, took one look at the chicken, and yelled, "Throw that ——— damned seagull overboard. If it had been any good they wouldn't have sent it back here."

Before I could make a move Slim had thrown pot, spoon, chicken and all out the port-hole. The kid never let on he knew anything about how the chicken got back there, but you could look at him and tell that it hurt him. Kind of shamefaced, he told the whole story to the Captain in Havana.

He was a funny kid, always asking some question about the old legends of the sea, and about all the things he had read about in books like "Treasure" and "The Mysterious Island." I really believe the kid expected any day to see some mermaids sitting on one of the little Keys which cover the Caribbean. All he ever got was disillusionment; and even in Havana, which is usually quite pretty, the only time he got ashore we saw the student mobs tear a policeman into little pieces with their naked hands, and his blood never got on the ground. The kid got sick, and I know he left Havana with an idea of it different than the one he had had. The kid even got some kind of idea about reforming one of the prostitute women he ran across in his trip ashore with the crew in Santiago. He was just that way—a dumb, romantic kid looking for something that just didn't exist. He could stand all the kidding from the crew, but continued to look for his dreams of the sea to be fulfilled in some mysterious way. He stopped the Captain on the boat deck one day and asked him if he had ever seen any of the things which he himself was looking for—the mermaids, the golden islands, the treasures and water nymphs and a lot of drivel along the same line. The Skipper looked at him like he was a freak of some kind, and told him to get the hell back to work and forget such nonsense. I guess the Old Man got sort of hard with him, because the kid didn't worry anybody else for a day or two. Every night, though, the kid would climb up on the hawser rack and look at the sun sink into the Caribbean, and you could tell that he was still thinking about things. Below him, in the mess room, he could hear the sailors cussing and fighting over their card games and cognac, but it seemed that nothing could disillusion the kid. He just couldn't get a slant on life as it really was; and he looked at the unpleasant things and the ugliness like it was all a part of a bad dream, and he would soon wake up to find the things he was looking for.

We got all loaded with 10,000 bags of Hershey sugar and set sail for Port Arthur, Texas. There was some sort of a embargo expected because of the Cuban Revolution, and we were trying to reach port and unload before it went into effect. We had the old rusty **Fairport** hooked up and were making about eleven knots around the Florida Cape. The kid was at the wheel on his usual day watch when the fire in the No. 2 hold was discovered. This sugar makes one hell of a funny fire. It will smoulder for a while, and then it will blaze up with a fury.

This fire here had probably started from a cigarette carelessly dropped before the hatch was sealed. Anyway, there it was, and the whole No. 2 hatch was smoking like a Trinidad asphalt hole. Pritchard rang the alarm bell, and we all turned out. You could feel the heat from the hold when you walked out on the midships deck, so the whole lower hold must have been in flames. There wasn't any way to get to it until the twin decks cargo caught and then we could work from the top. The ship was in no real danger, because these lakers are built with steel bulkheads to handle grain. So the fire couldn't travel back or forth in the ship, and was kept in one hold. The only thing possible to do was to close the shaft into No. 1 hold and open the seacock to let a little water into No. 2.

With the fire in the hold the only way to get down into it was through the chain locker, but the opening there into the shaft wasn't built for a man's body to get through. Chips, the ship's carpenter, a little dried-up Norwegian, could barely squeeze through the opening, but he started down to open the cock and close the shaft.

He was going into a raging hell of fire, and he knew the chance he was taking, but life on the sea is like that. Well, Chips got down all right, and we stood up forward waiting for him to come back out. The smoke was coming out of the No. 2 hatch like the spray over the fore-peak of a Hog Islander, and we could hear the flames cracking and popping down beneath our feet. We could tell when Chips opened the cock—the smoke changed to a nasty yellowish brown, and that wet sugar stunk like a San Domingo stevedore. We all waited a minute, but still no Chips. "The smoke must have caught him," said Moline, with a kind of catch in his voice. One of the crew walked over and looked down the shaft. There was no sound from below, only that nasty smoke billowing out. It almost made me vomit to smell the damn stuff.

It looked like Chips was a goner, because the shaft was too small for any of us; and the way the fire was going, the stongbacks would fall pretty soon—and that would be the end of Chips. We were all standing around kind of pale—it makes you think to see a man cash in his chips—when the kid came over from the fore-peak and said, "How about **me** going down there and tying a rope on him so you can pull him out?"

The Captain didn't seem to hear him; so the kid repeated, just as casual like as if he had been asking for a drink; only he didn't drink. The Old Man heard him this time and said, "Kid, do you think that you could do it? You might not come back yourself." That never even fazed the kid. His eyes just begged for a chance to prove that he could. The Boatswain tied a rope around him and gave him another line to put on Chips if he could get to him. The last look that we had at the kid's face before he went down into the chain locker was enough. He was sort of smiling to himself, and his eyes had a look in them—God, I'll never forget it. It was as if at last all his dreams of the sea had come true, and at last here was adventure, romance, and excitement for him alone.

Well, the ship swung round to the windward and the smoke just about stifled the crew. We were all standing around on the fore-peak waiting for a signal from the kid to pull him and Chips back out—just waiting, thinking and hoping. In a minute Pritchard and the Boatswain felt a jerk and pulled. The line came along like a dead weight—it was Chips. The Steward and Moline carried him aft—he didn't seem to be broken any, just stifled. We all stood around like a bunch of sheep, waiting for the kid to give a signal to be pulled out—we were still standing there when the cross-back fell. There was a kind of jar way down in the ship; then the smoke and flame shot out of the hatch. The Skipper just kind of mumbled "Christ," and Dearman, the A. B. who had pestered the kid so much, began to cuss right low. I've never seen a bunch of grown men turned pale as quick as those sailors did when that crossback fell, and it looked like the kid had gone to his Heaven—if there is any such place for those that believe in it.

The Bos'n had hold of the kid's rope, and he began to pull on it real slow and with only the faint hope of being in time. If that old squarehead ever said a prayer, I believe he said it then. He pulled it on up, and the weight on the end of it was like a sack of sugar or something. The kid was coming back up, but he was hurt and hurt bad. The Captain himself pulled him out of the chain locker and laid him back on the deck. He was still breathing, but his eyes were closed and his body was broken. The end of a beam must have caught him, and the whole of his body from his chest down was mashed like a spider when you step on it. Pritchard poured some cognac down the kid and he opened his eyes.

The crew was all standing around in a circle, some coughing and blowing their noses, and the fire was popping and cracking like hell below us. The Captain took the kid's head in his lap, and the kid just sort of smiled up at the Skipper with that dreamy look in his eyes. Nobody said anything, and then the kid spoke, real soft and low, with that faraway look in his eyes:

"Captain Dawson?" he sort of whispered.

"Yes, son." The Skipper choked on the words.

"Did you get Chips out all right?"

"Yes, son," the Captain said.

"Will he live, sir?" asked the boy.

"Sure, son," the old man answered; "but you're pretty bad hurt."

"That's all right about me," the kid smiled; and as he looked all the way around that circle, at those hard faces, the look in his eyes spoke for itself. This was what he had come to sea to find . . . He had found it at last, and now he was contented. His head fell back on the Captain's knee.

That was all, and nobody seemed to see a thing out of place in the way that Captain Dawson, the toughest skipper in the West Indies, walked back to his stateroom with the body of the kid in his arms; his eyes were misty and his face was lit up with a kind of glow like he was once more seeing his own far-distant boyhood.

Rain

Monotonous and gentle—
A dull, murmuring sound,
Aping the sea from which it came—
One time hard, another gentle.
Today it may pound—
Tomorrow beat a lullaby.
I stand at the window watching.
Is it tears for those who die?
Rain—monotonous and gentle.

—Clark Porteous.

Down For The Count

CLARK PORTEOUS

With a nasty smack the soggy right glove of "Bad Toney" Moreno crashed against the bristly chin of welter champ "Kayo" King. A puzzled expression came over the battered features of the stricken boxer as he crumpled in the center of the ring, writhing on the rosiny canvas.

Moreno, his stolid features unrelaxed, shuffled toward a neutral corner, wiping the blood from his thick lips with a sticky glove.

The roar of the crowd increased after the champ flopped on the dusty floor of the ring. It was a dizzy sort of roar, driving into the ears of the helpless fighter as he felt the floor strike his back. Out of the crescendo of sound, he could hear a raucous shout, "Git up, 'Kayo,' that yellow wop ain't hurt you none."

Then momentary blackness. All around the ring a sea of leering faces stretched back into the darkness—a sea of open-mouthed faces—ugly, handsome, plain—some shouting encouragement to the fallen champion, but most of them accusing him of stalling and urging him to get up and "fight like a man."

The dazzling arc lights played down mercilessly on the prostrate fighter. A stream of drying blood oozed away from his pain-twisted lips, and his head rolled crazily a time or two and then stopped. A shudder rippled up his sinewy body as the referee began counting. His expressionless face, without its usual battle scowl, seemed rather stupid.

As he regained consciousness, the first sound to hit his throbbing brain was the faint "Three!" chanted by the foggy-voiced referee. A dirty white sleeve and a giant hand had swept before his face and rose again like a huge pendulum, gradually counting him out.

"Git up, you yellow cur!" boomed a hoarse voice above the sea of sound. "Kayo's" spine arched; but his feet slipped helplessly, and he went limp on his back as he tried to rise.

He must not be counted out! If he could only finish this round, he would be able to stick and get a decision from that dirty wop. He had to hold his championship. He wasn't old. The gravy had just started to come in. Hell, a defeat would cancel that vaudeville trip. Manager Kelsey and all the boys were counting on him. He had to get up. Call him "yellow," would they? He'd show 'em.

His rolling eyes fixed themselves on the rising and falling chest of "Bad Toney." So he's the mug that's been puttin' away all the welters, is he? Well, I can take him. "Damn him," "Kayo" muttered, "I'll get up and show him and all those lousy stiff-shirts out there. I'll beat that stupid pan of his off." But somehow he couldn't manage to hate the fellow very convincingly. He rather disliked to think of getting up and punching Moreno; but, worse than that, he hated to think of getting punched by Moreno.

His mind rolled back to his first fight—that cold day in his native Chicago when "Butch" O'Leary had tried to run him off his corner where he stood shivering and calling out in a scared voice, "Tribune! Final edition!" A thick-chested little kid, he had surprised himself

beatin' the stew out of big "Butch" with his small, hard, piston-like fists. Ever since, he had been a good fighter, but he still felt funny before a fight; and he could never learn not to mind getting hit.

"Four!" droned the referee, and again the great arm moved darkly before "Kayo's" eyes. The huge lights blinked mistily in the ceiling, waves dancing from them just as the fighter had seen them spring from the hot concrete on a summer day in New Orleans.

He remembered that he had won his first important bout there. "Doc" Kelsey, maker of champs, had singled him out, though he was only a prelim boy. He had hated to fight, but Doc's training and the lure of the heavy sugar had brought him on. Knowing he couldn't take it so well, Doc had worked on his defense and his speedy jabs. He was hated by his foes because of the way he battered their mugs with his dancing in and out and his stinging short punches.

His later fights had been harder, however. Maybe his legs were getting weak. Naw, he was good for at least three more years. He trained fairly well. Still, he had noted the shrewed eye of Doc watching him work out, and had seen him shake his head recently. But he wasn't through. Hell, Doc was still for him. Hadn't he bet money on this fight? Moreno couldn't beat the champ.

He missed a count somehow, but "Six" brought to his dull brain the thought that he had to get up. He rolled, and more rosin stuck to his wet sides. His face was pasty white. He couldn't even lift his heavy hands from the floor.

The lights were still jumpy. "Doc" Kelsey had insisted on changing his real name of Henderson to "Kayo" King. "S'no name fer a fighter," he had said. The thought of a little woman in St. Louis now came to him. He had really loved her, but she thought of him as just another man. If he quit fighting, though—he was tired of all this. Swinging, dodging, feinting, jabbing. A dirty, hot existence, with guys flocking around for what they could get out of him. Training with the eagle eye of the Doc always watching. Maybe he would be glad to have it all over and be able to drink beer whenever he wanted it. And, too . . . that girl in St. Louis . . . he liked her . . .

"Seven!" intoned the dim voice of the referee.

"The dirty dog's stallin'!" a high-pitched feminine voice cried out.

He couldn't lose this fight. He had some dough salted away, but would it be enough? He was used to putting up a big front and spending plenty. Besides, how about his sparring partners, Doc, and the rest of the gang? And he still cared what the fans thought. He wouldn't stay down for the count . . . couldn't . . .

The murky air above the arena swam with the fumes of cheap alcohol and cheaper tobacco. King saw Kelsey in his corner, towel in hand. He mustn't throw it in, not this time . . . Kelsey wouldn't, though. He hated to have a member of his stable lose, and Kayo was still a good drawing-card.

"Eight!" the monotonous count went on.

The terrible idea that he wasn't going to be able to get up at all finally came to King, and he was surprised to find that he hardly cared. He would be glad that it was all over, and he wouldn't have to fight any more. That bowling alley he could get in Memphis . . . Then perhaps she would give him a break . . .

"Nine!" and again the big arm slowly came down, casting a shadow over the strained face of the champ.

"Kayo" closed his tired eyes, blotting out the vague swarm of dancing lights, strange faces, drifting smoke, and the referee who stood above, counting out his doom. But the swell of sound still burned into his ears, and the boos of the mob cut the fighter to the quick. They were so unjust! He always put out and gave the fans a fight for their money, hating them and himself because he did.

"Ten and out!" bellowed the referee, but "Kayo" hardly heard him. As his seconds carried him out, he saw the right arm of Moreno lifted into the air. Again King closed his tired eyes, blotting out the cruel faces, but still hearing the jeers that heralded his trip up the aisle toward his dressing room. But he could stand it; somehow, he didn't care—much.



Sprinter

Knees pumping
Feet pounding
Piston arms
Jutting forward
Grasping vainly
Body leaning
Breath gasping
Face distorted
Sprinter lunges
For the tape.

—Clark Porteous

As The Water

"As the water,
That polishes the jagged rock
Into the pebbles form and polish;
And the cutter,
Who shapes the rough diamond
Into a thing of beauty—
So the flow of sorrow, the cut of pain,
Forms our lives
And gives them meaning."

But what if the torrent be mighty?
Does not then the pebble disappear,
Washed and pounded into sand-flakes?
And has Nature the purpose
Of the stone-cutter?

—B. R.

Sundown On The Waterfront

ALLAN McGEE

The desultory startings of the few remaining cars on the cobbled levee echo and re-echo across the water from the bank to Mud Island. The rear of the city has died; only the belated engines and the far-off whistle of a train disturb the quiet lapping of the water down by the shore. The sun, all too swiftly sinking, is now slipping into the trees of Arkansas. Scrub trees and brush on the island are for a moment compensated for the usual drabness of their existence. A kind and generous Nature gives her underprivileged charges her latest and most riotous back-drop, daubed and streaked with pinks, reds, oranges, and purples, for their silhouettes. The only duplicate of this setting, the reflection in the still harbor water, is broken now and then by a whirl or a ripple. Occasionally a rising fish breaks the water with a faint splash, and the spot becomes the center of rings advancing on and on until another disturbance takes possession of the whole harbor with its ever-widening circles. Three tow-boats, silent and still, yet gently, almost imperceptibly in rocking movement as if sustaining the slightest, passive breathing, are tied along a wharf-boat. A light here or there, a wisp of smoke, a faint singing of steam, or perhaps a quiet figure on deck watching the water are the only signs of life on board. A stern-wheeler with its tow swings in off the river. Men move sleepily along the decks handling the ropes and staring at the shore. At last the three barges are edged in contentedly to the bank. Two more stacks are outlined against the sunset. Out on the river a haze forms, a city's smoke and dust for a day. As the screen comes lower and the purple draws closer around the great bridge to the south, its form grows faint. So calm and smooth does the water's surface appear out there that all sense of the river's flow vanishes; forgotten are the treacherous swirling currents. The reflected colors blot out any recollection of the monotonous, mud-brown stain. A low rumble becomes perceptible, then distinct. It is felt as well as heard. A train in toy dimensions appears in bold relief on the far end of the bridge. Its whistle blows twice; it passes through a deeper haze on this end of the bridge; and then, seeming to pause as if reluctant to give up its individuality and entity against the sky, the train is swallowed up by the city. The sun has now gone out of sight. Only a glow is left above the clouds in the west. The haze has obliterated all lines on the far shore. The skyline, the land, and the river form a somber, three-dimensional curtain as elusive and indefinite as the chorus of crickets. Solitary red and green lights appear, and then it is dark. The blacker outline of a cloud can be discerned above. Four negroes walk along the track below talking low among themselves. A cold breeze comes across the now noisy water as the last car chugs up the levee.

Rhapsody

DIXIE MAE JENNINGS

As the train traveled on, Caroline wished that she might go on with it and never stop riding. She tried to stop counting the telephone posts as the train rushed on, but then another one would pop by and she couldn't resist numbering it. The constant click of the wheels on the rails was maddening and she couldn't forget. Caroline Davis was going home. It seemed just yesterday that she had returned to school, her last year in college. Last night when she and Fred came home from the movies there was that telegram. She supposed she should feel terribly sad, but she just felt numb all over. Could her father really be dead? He had always been so much alive to Caroline. It was he who had encouraged her to write despite all of her misgivings. Her mother had thought that two years of college was long enough, but her father in his gentle way had firmly said she should go all four years.

Caroline knew Jason would be at the station to meet her. He was always dependable. She believed she would like him more if she didn't always anticipate what he would do. You could never tell about Fred. He had wanted to come home with her, but she wouldn't let him. Somehow she couldn't picture Fred in her own home. Jason wanted to marry and settle down on his farm, raise chickens, hogs and children, and die. Caroline didn't merely want to dabble **her** life away. Three years ago, though, she hadn't thought that to live as Jason wanted to was so terrible. College and Fred had changed that. She was just beginning to realize the narrow limits of her home town. Fred was going into his father's law office next fall and she had had that marvelous offer to write for the **Post** after graduation. She could hardly wait to tell her father. But how could she, if he were dead? Now there wouldn't be anyone at home who would understand. Caroline suddenly began to have feeling, and for the first time since she got the telegram she cried.

The train was slowing up. There was Jason wearing a horrible red necktie. Why in the world was she thinking of neckties when her father...

"I'm sorry, Caroline."

She took Jason's arm and nodded her head.

Mrs. Davis was waiting on the front porch. The sight of her mother made Caroline give way to her own feelings, and the next minute they were in each other's arms. It was the first time Caroline had ever seen her mother cry. Louise, Caroline's married sister, took her upstairs. She made some hot tea, and while Caroline was drinking she told her.

"We are plain flat busted. The farm—all but a small piece—will go to pay the debts. Of course, Jim and I would like to help, but you know how things are with us." Through Caroline's mind raced thoughts of money she had foolishly spent, clothes, shows, dances; and all the time they couldn't afford it. Now she couldn't go back to school.

"Oh . . ."

It was nearly dark when they went downstairs. Old Mrs. Allen stopped them to kiss Caroline. "You know, honey, it was so bright and pretty; and right after it (nodding towards the parlor) the awfullest cloud come up, and everything got black." Caroline didn't share the foolish superstitions of this poor woman who never talked about anything but the weather. In the parlor there were a million people sitting about the coffin. When she appeared she heard the hushed remarks concerning herself. She also believed she heard the ice cream freezer going on the back porch, and the thought irritated her. She walked over to the big, ugly box and looked in. That person in there—that wasn't her father. He didn't have his glasses on, and he wasn't smiling. A little wave of nausea enveloped her as she felt everyone's eyes fixed on her, watching her reaction. For a minute she wanted to scream at those people, to tell them to get out, but she calmly walked out of the room. On the porch she heard her mother telling the undertaker to put some more rouge on his face—he looked too pale. Caroline wanted to laugh, but she turned and walked out into the pasture. It was like a big party, she thought. Everyone there in Sunday clothes, sitting and talking in that very room, criticizing the life deeds of her father and passing judgment on his soul.

She stretched out on a hay pile and looked at the stars—it was so nice out here. Up there somewhere she supposed there was a God or she wouldn't have such a wonderful feeling of sudden peace, and out here somewhere in the new-mown hay was her father. She wished she could stay like this always, watching the stars and feeling all cool inside.

Jason startled here. "I thought you might like some ice cream."

She took it because she didn't know what else to do.

"Your mother asked me what music they should play, Caroline, but I don't know anything about Michael Angelo and those guys."

Caroline smiled. How could he know?

"It's getting late, and you must be tired after your trip."

She was tired. "Let's go."

That same night a week later Caroline began her letter to Fred. It was all over now; they had been able to keep the house and more of the land than they had expected. Jason's father had insisted on lending some money, and all the debts had been paid. She was writing to Fred to tell him—she couldn't tell him. It all seemed so unreal. That ambitious girl who had gone to college was like a stranger to Caroline, and she would keep her a stranger. She must forget all those things that she had once experienced—those things that had meant so much. Did they really exist? That Caroline had loved Fred, but this one must forget him.

She couldn't finish the letter; she got up and walked to the window. Several nights ago her heart had cried out to something up there in the stars, and now her very soul sobbed out; but the ache wouldn't stop.

Her mother called from the foot of the stairs.

"Caroline, Jason is here."

Slowly Caroline turned towards the door.

"Coming, Mother."

Jim

HENRY OLIVER

I can never see the bare, white arms of a sycamore without thinking of that day. The years roll back, the present scenery vanishes, and as if in a mist I see a drab land of red clay hills, a little farm house, and in the front yard one bleak, bare sycamore towering above a few stunted maples . . .

I was working in the drug store when first I met him, a young man just a few years older than I. He had come to teach English in the local high school, and I remember that when he was first pointed out to me, I said to myself, "That boy!" For though he was twenty-five, he did not look a day over twenty. His face was clear and almost childlike, his eyes were frank, and his slight body did not seem that of a mature man.

I had been teaching Sunday School to a boys' class in the primary department, and I remember what a hard time I had been having of it. I never was a good speaker, and my education hadn't gone beyond high school. The boys were hard to keep interested, and I had a sneaking suspicion that the only incentive for them to come was their fear of their father or mother. When Jim came to town, things became different somehow. He helped me with my talks, showed me how to drive in a point, and made suggestions about how to interest the boys. He himself taught a class in the junior department. They were all crazy about him—his regular students and his Sunday School students as well. Even the roughnecks were silent during the study hall period, and didn't make any trouble. I liked him from the very first time I met him; I almost worshipped him, and I think he knew it, for sometimes he would smile at me reproachfully and say, "Dan, think out your ideas for yourself. My beliefs aren't gospel."

What it was on his part that made him like me, I don't know. He never did tell me, and naturally I didn't ask. Maybe it was because we both like poetry so much, for I remember that he would come and talk for hours at a time about Shelley and Keats, his favorites. And it wasn't the kind of talk you hear so much, from those who make a cult out of romantic poetry. It was simple talk, quiet and from the heart, and somehow within me I felt that if Shelley and Keats had been alive, they would have been glad to have known Jim. I couldn't appreciate their poetry so much myself, but when Jim started talking about them, there was nothing that I enjoyed more. He had written some poetry himself, and I thought it was mighty good, but he said no, it didn't have something, the feeling for words, he guessed, and that he would never be a poet. But he was always writing; I have a lot of his poetry with me now.

He taught there three years and then one May he said, "Dan, let's go to college."

"Me?" I said. "I haven't been to school now for five years; I've forgotten all I've ever learned."

But he finally persuaded me to go ahead. I wanted to be a preacher, he said, and if I didn't go to college, I never would have a chance. I knew that, but I had always held back on account of money.

"How much do you have?" he asked.

"About four hundred dollars," I said.

"Why, that'll last you a long time," he said. "And besides you can get a job and earn more while you're going to school."

So that fall we went to Wakefield College, a little Methodist school in the foothills of the Smokies. Jim was a senior. It was a pleasant year we passed up there in the mountains. I never saw anyone who enjoyed life as much as Jim did that year; to live among the tall pines, the mountains, and the mountain streams, and to enjoy the friendship of a few students was all that he asked. He was a born poet, although he said he couldn't write.

I could have wished that that year would have gone on forever, and so, I think, could Jim; but he graduated and got a job teaching school in some town in North Carolina. I wanted to quiet; I figured I wasn't doing much good; but Jim said I ought to stay, and so I went back up there the next year. Jim and I wrote each other every week, but still it was an awful difference with him gone.

Things were going along about as usual that winter when suddenly I got news of Jim. He had tuberculosis, and they were taking him out to New Mexico. I asked when it had happened and wanted to know if I had time to see him, but they said no, that he was leaving for New Mexico that day. He had written me the last letter as if nothing had happened. I guess he didn't want me to bother.

Things seemed different now. I don't know how it was, exactly. Jim kept on writing me letters, and he seemed to be cheerful, but all the time I was fearing that I would hear of his death. Jim had such a weak body, and I didn't figure he had much chance. So I just went along, waiting, and trying to write Jim cheerful letters; I didn't have much hope. I didn't have any interest in my work, and the only thing that kept me in school was the knowledge that Jim would feel hurt if I quit.

That March I received the letter I had been expecting. Jim wrote it himself. "Dear Dan," it said, "the doctors have given up all hope. I knew I was going to die, but I didn't think it would be so soon. I want to see you and Dad again before I go away, and so I'm having them take me home. They're giving me three weeks anyway, so there'll be plenty of time. Be sure to come; I shall be home by next Wednesday." And he said a lot more about his thoughts, and seemed to be laughing at himself about something or other.

I didn't know what I would say when I saw him, but there was nothing in my life I wanted so much as to see Jim again—before he died. So I got everything ready and took the train over to Carroll County, where Jim lived. The scenery wasn't at all what Jim had liked—mountains, and streams, and evergreens. It was all red clay, with gullies where the rain had washed out the land. It wasn't spring yet, and the few trees around were bare and naked.

At the door of a neat little farm house Jim's father met me. The old man (he looked old, though I have since learned he was only fifty) reminded me very much of Jim, and as I looked at him, I could see why Jim was the person he was—about as high a mental compliment as I

could pay anybody. He took me in to Jim, looked at his son for a moment, and left the room. He knew we wanted to be alone.

Jim looked up at me and spoke. His voice was weak. "Dan, are you still intending to be a preacher?"

"Why, yes, Jim."

"I wish I could believe what you believe. I wish I could believe that we will rise again and live eternally."

"Why, Jim, I always thought you believed that."

"Because I taught Sunday School? No, I did that for other reasons . . . I don't want to die, Dan; and do you know," he smiled feebly, "it all seems such a big joke to me now, such a big joke."

"You're going to try to say something comforting. Don't try it; you can't. I said just now it seemed like a joke. It's not a joke, Dan; it's awful, just sinking into nothingness."

I turned my face away and looked out the window. A giant sycamore stood not a hundred feet from the house, a grim ghost, white and bare and awful.

Jim noticed my glance. "Do you see that tree, Dan? Ever since childhood that's been my idea of death. Every winter since I can remember I've seen it like that, naked, white, silent. There's no color to it, no sound in it. I never have touched it, but I feel sure that if I did, it would be like ice. It's death, Dan . . . no color, no sound, no heat, no anything . . ." His voice trailed off.

I sat there staring dumbly at the tree. In a few minutes the father came in, and we started talking; Jim seemed to have forgotten his fears. When I got up to go, he pressed my hand hard and said, "Go on back to the college. I don't want you hanging around here and waiting. I'd feel like shooting you."

I forced a weak smile and left the room, but I did not leave town. I did not have to wait long; he died sooner than they had expected.

I guess that even in death Jim shapes my ideas. I'm not going to be a preacher any more; I can't believe. And every time I see a tall white sycamore I hear Jim's low voice trailing off into silence.



It is hollow mirth that laughs at self and lack of mirthfulness—
Dismal satisfaction that comes from dissecting the mind with its own sharpness.

Perhaps in a world of logical improprieties
The mind will yet evolve one contradiction explaining all others.

—Henry Oliver.

Here Am I Remembering

(TO SYLVIA)

Here am I remembering, Love.
You may not care to retrace
Our varied wanderings.
Perhaps you should rather forget.
Well, Love, forget then,
And no tears,
But I must needs remember.
These are part of me now,
And you were part of them.
That dual happiness
Now caught forever in crystal
Nothing can shatter—
Not even forgetting.

On the upper-deck of a steamboat
Night closes around us with starlight.
The savage rhythm of a band
And the sound of the movements of people
Dancing on the deck below
Rise to our ears.
We have no mood for that.
Ours is the kind of love that does not dance.
Our love is the love of silence,
Or low murmuring underneath bright stars.
(I remember now we kissed once
Where moon-flowers were shining.)
The breeze is fresh from the river.
Islands drift past us.
We are lost under the blaze of starlight.

This was a night of walking a lane,
Arm in arm.
We can divide this time by two,
For we found, on one time,
A bright fire, and lighted faces,
And cheerful, homely conversation.
Another time we found whispering
On a dark bluff by the river.
There was a dream spun by a spider:
Night was the spider's name.
Stars tore at his web trying to get free,
and he murmured at them.
Do you remember he murmured? . . .
Only the wind, you say?

Arm in arm, over the dry-baked clay
 And the stones of the river bank
 We walked.
 We were laughing, and the wind
 Laughed with us,
 Tousling our hair in play.
 I can remember we were arm in arm.
 Strange is it that one can remember.
 We stumbled together over the
 lumps of baked clay,
 And over the loose gravel.
 I held your hand to steady you sometimes.
 Once with a piece of driftwood
 I carved in a piece of clay
 A trinity of words.
 Were they ours,
 Or must someone else say them?
 They are gone now from the clay:
 Rain and the river have taken them.
 Somehow they seem to me
 Still to be carved in my heart.
 Is it a foolish notion?

These moments I have carried in my heart
 Until I see them, feel them,
 Hear you whispering, even,
 Once more by my side.
 Our love was ever a love of silence,
 Too great to be spoken with lips,
 Or even with eyes.
 Our love has been wandering,
 Trying to find expression for itself.
 The attempts have been feeble,
 But here is another.
 It tries to be vocal,
 To burst in upon you,
 To surprise you with its lyricism,
 To bind you with silken chains,
 Listen, dear Love, and remember.

I offer no new dream now;
 Only a few memories
 Too fraught with life's golden ecstasy
 Ever to die.

—Richard A. Thomas, Jr.

Hands Which Once Moved

Hands which once moved
 In quick obedience to brain
 Now lie quiescent on
 The counterpane.

Eyes which once looked
 At Life's brave onward sweep
 Now have forgot it all
 In endless sleep.

Lips which once gave
 Bright patterns for my days
 Now give no sound, and Life moves past
 In wordless ways.

—Richard A. Thomas, Jr.



Barrier

Behind these lips
 Which seldom curl to smiles
 Or break to laughter,
 As waves on sandy shore,
 Laughter swirls forward
 Trying to reach you,
 Restlessly charging at you,
 Pounding against that
 Which is insurmountable,
 Sobs back within the depths
 As waves that break their insane strength
 Against a cliff, tall-lifting adamant cliff.

Tears, only tears,
 To charm the salty ocean in myself!
 Give me tears,
 For laughter in me striving for release
 Meets barrier of stone.

—Richard A. Thomas, Jr.

Sonnet

The colour and line alone, the artists say,
Reveal true Art. The first we see at sunset,
Where all the varied colours, the gold, the claret,
Are lavishly spread. The line? White statues convey
The idea best. But I, unmoved, would betray
My disbelief. To me far more beautiful yet—
An untinted painting, its changing lines overset
With cloudiness. (For what can Art display
To rival Love?) By night, my Beloved's face,
Enveloped in shadows thrown by moving leaves
Before an haloed moon, in softened light,
Is a memory nothing can displace
From my soul. For lodging there, it weaves
Into my being a picture of the night.

—R. M. B.