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EXPERIMENTALIST

VOLUME XI

SPRING, 1965

EDITORS

ELIZABETH JAYNE

LEE CLINTON

EDITORIAL STAFF

LYNN-MARY BEYSER

FRAN CADDIS

NANCY CLARK

STEVE CLARKE

DAN JANDORF

DYAN SCHAUDER

FACULTY ADVISORS

MISS BARBARA HULL

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The EXPERIMENTALIST is the student creative writing magazine of the State University College, Geneseo, New York. Manuscripts and letters of inquiry can be directed to: Editor, the EXPERIMENTALIST, CC No. 675.

AWARDS

Lucy Harmon Fiction Award:

Carole Bayer for "Bit of Heaven"

In "Bit of Heaven," Carole Bayer has attempted something more than the usual college story. Certainly, if she keeps writing, and writes hard, she will do better things, but already we have evidence of a clear vision and a feeling for human beings as they are. Her handling of the mother, Mrs. Montgomery, is especially good.

William Melvin Kelley

Mary E. Thomas Poetry Award:

Dyan Schauder for "On Choir Boy Baked Ham Dinner Days"

All young writers serve witting or unwitting apprenticeships, and Dyan Schauder's eloquence resembles Cummings'. And if poetry is striking reconsiderations of human experience, Miss Schauder is a poet.

Leo Rockas

William T. Beauchamp Literary Award:

William Melvin Kelley, Writer-in-Residence, Spring, 1965; author of *A Different Drummer*, *Dancers on the Shore*, and *A Drop of Patience*.

The Beauchamp Award, presented to Mr. Kelley, is in recognition of the outstanding contribution he has made to creative writing on campus this Spring.

The Editors

The Editors of the EXPERIMENTALIST wish to thank Mr. William Melvin Kelley, Dr. Gifford Orwen, and Dr. Leo Rockas for their participation as judges in this year's student awards.

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EXPERIMENTALIST

VOLUME XI

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CAROLE BAYER

Bit of Heaven

"We at Archaic Gardens feel that you and your family deserve the very finest. This is that special place you've been looking for. Our community offers the best in accommodations for the Senior Citizen.

"Forty-five miles from New York City on the historic Hudson River, we offer perfection in country living. Our units are convenient and modern, our grounds spacious. Ours is a community within a community. Every possible need and desire is catered to within the confines of our own surroundings. If nearby attractions arouse your interest, however, you will find that transportation facilities are excellent.

"Archaic Gardens is situated on seventy-five acres of the most picturesque land in Westchester County. We are easily reached by both parkway and train. Why not visit us? Stroll in our gardens. Watch the sun set on the beautiful foothills of the Catskills. Enjoy the freedom of our country atmosphere. We are confident that you will find Archaic Gardens to be that 'little bit of heaven' you've always dreamed of."

The brochure dropped from Adrienne's hands. Malcolm was looking at her.

"I don't know, Malcolm. I just don't know. It sounds wonderful, but I just don't know. It all seems so—well, so inhumane."

"Inhumane? Don't be sentimental. She's my mother. I know what's best for her. You're just being selfish by wanting her to stay with us. She needs a chance to live, to be free. What can we offer her here? A bed? Food in her mouth? She needs to be with people her own age. Anyway, all she ever gives us is worry."

"Malcolm, she's your mother. Of course we worry about her. Do you think that if we moved her forty miles we'd stop worrying? It would be even harder. We wouldn't know. We'd always be wondering how she was and what she was doing. And as for her chance to live—what kind of a life would she have away from everyone and everything that was familiar to her. This is her home—we're her family. Doesn't that mean anything to you? Or do you want her to end up like my mother?"

"Look Adrienne, we couldn't afford to take your mother in with us. I can't help that. Stop trying to make me sound like some kind of a monster. I know what I'm doing. This is the best thing for all of us."

"Adrienne, will you come up? I need someone to help me downstairs." Malcolm could hear his mother's heavy footsteps in the upstairs hallway.

"I'll be right there, Mother."

"See what I mean," Malcolm muttered.

Mrs. Montgomery entered the room slowly, leaning on Adrienne. She was a small woman, but her hands and feet were swollen. They looked like they were filled with water, ready to pour out quantities of fluid at the slightest pressure. Mrs. Montgomery was dressed in the same lifeless colors she had worn since the death of her husband three years before. Adrienne often asked her to put on one of the brighter dresses that hung at the back of the closet. "It will make you feel better," she would say, but the old woman would always insist on the navy or the black.

Mrs. Montgomery had a pleasant face, so round that her dimples were only a happy memory. She smiled when she saw Malcolm.

"I couldn't sleep, Malcolm. It's too cold upstairs."

Malcolm got up and walked over to the thermostat. "My God, Mother, it's seventy-eight degrees in here." He wore that annoyed expression that an adolescent has when his mother calls him away from his friends to take out the garbage. He sat down and picked up a newspaper from the coffee table. His mother sat on the couch, her discolored, puffy hands folded neatly on her lap. She smiled at Malcolm, showing a mixture of love and pride in her expression. Malcolm felt

like screaming, "Stop looking at me," but he knew that he wouldn't be able to stand the scene that would follow such an outburst. Mrs. Montgomery was rather touchy lately, and any sharp word or tone usually ended in tears and wails. Funny, Malcolm thought, she never acted like this before.

Adrienne came in from the kitchen with three cups of coffee on a small copper tray. Mother beamed. She never finished the contents, but she seemed to enjoy the warm steam that brushed her cheeks when she lifted her cup. She would sometimes sit with it close to her mouth, not drinking, but merely savoring the fragrance and the consoling warmth.

They sat quietly. Adrienne bustled from room to room, as if she were trying to avoid possible unpleasantness. Malcolm read and re-read the financial page of the newspaper. Mother sat holding her half-full cup. By midnight the house was dark.

The early morning sun streamed through the yellow curtains in the breakfast area. Malcolm sat fully dressed at the small table, his elbows resting on the cloth. Two poached eggs lay untouched before him. He had just nibbled on the toast, and now the butter was so completely absorbed that the surface was shiny. Adrienne sat opposite him, engulfed in a maize terry cloth robe that made her a part of the room. She held a cigarette in one hand; the other rested on her coffee cup. They hadn't said more than the everyday "Would you please pass the salt?" or "Is the paper here yet?" since the night they had spoken of Archaic Gardens. This both disturbed and relieved Malcolm. He usually liked to talk things out, but he also liked to have his own way. Silence, he presumed, was the only answer. Malcolm could hear Mrs. Montgomery moving around her room. He knew at any moment she would call to be helped downstairs. He got up from the table. "I guess I'd better be going. I have a client coming in at nine. Traffic might be heavy." He had no one coming, but for some reason he felt he needed an excuse to get away. Adrienne didn't look up. As he closed the front door he heard Adrienne calling, "I'll be right there."

The morning progressed slowly for Malcolm. When he came in, his secretary brought him a stack of letters that needed his signature.

It was almost noon now and he hadn't looked at them. He sat at his desk smoking cigarette after cigarette, and staring at the tiled ceiling. He ordered a chicken sandwich and some coffee around two, but the food seemed dry and tasteless. The coffee too lacked flavor, but it relieved the dryness in his throat. At three-thirty he called Adrienne.

"Look Adrienne, I've been thinking. It's been a long time since—well, I thought maybe you'd like to go out for dinner tonight. I want to talk to you."

"I can't leave Mother alone."

"Why can't you get one of the neighbors to stay with her? We won't make it late. O. K.?" Malcolm's voice was strained.

"I guess that Betty could come over for a while. I'll take a cab and meet you at the office about five."

"Fine. And Adrienne—thanks."

Adrienne hesitated for a moment. "I won't be late." The receiver clicked in Malcolm's ear.

Adrienne arrived at the office a few minutes after Malcolm's secretary had left. She wore a dark green mohair suit with a cream colored silk blouse. Her kid pumps accentuated her shapely legs. Malcolm never thought of her as being middle-aged. He only thought of her as being a woman, a special creature who had reached all the beauty of maturity. When she opened the door, Malcolm noticed her perfume. He smiled to himself. Adrienne's perfume was a joke with him. He would always tell her how nice she smelled, and ask what she was wearing. She would say *Replique*, or *Chant de Aromes*, or *Crepe de Chine*. She had a thousand names for the mysterious bottles on her dresser. Malcolm never learned to associate the right name with the proper scent. He only knew that the sweetness and the mystery made him happy.

"I just have to get my coat," he said, straightening up the last stack of letters on his desk.

He took her to the "Old Garden" on Twenty-Ninth Street. It wasn't the most elegant of restaurants, but it was respectable and quiet. The headwaiter knew them. "It's so nice to see you again," he said, as he led them to a small table.

They both ordered Rob Roys, and after a few sips, Malcolm began to speak. Adrienne held her glass tightly.

"I'm glad we have a chance to be alone. We really should do this more often." Adrienne was silent. She knows what I want, he thought.

"Adrienne, I've been thinking a lot lately. Why don't we go up to Archaic Gardens just to see what it's like. I'm not saying that we'll send mother there. I just want to see."

"You've made up your mind already, haven't you?"

"Damn it, Adrienne, be reasonable. Look what she's done to you. You're nothing but a maid for her. I didn't marry you for that."

"Malcolm, I like taking care of her. She doesn't ask for much, and anyway, I enjoy it. I don't mind a bit."

"I mind."

They ate their dinner in silence.

It was raining that Saturday. The trip took almost an hour. Traffic was light, but the trip seemed long. The only sound in the car was the groan of the radio. It was almost eleven when they spotted the first sign.

ARCHAIC GARDENS — THREE MILES AHEAD
THE SENIOR CITIZENS' PARADISE

"It's nice up here, don't you think?"

"Lovely," she answered coldly.

The car made its way slowly up the winding road. Malcolm instinctively turned down the radio. He wondered why he did it, but he didn't bother to touch the dial again. At the top, he stopped the car.

A long row of apartment type units stretched out before him. To the right he could see the river. It was cloudy, and the mountains in the background looked like shadows. A light rain was falling. I bet it's nice in the summer, he thought, as he got out of the car.

The gravel crunched under their feet as they walked toward the office. A small curly-headed man of about thirty sat at the desk. He stood up when the Montgomerys entered. Smiling, he reached for Malcolm's hand.

"Welcome to Archaic Gardens. My name's Bob Burleigh. Can I help you?"

"Well, yes. I came here to see about—I wanted to learn a little about this place."

"Then I'm just the man you wanted to see. Tell me, is it a parent who would like to come here?"

"Well, we haven't really discussed it yet. It's my mother."

"Mother. Splendid! Women especially love this place." The salesman glanced at Adrienne. Her face was cold and hard. "How old is your mother?" He asked the question, but hardly seemed to want to answer. He was writing on a pad.

"She's seventy-two. And in good health."

"They're full of vigor, aren't they Mr. ?"

"Montgomery. Malcolm Montgomery. This is my wife Adrienne. I'm sorry."

Adrienne was staring out the window, but Burleigh didn't notice. He was busy recording the information.

"You know," Burleigh started putting down his pencil, "when I reach retirement age there's nothing I'd like better than to settle down here. Off the record, this place has everything. This community is something."

Malcolm glanced at Adrienne. She looked like she was going to be sick.

"Just what do you have to offer?"

"Everything. Beautiful units. Really convenient. Complete facilities. We have our own infirmary. Bowling alleys, tennis courts for the active. Movies for those who want to relax. And dances every Friday night. Lots of social life."

Malcolm almost laughed when he thought of his Mother dancing.

"Would you like to see one of the units?"

"Fine. Adrienne, are you coming?"

"I'll wait here."

The trip back seemed even longer than the one up, for the radio wasn't even playing now.

It was a month before they saw Mrs. Montgomery. Malcolm had good intentions, but, with one thing or another, they never managed to make the trip. Adrienne hadn't been speaking to him, but he thought that she would snap out of it soon.

The door was unlatched when they arrived. The odor of stale air met their nostrils. There was a pile of unwashed dishes in the kitchen sink, and a bar of softened butter on the table. Malcolm was surprised at the condition of the room, but he didn't say anything. Adrienne was already walking into the bedroom. Malcolm followed her.

Mrs. Montgomery was sitting in front of the window, her hands folded on the sill.

"Mo-Mother?" Adrienne's voice cracked.

Mrs. Montgomery turned slowly. She looked pale, but her eyes sparkled when she saw them.

"Malcolm, Adrienne. I've been calling for you. Didn't you hear me? I wanted you to help me downstairs."

LEE CLINTON

Poem

make softly the wind sound
to bend low the willow
to win where strength fails

DYAN SCHAUDER

On Choir Boy Baked Ham Dinner Days

on choir boy baked ham dinner
days when the
new york times
lights a thousand
evening fires
sleep till noon
or burn incense.
lie all around
and drink till
you can not laugh.
eat steak
every day of
the week;
give dear aunt jane
reason to shake
her marshmallow head
in shock.
but if i want
to put on the
holy mask and
join the candle
burning chanters in
the only house of god
do not stop me.
do not give me
the look of the
self-crowned king or
recite from page
five of your unwritten
lecture.

unlock the door—
ignore me as
i leave and i
shall return in
an hour as
though i'd never gone.
if when the
automatic crow breaks
through the peace of
your escape
every morning
before the world realizes
it's awake,
and you dress in the
undecided dark to
walk click-slap-thump to
the wooden benches, steady
alter and burning cross.
if every morning you
kneel there for the good
of your long lost soul—
read and whisper of
your despair.
if you keep your soul so
clean it smells of
soap i do not
care.
go on, find
your own salvation.
but should you
read your blessed words
to me, or pound before
my wounded sight your
manual of printed
truths;

try to force me
into one of your
standardized—worshipped—feared coffins
i shall retire within
my walls while
you stand beyond the
gates you might
have entered.

ah, sing the songs
of revolution.
wear your hair
long and your
life short.
cover yourself with
the symbols of
the bitter
tell the world to go
to hell—
care for no one
and no thing.
whistle at the moon,
spit at the sun.
all i ask is
that you walk with me
even if your family
would approve.
even if i am government and
society approved
and certified.
though i may find
good at the bottom of
the glass and
refuse to throw the dirt
of our lives
back at those who deserve

all your heart.
though this i am,
walk with me
through the streets
and always shall i think
of you when the people speak.

be born in the high-walled
circle and die
in it.

live always wrapped in
your security blanket,
sucking your thumb and
biting everyone else's.
plan your life
by They.

polish your shoes,
eat your vegetables,
brush your teeth.
remember that you are of the chosen.
forget those left
bleeding in the tracks
of your shoes as you
walk on.

if this is what you
think life is
then it is real.
but if i find
it false and
want to make it known—
torn and bitter,
wet with tears—
if this is the
self i choose to be
scorn me with care;
lower your nose

and eyebrows in
my presence.
spray the house when i leave—
make sure the good people
never see me—
but when i am
near you forget
for awhile your missionary blood.
accept me as another.

i will not stay
long 'neath
the pressures of
the sword.

There Is No Wind

there is no wind
just the stillness
of the grave.
there is no rain
just a few morning drops
from the few
who awoke in the night.
there is no cold
just the touch of the
perspiring crowd.
but still i
come banging
on your door.
pounding.
beating.
i want none of
your food
and little of
your time.

i want none of your
water or silver.
if you would let me
lie in the corner
for as long as it
takes to see
you smile
i would be on my way.
if just for one moment
you would show me
your favorite book
or sing me
your only song—
then i would leave
as i had come ;
on my feet.
i want nothing
from you
but a look ;
the look that christ gave judas.
but if you will not
let me in,
or insist on giving
me your prettiest pin,
or making me something
to eat
or drink
if you make me look
through your scrapbook
or make excuses for
this and that—
then i must leave as
all the rest ;
on their feet—
and you will
find the tip
on the table.

There Is A Oneness Of Men

there is a oneness of men
which no walls can break.
under the hand-cast barricades
runs a river from which all blood flows.

though we meet strangers and part strangers,
though dying holds us as two,
my life is forged with yours and
no averted look or mind-child born of dust can tear them.

the men who've been killed for noble causes,
though they bore different names,
have all died for the same buried truth,
and lived in the same gnawing grief.

hold the burning cross a little closer
that i may burn the papers of our fears
and selfish molders of our despair
with its screaming light.

i await not the binding prophet
or the linking life.

i await the destroyer of the paper-clip bonds,
the man of swinging sword to cut us free of false controls.

JOYCE BULLOCK

Rebuff

She sat there, staring at the fly in the pitcher, watching it squirm and wiggle in the nearly soured cream. She poked it with her pencil point and waited for it to pop to the surface . . . to struggle no more. With a shiver, she realized there was a man at the end of the counter, waiting to be served. She sighed and shuffled over to the only occupied stool in the place. He murmured "coffee" and thrust a dime across the counter as if it were a weapon. She went to the coffee pots and filled a cup till it sloshed over the side. She always did that. Coffee just seemed better if it dripped on the customer and left a ring in the saucer. She resisted the temptation to give him the cream with the fly in it, giving instead another nearly soured pitcherful.

Gold eyes . . . he actually has gold eyes. I've never seen gold eyes before . . . and there were pink veins all over the whites. Mother told me there would be oddballs coming in . . . always said I wasn't cut out to be a hash slinger. Wanted me to be a model or something . . . poor old girl . . . her daughter just had to be what she couldn't. Thought I'd have trouble with men getting fresh because I was a waitress. She didn't know you got to be halfway decent looking before anybody will try to get smart. She always thought I'd outgrow the baby fat. On my seventeenth birthday, no, eighteenth birthday, she brought home a size twelve party dress. How she pushed and pulled! When she knew I wouldn't ever fit she screwed up her face and bawled like a big baby. I just stood there with that zipper pinching my back wondering how I could make her happy.

Again she shivered and whirled on her stool. The man was staring at her. He picked up a cup and smiled a crooked half-smile. She went to the row of coffee pots.

Just get him the coffee . . . don't look at him . . . those eyes. They'll make my hand shake and I'll spill the coffee. Maybe he's watching

me now. Will his eyes follow me? Will he try to reach out and touch me?

She turned and went to the man. His eyes were focused on the counter and he made no move. She picked up a rag and scrubbed as though she were seeking vengeance on some unknown enemy. She rubbed and rubbed the same stains that had been there for two years. With the usual insight, she grabbed the can of institutional cleanser. She sprinkled it wildly on the stains. She loved the fine blue dust that settled on the counter. She again began to rub, rub.

Thought for sure he'd try something. He just sits there, not looking at anything. Grandpa did that. There I'd be, feeding his flabby face. Every time the spoon came to his mouth he'd open it, and then snap it shut, like a fly-trap or something. Always staring, that one was. It was probably better when he knocked off. Grandma ran around screaming and bawling how she wanted to die and go with him. Everyone felt *so* sorry for her. I was little then. I wanted to laugh then. *I* knew she wouldn't die. She was too mean . . . been nine years and she's still around to nag.

She sighed and gave up her task. Her shoulder joint ached and she was beginning to feel silly scrubbing the same spot. By the clock she saw that she had only a half hour till closing. With a sigh of relief she began tidying. From the corner of her eye, she saw the man slip out the door.

Didn't pay for the second cup of coffee. Probably using it for an excuse to come up to me after I close. "Sorry mam, here's the money I owe you. Which way are you walking . . . ?"

She went to where he sat and a dime was staring at her from the counter. She frowned and rang it up.

Probably waiting outside for me. He was watching me. I'll show him I'm not a pushover. I'll take this fork along just in case. Susie was followed by a man once. He even tried to get her in his car. She just laughed at him and came home. She didn't even tell anyone. Oh, she mentioned it a few weeks later. It didn't mean anything to her. If it had been me, I would have screamed for the police. Then

Daddy might have taken a poke at him. That's the right way to teach these mashers. Damn Susie, acting as if it were nothing. She always does that. One of these times she'll get strangled. Then she'll wish she had acted concerned. Well, time to close up. I'll keep this fork handy to stab him. Maybe he will grab me and try to kiss me.

She locked up and stepped into the stifling air. She glanced to her right and left and stepped boldly to the street. She had three unlit city blocks to go till she reached home.

Probably thinks I don't know he's out here . . . maybe he's behind a tree or a garbage pail. I've got the fork though. I won't walk fast . . . he'll think I'm scared. I'm not . . . just want to show him I'm not easy, that's all.

She shuffled along, covering ground faster than she had intended. About a half block from her house she slowed to halting, mincing steps. There were so many hiding places along that stretch. But, before she realized it, she was at the walk leading to her door. She looked all around her, searching every alley, every shadow. She pulled the fork from her pocket and threw it on the ground. She went to the front door, and stepped in.

JAN HORNSTEIN

War

they walked through the field
soaking in the glories of nature
and the lowliness of man

as they walked looking at the brilliance of the sun
they stopped
it was dark
the sun was clouded over by a familiar shaped cloud.

they realized it was a test
to prove their superiority over the enemy
but the sirens sounded
and screams could be heard.

they ran for protection
they were not afraid
for after all their country was the strongest
there was no doubt in their minds.

as the field was slowly devoured
by the flames of fire
and those minute particles of dust
they smiled
knowing the destruction that was going on to be inflicted upon
their enemy.

they smiled
and as they both fell to the ground
dying
they were happy
knowing that their country had won the WAR.

DOUGLAS BRODE

On The Fire Next Time

The interesting thing about James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* is the author's tendency to shy away from abstract politics, from governmental issues, from segregation, from integration, and from preaching to his readers at all. In this sense, the book reads more like a novel than an essay. He gives us a personal experience—that of the man James Baldwin, but always it is also the Negro James Baldwin, going through life, wearing his black face and his black body, thinking through a black mind, but also a human mind, a human body . . . and so, as humans, we understand his feelings, his emotions; as whites, we must listen carefully if we are to understand what he says as a Negro.

The essay is in the form of two letters, the first, and shorter one, titled "My Dungeon Shook." It is, in essence, a comment on the idea of acceptance. Baldwin expresses himself in the statement "There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that *they* must accept *you*. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that *you* must accept *them*." Here, he is stressing to the Negro the importance of accepting the white man as an ignorant person (ignorant of himself and the country he has made) and the necessity of freeing the white man from his misconception about them.

The essay ends on an optimistic note, as Baldwin reminds the Negro of an old folksong: "The very time I thought I was lost, My dungeon shook and the chains fell off." The exact meaning of this, as an optimistic conclusion, is somewhat clearer having first considered the second of the essays.

In "Down at the Cross," Baldwin spends considerable time drawing a picture of the Harlem streets, with all the pimps, whores, and criminals that congregate there, and he visualizes the moment of conception in the mind of every young Negro when he comes to the gradual realization that there is no escape—that he is doomed to that

street: and rather than fighting it, despair eventually overtakes the mind.

Here, the essay might be related to the Supreme Court's *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case, where the doctrine of separate but equal was declared Constitutional. The Negro is forced into a less than human position—even if he were to receive “equal” (and he rarely does) the conscious awareness of his “separateness” has a constant effect on his mind. He is taught to despise *himself* for being black, and this guilt causes him to congregate in ghettos even in those few cases where regulations would not. Similarly, Baldwin tells us of his hate and desire to kill his own father for what the man represented to him—the past: beaten, whipped, subservient.

Something is out of joint; he knows this. He is guilty of some unmentionable crime; he is painted black as a life-long mark of Cain to remind him. His entire existence, the entire existence of every Negro individual in the United States today, is like a Kafka nightmare, going on continuously, again and again. As Baldwin puts it: “You must consider what happens to this citizen, after all he has endured, when he returns home: search, in his shoes, for a job, for a place to live; ride, in his skin, on segregated buses; see, with his eyes, the signs saying ‘White’ and ‘Colored,’ and especially the signs that say ‘White Ladies’ and ‘Colored Women’; look into the eyes of his wife; look into the eyes of his son; listen, with his ears, to political speeches, North and South; imagine yourself being told to ‘wait.’ And all this is happening in the richest and freest country in the world, and in the middle of the twentieth century.”

Baldwin's comments here are not addressed to the Negro but to the White Man. He is concerned with the society we have established for ourselves, and with the society we have forced the Negro to live in. We must consider our government closely and determine just how adequate it is if it will, first, pass legislation allowing an entire race of people to be segregated in every aspect of their lives, and, second, flounder helplessly while the individual states ignore any attempts to end segregation.

Through the despair, it seems, we ourselves have forced the various Negro groups to come about—Elijah Mohammad, Malcolm X, The

Black Muslims—as well as their conception that the whites are doomed and that the Negroes are taking over. This is an optimistic view, for the estranged Negro. It is the only type of optimism he can subscribe to, for he can no longer “wait” for his rights, his liberties, his American citizenship.

But I conclude that there is an element of true optimism on the part of Baldwin. First, the mere fact that he has written down these concepts for someone, including some Whites, to read is a sign that he has some hope that something might possibly be done, and second, the fact that the book was published, despite the grave errors in our system of life that it points out, makes us look optimistically at our own government: that it takes criticism so well, and that the First Amendment is an actuality.

It is an interesting paradox that while the presence of such a book points out the finest part of our way of life, the content of the book points out the worst.

STEVE CLARKE

A Suite In Three Parts

PRELUDE IN B-FLAT

The heart fluctuated in cadence
With a strict tempo. A thought?
No!—a force like that upon
Watching great stones eroded
To grains of sand, or five hours
Of music with no instrument
Anywhere playing.

The organist fluttered up and down
The keyboard—his *vox humana*
Was broken, but the flute blended well.
The great and swell built the majesty
Of growing grandeur in the "Hallelujah,"
Filling the nave of a cathedral. He
Fled the church leaving the notes still
Soaring behind him, trapped by the
Coarsely rising stone edifice.

FUGUE IN G

The stream of a salty tear ran,
Or rippled, a ragged coarse to
The end, where it began.

REJOUISSANCE

The organist slowly returned to his
Instrument. The *vox humana*,
Rejuvenated, coupled with the flute
To sing of a tranquil glory never before found.
The stone is vanquished—all is won.

BOB ROOT

The Stone

Jimmy stood on the ridge surrounding the quarry, just out of sight of the house. Before him was a vast display of chopped granite, spiralling down to the pebbly floor. In the center of the crater sat a steam shovel with bits of yellow peering through the rust that covered it. Jimmy's eyes scoured the basin and clung to the machine in total wonder over its presence, as if it were the symbol of a lost civilization suddenly emerging in the midst of his new neighborhood. Jimmy's face showed his awe at the discovery of the quarry and the quantity of stone that lay before him. He moved along the ridge in anxious exploration, the fringe of his imitation buckskin outfit flapping as he walked. He held his flintlock tightly in his fist and pushed back his furry cap with the coonskin tail when it started to slide down his forehead. Halfway around the rim he stopped.

On the ground before him lay a white stone. Jimmy picked it up and examined it. It was smooth and even, a pure white oval. Jimmy looked upon it like a jewel. He was many minutes examining it, and then he began to look around for others. There were many stones with white but none so immaculate as the thin stone in his hand. When he could find none to match it, he sat down on a boulder and gave all his attention to it. He looked up when he heard voices.

The voices, and the scuffle of feet, came from the other side of the ridge. Jimmy jumped up and turned in the direction of their approach. Within a few minutes a boy about Jimmy's age appeared on the ridge and then another and another. It was the third boy who saw Jimmy.

"Hey, who's that?"

The others turned and looked at him. Each of four more boys came over the ridge, stopped, and stared at Jimmy.

"Who're you?" the first boy asked. He was black-haired and dressed in jeans and a cowboy shirt and hat. He carried a Winchester.

"Jimmy's my name."

"Where do you live?"

Jimmy pointed toward his house. "Over there. We just moved in."

The boy who had seen Jimmy first pointed the other way. "We live over there."

Jimmy looked across the rim of the quarry, across the fields and the creek, and saw the rows of houses.

"What're ya doin' here?" the leader asked.

"I don't know. I just wanted to see what was here."

"Ya by yourself?" the third boy asked. Jimmy nodded. "We're playin' guns. Ya wanna play with us?"

"He can't play with us," said a fat boy with double holsters. "We don't know him."

"Sure he can," the other said. "Can't he, Billy?"

Billy looked at Jimmy. "Okay, we need one more guy to be even."

The third boy asked again, "You wanna play with us?"

"Sure," Jimmy said. He hadn't been in his new house long and he hadn't any friends in this neighborhood.

"Okay, come on."

The group moved off and Jimmy followed, absently placing the white stone in his pocket. They went around the rim to the opposite side and climbed down the outside of the ridge to a level place that stuck out over the woods. There they circled around the leader, waiting for instructions.

"No crossing the crick, and ya can't go beyond the road up there or past the road over there, or around the quarry. Ya gotta give a guy a chance to get into the woods."

After the rules were set up, the teams were chosen. The black-haired boy, Billy, and the fat blond boy in a sweat shirt and Bermuda shorts were the ones who chose. Jimmy was the last one chosen. He was on Billy's team, as was Jerry, the one who had asked him to play. They went odds and evens for the woods, and Billy won. The fat boy's team was to go into the quarry, count to one hundred, and then come after Billy's team. Once they got in the woods, Billy's team could shoot them. When the fat boy, Larry, had led his team over the rim, Billy led the others into the woods. He and the fourth boy scattered, and Jerry turned to Jimmy.

"You can hide with me 'til you get used to the game."

He led Jimmy to a hillock shaped like a backwards-L, covered with dense bushes, which they circled, entering the brush from behind, on their hands and knees. Jerry left Jimmy in the base of the L while he crawled up the part that pointed toward the quarry. Soon Jimmy was alone in the bushes, lying flat on his stomach, his flintlock pointing toward the unseen quarry. Everything was quiet.

"Jerry, are you still there?"

"Be quiet," Jerry called. "I just saw 'em come down the hill. They're in the woods now."

Jimmy was quiet and waited. He watched the inside of the L, but he could see nothing. A few times he heard bushes move toward the left, but no one appeared.

"Tow, tow, tow." To his right Jimmy heard Jerry call out. "You're dead, Freddy," Further away Freddy answered, "Oh, all right." Jimmy moved restlessly in his hiding place. All at once the bushes at the base of the hillock opened, and Larry rushed toward Jerry's spot. Jimmy raised his flintlock and fired.

"Bloom."

Larry stopped and whirled with his revolvers pointing generally toward Jimmy. "Tchew, tchew, tchew, tchew. You're dead," he called.

Jimmy looked up with surprise. "No, I'm not. I shot you first."

"No, you didn't. You missed me."

"No, I didn't."

"I was moving too fast; you couldn't have hit me."

Jimmy was silent.

"Tow," Jerry said. "You're dead, Larry."

Larry looked up at him. Jerry had just emerged from his hiding place. "Well, so's he," Larry said.

"No, he's not. He shot you, Larry. Besides, you couldn't have hit him; he was too well hidden."

Though dissatisfied, Larry gave in and laid down. Jimmy came out of hiding and joined Jerry, thanking him. They could hear the sounds of the others off near the river, and Billy told him they had better go that way to help the rest of the team. Jimmy nodded, and the two hurried off together. Jimmy smiled as he followed the other boy.

Billy's team won that game, and the next, when they came after Larry's team. In the third game, Billy and Jimmy hid down by the creek. Billy had thought that he had seen a good place to hide when they had cornered Larry there last time. On the river bank Billy pointed up into the branches of a tree hanging out over the creek.

"That looks like a good place," Billy said. "You can hide there. Go ahead. I'll hand you your gun."

Jimmy said, "Thanks," and handed him the flintlock. Then he scrambled up into the tree. He had some difficulty getting through a tangle of branches, but when he did, he discovered a thick, well-covered limb. "This is neat," he called down.

Billy handed him his gun and left. Jimmy waited breathlessly for the first of Larry's team to show himself. He heard flies buzzing beneath him, just above the creek, and the slap of the water on a rock jutting out from the opposite bank. He heard shots in the distance and the drone of a plane overhead. Then there was silence again. The silence lasted a long time, and in his hiding place Jimmy waited alone.

"Jimmy." It was Jerry's voice, calling from somewhere near the tree. "Jimmy, where are you?"

"I'm up here," Jimmy answered, and brushed the branches aside to reveal himself to the boy below. "Up here."

Jerry searched the trees for a moment, then spotted Jimmy. "Come on down. The game's over."

Jimmy tossed his flintlock down and descended awkwardly. "Who won?"

"They did. Everybody's leaving. Come on."

The two trudged off toward the quarry where the others were waiting.

"It's a good thing you remembered me," Jimmy said. "I might have waited all night up in that tree."

Jerry didn't answer. Soon they were out of the woods, and Jimmy followed the other boy at a little distance as they clawed their way up the slope. The others were directly above them on the rim. As Jerry reached them, Larry said, "Aw, why'd ya have ta go get him?" Jimmy looked up at them and saw another boy kick a rock down toward

him. It hit him in the chest and he stopped, watching them fearfully. A few more rocks came down, and one hit his leg on the shinbone. It hurt, and Jimmy grimaced, but said nothing. The boys laughed and called, "What's the matter? Can't ya climb?" and "We're the kings of the castle and you're a dirty rascal." Jimmy's eyes started to water.

"Come on, guys. Let's go," Billy said, and started off. The others turned to follow him.

"What a dopey kid," Larry said, and Jimmy heard the others laugh and echo, "Yeah, what a dopey kid," or "He sure is dopey." He heard them walking off, but he could no longer see them. The tears blurred his sight, and all he could see was the gray of the hill. He sat down suddenly and rubbed his leg where the rock had hit him, and cried as noiselessly as possible.

"Jimmy?" The voice came from above him, on the ridge. It was Jerry. "Jimmy? I'm sorry. I like ya. Honest." Jimmy didn't answer. "Honest," he repeated. When there was still no answer, he said, "I gotta go now, Jimmy. I gotta go with those guys. See ya?"

Jimmy turned around quickly, rubbing away his tears and rising. "Jerry, wait a minute." Jimmy scrambled up the side of the hill as quickly as he could. Standing by Jerry, his eyes still misty, he could see the other boys hazily disappearing over the far rim. He wiped his nose on the back of his hand and reached into his pocket, drawing out the white stone. He handed it to Jerry without speaking.

"This is neat," Jerry said, as he examined it. "Where'd ya get it?"

Jimmy pointed. "Over there."

"Are there any more over there?"

"I didn't see any. You can keep that one."

The two boys looked at each other.

"Thanks, Jimmy," Jerry said quietly. "It's really neat."

"Ya wanna go look for more?" Jimmy asked eagerly.

Jerry looked after his friends. "I gotta go right now."

"I mean, sometime ya wanna?"

"Yeah, okay, sometime."

"Tomorrow? After lunch?"

Jerry looked after his friends again.

"I don't know. Maybe . . .". His voice faded, and his face was furrowed.

Jimmy straightened his stance and tried to sound happy. "I'm gonna look for more tomorrow," he said, adding hopefully, "after lunch." He watched Jerry shift his weight uncomfortably. "Maybe I'll see ya," he said. Jerry still didn't answer but tried to concentrate on the white stone. Jimmy's eyes started to water again and he pressed his lips together to keep the corners of his mouth from turning down. He suddenly turned away and said, "Good-by, Jerry." Then he walked quickly along the rim. The tears flowed in pace with his steps.

Behind him, Jerry called his name. The second time he heard him, Jimmy stopped and turned. Jerry shrugged his shoulders.

"Ya wanna look for more of these?" Jimmy nodded. Jerry shrugged again. "I'll see ya tomorrow?"

Jimmy's tears came faster and sobs rose in his throat. He tried to smile, but he couldn't. His facial muscles had to stay tight, or else he would bawl. The first time he said, "See ya," it came out choked and muffled. He called it again, and Jerry said, "Okay." Then Jimmy waved. He turned and disappeared over the rim, trying to reach the bottom of the slope before his sobs overtook him.

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