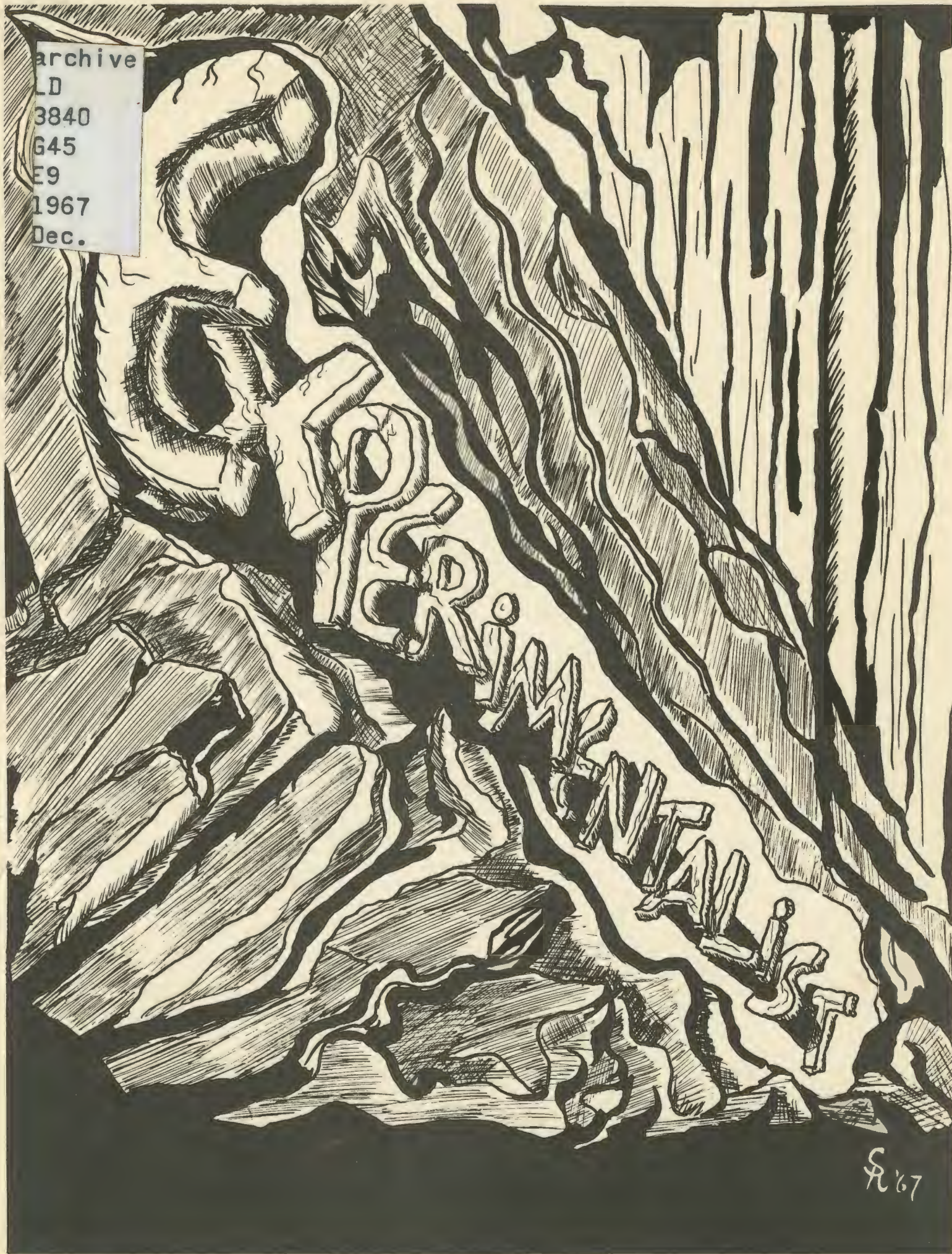


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EXPERIMENTALIST

Volume XIV

December, 1967

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The EXPERIMENTALIST is the student creative writing magazine sponsored by the English Department of the State University College, Geneseo, New York.

Introduction

This space is being used in order that I, as one editor, may explain something of what you may expect from the Experimentalist this year. I believe from reading past issues that we will be coming closer to what the name "experimentalist" means, to experiment. We are looking for material which reflects current, now, trends in the arts. I recently attended a poetry conference at State University College at Cortland and was amazed to find many students defining poetry and trying to fit everything into a literary standard. Usually one overhears students complaining that professors are forcing them to accept standards; now it seems that the students are restricting literature. If this magazine can counteract this feeling of traditional academics and put a quality of free form back into student work, then I feel that we will have accomplished much.

As for the technical aspects of the magazine, it will be run as a professional magazine. As in this issue, following issues will contain the work of professional poets. Manuscripts will be returned only if a self-addressed envelope is enclosed. If a critique is requested, we will enclose one. Submissions have come in rather slow for this first issue; I would hope that more of our creative students will use this magazine to publish their work in the future.

--Harold Bush

Insidious time and distance shroud with quiet dust,
uncoloring the essential brightness, layering the surface,
texture, shape, of the objects of the mind.
They are the tea-table in a great aunt's parlor,
sitting under the particle by particle tick,
tick tick of an old clock. Flowers faded, stiff, preserved.
Things becoming were.

--Kathryn Quick

Having Never Seen Snow

A fallen leaf
Arranges her petticoat
Awaiting the next tree

--Kathryn Quick

To Learn

The patent, searching student
climbs towers of delusion

rings a bell of truth
silent, it lacks a clapper—

he seeks to channel the mind,
channels it until it dies,

climbs a mountain that sinks
to a cave without a door,

bobs like a seaweed cork
in philosophy stagnant despair.

—Wendell Brooker

Meditation

I sat there on the toilet
Looking at myself in the bronze doorknob,
In the cellar the furnace switched on.
The plumber the day before
in trying to fix the clogged toilet
had mysteriously hooked up the warm air duct
to the toilet bowl. As I sat there
with warm air massaging my balls,
I wonder, will the fire in the furnace
Go out if I flush the toilet?

—Don Lovejoy

A Body

The empty eyesockets glisten in the soft rain.
From the open mouth, the smoke from sizzling embers came.
A bloody womb flows from the fertile groin
to the shiny street of a mighty nation.
Somewhere in the dark a bayonet
Shrieks with laughter.

—Don Lovejoy

Untitled

The finite mind turns ice
Writes grotesque in recognition
Of perpetual bleak.
Guilfull humiliation: In the hardened stream
the eyes of a frozen frog
Reflect the mock of time.

—Don Lovejoy

Oh Mother of Mothballs

we offer up to you our rags
that consummate
the bodies of fleas

lice forever pray upon our cloth,
and only your odor
sot stark,
peevisish,
and painful unto
our bowels
Can Destroy those miniature
birds of prey
that suck
the living lining
from our cloth
EVEN

linen
white and pure
is defiled
by the protruding lips
of so infectious
a host
How else are we to stand up
to these devastating numbers
except through,
By,
and according with
the everlasting blessing
and repugnant odor
OF
the Mother of Mothballs

--Serge Rondinone

The Bastard Soul

without joy and in
sorrow
only knows
plights of folly.

The Wise live in
caves
and Beasts feed
upon each other's
bread,
while virgin hearts
raped by
rods of deceit
die in fields
of rice.

--Serge Rondinone

Interlude

Raindrops danced upon barren ground
As my weary heart took gray skies to
Color the mystic shadow called love.
Swallows sung as the world around
Spun as if nothing had changed.
Perfect world still admired perfect star's flame.

Storm approached from the lull.
Thunder's cries warned my soul from
Turning to the one I loved.
I ran. My heart's deepest fire did not.
Lightning's aim had missed its mark.

Over the bleak horizon came
Whirlwind to tossle the strength
Of mind's determination. Tree's limbs
Snapped while teardrops meshed with
Raindrops as you bid my heart to follow.
Gentle breeze would not die.

Sky cleared suddenly as to battle
Storm's strength. Quiet lingered.
No more the rain would tumble.
Silently dark overcame dusk.
Within my soul
Raindrops danced upon barren ground.

—Jayne A. Lehsten

I

Emptiness resounds
yet something cuts a nerve...

a silver saxophone
sweats a glistening toil
in musicians faces...

music echoed black
squanders purist prayers
wasting gray-green bribes...

II

play the blue guitar
for a solemn red-haired boy
gaping at movies alone,
a solemn black haired girl
locked with a book alone...

each resides without
a life until they open
locked and sharpened razors...

--Wendell Brooker

Trees

The trees rise above me
Tall and still;
And I see soldiers,
Proud soldiers,
Marching, marching, marching.

If I listen closely
I can hear the sap-pulse
Locked deep within the rough bark.
It beats in time with the circle
 of Spring,
It beats with the sound of marching.

—Josef Tornick

Life

Life is an abstraction,
A crystalline structure
Of shattered images -
Kaleidoscopic fragments
Of puzzle pieces
Scattered in an endless game.

Life is a trying,
A fitting of these magical pieces
To form a whole.

—Josef Tornick

Biographical Sketch

Norman Hoegberg has degrees from Princeton, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Iowa. His work has appeared in the North American Review, Poetry Review, John Logan's Choice, and many other magazines. He also appeared in the anthology, 28 Poems. A professor at colleges in Iowa, Maryland and Nebraska, Hoegberg is presently advising Black Arts groups in Baltimore and Washington, D. C.

THE STATUES

The yellow statues, of dead men,
the green statues, black

they are in the centers
of whirling eyes

they are not us, they are
history telling of old metal

the yellow and green statues
of dead men, the black

each morning I walk under the nose
of Daniel Webster

and call him by name, Daniel
Webster, I call him by name.

Norman Hoegberg

POEM OF TEETH, OF SWELLING LEAVES

The men are made of teeth
and the burned blue edges of razors
they carve their meat
out of whatever pulse of earth

o swelling of a leaf
of a simple hand

the men are sharp
and desolate as stars
their mouths grin with the terrible
efficiency of pockets

o urging of waters
under new bark

men cannot live with cattle
and without cattle
cannot live without the meat
of other men

a silent root
sucks at a silent sand

we are walking in the sleep of foods
among the tinkling graves
daybreak folds itself over us
like a huge tongue

o swelling of leaves
of a dark simple hand

Biographical Sketch

George Chambers has published his poetry in over two hundred outlets, including The New York Times and Hawk and Whipporwill. His work was anthologized in 28 Poems, and he has read publicly. A student of Robert Lowell, Chambers is now on the English faculty at Wisconsin State University. On leave this year, he is presently teaching and writing at the University of Iowa.

WERPO

is well
he is
is Wer-
po the po-
em bust-
er grr
he say
from his
is-
land this
is a cit-
y are it
I am sail-
ored here in
the sunk
flesh of
miss-
ologicurl
lad-
ies
and I
were a sing-
grr by
them nice
I am
watch me
I do

George Chambers

THE DAISIES

"Behold my friend the daisies
sweet and tender." Russian,
19th century

Behold! my friend
these daisies sweet
and tender

beneath
the fingers
of yon cloud

he he
that drawls
in the

is it the
up there
sky?

Friend, the daisy
sweet the daisy
tender

is counting
on us, eh?
We hope.

Matters grave
attend this
simple flower

the girls are washed
are waiting
in airy dresses.

The cloud is ready
so count and pull.
So much depends

on daisies sweet
and tender, my friend.
Behold.

1967

A year drifted by with a setting sun.
Laughter rang with a silvery tingle.
Crisis floated by in a black stream,
Love walked into lonely hearts.

The year was young so long ago.
Dew settled upon grass' carpet of velvet,
Winter's loneliness turned into spring's life,
A girl became a woman.

Days ran by with the speed of flaming stars.
Night's moonbeams crept into lull's silent scene.
Storm filled void's air with excitement new.
Rain refreshed seering souls.

These sights and sounds became a year.
Time's haste left many episodes untried.
We wanted much and gave not,
It was a year to live and a year to die.

--Jayne A. Lehsten

Advice to a Sleeping Child

The child put away her toys so old,
And breathed a sigh so clear
To answer a question aptly put.
She laughed last night at the foolish charm
Of dolls and bears - the toys so dear.
Tonight she was woman.

As she slept and I look upon her, here, I see
Memory's dream, bright - Childhood's delights.
Now as I see the tossed head, my heart
Yearns for the dear yesteryear.
She awoke a little while ago
Reaching for her teddy - a child again.

In the years before her still,
Dolls and toys will be replaced by
Dreams and trusts, in and about
The ones she will love.
Sleep on, dear little girl, here's your toy -
Woman will come - but please wait!

—Jayne A. Lehsten

At twenty-two I still play,
Solitary games at night
In a mushy field. I run and leap
And woo with my mouth, and run and leap
into awareness. I halt! and stare
At the somber Armory.
Babies cry, men become withered
Then I run and trip on a bloody tree stump
And wretch on the sleeve of my green coat.

—Don Lovejoy

Propriety

Gone is the tissue
and maidenhead
of despair.
I'm glad
but what now?
You're filled with
seed,
whore of the lower end.
The veil of white
is stained with
stale remains
of thought provoking
sperm
with piston in motion
up popped the clutch,

a stick slipped

a gear box

ruined.

—Serge Rondinone

Written on the banks of Lake Ontario
March 5, 1965

My thoughts wander as I sit here on the angular boulders. The air is heavy with the acrid odor of dead sea life. The dead bird is below me, its fuckin stench slowly making me nauseous. The conversation turns, first courses, then booze, then women. I think of the ass I haven't been getting and I guzzle more beer. The belches, the vomit, the flying cans, my thoughts, my presence in life. The train goes by. The fear, the unknown, the passing of time, and its gone. Nothing lingers long, every feeling I sense exists only for the fleeting second. I guzzle more beer. The adventure, the exuberance, of running on rocks in and open shirt in the early Spring. Running, running, the ice looming in front, you stop, its gone, and then comes the sound of the train. The fear, the unknown, gone again with the sound of birds. I leave and there is nothing.

--Harold E. Bush

Interpretation

Old, old woman,
despairing aged sparrow
caught in a winter bare bush,
rocking, watching, never smiling
from your open window,
imprisoned by fire escapes.

You are the sludgy sediment
of a concentric world
bound in a tenement maze,
lost and clogged,
waiting to be ripped up
by the saving grace
of a bloody scraper.

Whoever in the world
is still able to weep
unknowingly weeps for you.

Are you able to hope?
Do you mourn the broken eggs
that fry hard,
greaseless on the pavement?

Do you communicate
with the crowd of flies in the corner,
with the roaches who climb out
at night and up the walls,
treading on your dreams?
Your mind is patterned
after cobweb lined cracks in the paint,
supporting the crusty building,
synapses reflecting the crumbling color,
touch, tidings impossible.

You observe me,
a hairless monkey with no tree
hunched on a brownstone ledge.
You mother me with a glance,
reeled across the street
on a sun-silvered clothesline.
Your small black eyes follow me
like a Puerto Rican Mona Lisa,
but they view solely a past of pain.

You have been weaned on death.
You know him when he laughs loudly
in the corridor of night,
curling the ends of your lips
in a smile, bristling the small
hairs on your neck.
He owns you now,
but teases you with life.

Your face has been scratched,
etched into a thousand identities
by the hot needle of experience.
Each has left a mark or wrinkle,
each rattles its chain occasionally,
the one self left,
the agonized face of a chinook,
unable to spawn and die.

The boys playing stickball
on the streets do not miss yours
replaced by a Purple Heart
which doesn't beat or
wet your apron with prayers and whys.
It needs dusting once a day.

Young girls strut in the streets,
sixty year flowers,
a million reincarnations of you
who will learn nothing of you.

You have given up;
you no longer water your flowers.
Their ends curl in rigor mortis,
clutching soot out of the air.

I pity a world
that has burned out hope
and left the gray ash of affliction
on your waxen face.

--Wendell Brooker

Haiku # 1

Mist-Quiet morn
a blue heron
ruffles the still water
Ah, brief song.

—Josef Tornick

The fleeting images
In a faint tracery
of after-light
Imploding on the closed eye..
A memory, a mockery, a meaning.

--Josef Tornick

HIS GRANDFATHER'S FUNERAL

WELCOME TO PORT SHARON
A FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

* * *

CHRIST IS COMING SOON
READ YOUR BIBLE

* * *

THE CORNCOB STOPPER LIQUOR STORE
WINE AND SPIRITS
NO COUNTY TAX

* * *

Johnny Capon took his bag off the rack, walked forward to the driver, said something over his shoulder, and pointed down the road.

The bus stopped in front of a large white farmhouse with one wing built of brick. Stiff and unsteady from sitting down so long, Johnny took the last step from the bus hard on his heel and tottered slowly up the driveway, around the back of the house. The outbuildings were all of the same dull gray weathered wood, but the house looked as if it had been newly painted, and, over the door in the brick wing, there was a sign in neat black numbers that gave the date of the house--1758. Behind him, he could hear a sudden wheeze and then the rough noise of the motor getting louder as the bus started to move away.

He hadn't been at his grandparents' in over a year, but everything had remained as he imagined it--the milk house and the large barn with the double row of empty stanchions and up by the side porch, the garage that had all the mudwasps in it. There was a single white box beehive that never had any bees. He wondered if it had ever had any bees. The garage door was open and Johnny saw a car inside.

"You must be Johnny."

John thought it had come from inside the garage and he stopped walking and looked at the open door, waiting to find out who was talking to him.

A tall thin man with glasses walked around the car at the back of the garage. He was mostly bald but there were some long hairs that he had combed over the baldspot to hide his deficiencies and he wore gray tweek pants and a canvas work jacket.

"Johnny?"

"That's right."

"Well, Johnny. How are you? I'm your Uncle Melvin."

Johnny nodded and said, "Hi." Uncle Melvin was his mother's brother from New Hampshire. He couldn't remember ever seeing him before.

"Well, Johnny. Come on. Here, let me take your bag."

"No. That's all right. I've got it." Johnny squeezed the handles and lifted it a few inches higher but his uncle took it anyway and grabbed his arm.

"Your grandmother will be glad to see you, Johnny."

"Oh. How is Grandma?"

"Oh, she's pretty good, Johnny. She took it pretty hard at first but she's all right now. She knew it was bound to happen some day. He was sick for so long, you know."

They went up the porch steps and John knocked over one of the tin pie plates that his grandmother used to feed the farm cats. Clang! The soggy breadcrusts fell off the porch and the milk bubbled on the sidewalk around splinters of ice. His uncle Melvin pushed the door open and led him into the kitchen.

"Mother! Johnny's here! Take your coat off, Johnny." Johnny handed his topcoat to his uncle and waited nervously, not quite knowing what to do next.

"Johnny! What a nice surprise! I'm so glad you came."

"Grandma!" Johnny held both her hands together with his. They felt cold or maybe it was because his hands were cold. He had just been outdoors and it was cold outdoors.

"Johnny. Oh! This is nice. Your mother couldn't come?"

"She. . . she said she didn't want to see him like that . . . and . . . everything."

"Yes. They were so close. Well, let me look at you. You look like you've grown a little since you were here last time. How'd you get here? You didn't drive all that way, did you? What time did you leave? You didn't drive all night, did you?"

"I came on the bus. It left about eight last night. Slept most of the way."

"You should have called or something. You should have let us know you were coming. Alice had the arrangements all made."

Johnny tried to explain to her that it had been a last minute decision to come, that he wasn't sure until right before the bus left, that his mother didn't want him to go by himself. His grandmother was nearly as old as his grandfather, and she was small and wrinkled, and she had white hair, only sometimes it looked lemon-yellow around the ends. He was sure she wouldn't understand that he hadn't had time to call.

"Well, come in the other room, Johnny, Martha is in there with the twins. Mel, take Johnny into the living room and introduce him. He hasn't seen the twins since he was a little boy. I have to call Alice. She and Ed will want to know that Johnny's here."

Johnny's uncle took him into the living room. His Aunt Martha was sitting on the couch talking to one of the twins. The other twin was pregnant and she sat on the piano bench leafing through a stack of sheet music. The twins' names were Jean and Joan, but he didn't know which was which.

"Girls, this is your cousin Johnny Capon from Priorsburgh--New York. He came all the way by bus. Johnny, I think you know your Aunt Martha anyway. She was out to your house two years ago with your grandmother and grandfather."

"Yeah. Hi."

"Hello, Johnny. I'm sure your grandmother will think it nice that you came. It's such a long ride from where you live! Aren't you awfully tired?"

"No. Slept most of the way. I am a little stiff, though."

"And, Johnny, that's your cousin Jean."

The twin next to his Aunt Martha said "Hello, John." and nodded.

"And this is your cousin Joan. She's married and is going to have a baby sometime in January."

The pregnant twin giggled and said "Hi!" Johnny nodded back.

"Jean's going to be married next month. Do you remember the twins, Johnny? They used to pick on you when the three of you were little."

Jean looked at her father. "Daddy!" and then she took a magazine off the table and opened it up.

"Well, Johnny, sit down." Johnny's Uncle Melvin put his hand on Johnny's back and pushed, and the fingers went through Johnny's jacket and felt warm. "I want to go back out and finish washing the car."

"Mel! You're not going to wash the car in your in your suit pants! You'll get them all wet."

"Oh, they're not going to get wet. I just want to sponge off some of the mud. The car looks like Hell."

Johnny sat down in the brown captain's chair facing the couch. His aunt and Jean were reading magazines and he moved the knot on his tie and looked out the window over the couch at the bare walnut tree by the road. A few large snowflakes were falling, and they began to stick on the branches.

When you take the green hulls off of walnuts they turn your hands yellow and brown. You hit them with a hammer. Nuts go in a market basket, put the hulls in a cardboard box.

His grandfather made a tire swing for him. He tied the rope to one of the walnut limbs. "Swing higher, Johnny!" The rope twisted and he spun around.

"We live in Ottawa."

"Huh?" Johnny looked at his cousin Joan by the piano. "Pardon me, I didn't hear what you said."

"My husband and I live in Ottawa. Have you ever been there?"

Johnny watched her square a small stack of sheet music. "No."

Joan looked up at him for a moment and went back to her sheet music again. "You really should go there sometime."

Johnny's grandmother came into the room and took something off the piano. "Here Johnny. While you're still here I want to show you some pictures. This is Nancy's graduation picture." Nancy was his Aunt Alice's daughter, another cousin. It was a picture of a blank melonfaced girl in a white cap and gown. "Isn't she a nice looking girl? And these are some pictures the people from the newspaper took of the house. Did you see the clipping I sent to your mother? This is a nice one of Nancy here. They brought in the old spinning wheel out of the cellar and my old butter bowl--well, that's not an antique. I used to use that years ago when John and I first came here and I made my own butter. And they found that old axe in the cow barn. And the old brass fireplace was found when we tore that wall over there apart to put in electricity. Oh! I like this picture so much! That was last March. John was feeling better then. He spent the whole afternoon talking to those people." His grandmother handed him the photograph of his grandfather sitting on the brick porch. He looked at it and handed it back to her.

"It's nice."

His grandmother put them back on top of the piano. "Jean? Do you want to help me with lunch?"

Jean laid down her magazine and followed her grandmother into the kitchen. Johnny bent over and pulled his socks up tight and then leaned back and closed his eyes and tried to imagine his grandfather sitting on the brick porch. Joan started hitting the piano keys one by one, going from the high notes down.

That was the sound of the cow's milk hitting the sides of a white enameled pail.

He woke up early and followed his grandfather down to the barn and watched him milk the cows by hand and his grandfather had hairy brown hands and sat on a short white stool with a knot-hole through the seat and the milk would go Pink! Pink! against the pail when he started and Plump! Plump! when the pail started to fill up. Plump! Plump! Plump!

His grandfather took him with the milk cans to his uncle's dairy. A man in white overalls took some of the milk and put something in it and it turned pink and the cans were emptied into a tank and the empty cans were put into a stream machine that never stopped. Clang! The cans went in upsidedown and around and out of sight and Clang! The man took them out and Clang! He slammed the tops on. The room was warm and damp from the steam and he rubbed his finger across the window and watched the milk foam in the tank.

"They did a wonderful job on your grandfather. He looks real nice."

Johnny clasped his hands together and looked at his aunt. "What will grandma do now? Stay on the farm?"

"I don't know. She might. Alice and Ed live so close. Or she might take a small apartment in town. I don't really know."

Joan stood up and took another photograph off the top of the piano. "Would you like to see another picture of us? When we were little you really couldn't tell us apart."

"Well Jean hardly looks like you now!" and Johnny's Aunt Martha laughed.

"Mamma!"

She showed him a picture in a little standup cardboard frame of two little lighthaired girls in teeshirts and overalls and he said no he couldn't tell them apart and she put the picture back on top of the piano. Johnny felt uneasy and looked out the window for a long time, trying to think of something to say.

For lunch they had chicken pie and baked potatoes. Johnny picked up the pitcher and poured himself a glass of milk. He blew the white bubbles across the top of his milk. At home they got milk in a bottle, but here they drank their own milk.

"Why are you blowing your milk?"

Johnny felt his face getting warm and he watched Jean pick up the bottle and pour herself a glass of milk. Joan giggled behind her hand. No one asked him any more questions so he didn't have to talk to anyone. After lunch he went back to the captain's chair.

"Johnny?" His grandmother stood in the doorway to the kitchen with a pair of shoes in her hand. "Johnny. You'll ride

over with Mel and the rest of us, but when we leave for the cemetery, you'll have to ride with Alice and Ed."

"I won't be able to go to the cemetery. The bus comes through Port Sharon at three-fifteen."

"Jimmy's here!" One of the twins yelled from the kitchen, probably Joan. Jimmy was their brother. He had stayed and worked at home for the last three days, while the rest of his family was here.

"I really think you should go to the cemetery, Johnny."

Jimmy was a big strapping simpleton of a farmboy. Everybody started questioning him about his trip. Johnny felt a little ashamed and slid down in the chair. "I'd like to but I can't. I came to see him one last time. There won't be another bus till after eight. I've got to be back in school tomorrow."

"I forgot my suitcoat."

"You understand, don't you?"

Johnny's Uncle Melvin shook his head. "Mother? Did papa have a suitcoat that Jimmy can wear? He left his own home."

Johnny's grandmother said she didn't know, but she went upstairs and came down with a light brown doublebreaster that Jimmy put on. That made Johnny shudder and he wondered why his grandmother let him take it.

There were more people there, and his grandmother took him by the arm and introduced him to all of them--his grandfather's second cousins, and their families, and Mrs. Wilcox, whose parents had sold the farm to his grandfather. His grandmother took him through the door with the sign that said JOHN PARKS*SHARON to see his grandfather, and lying in the coffin, his grandfather looked like his Uncle Melvin.

"He didn't want to die." His grandmother started to cry and went to her seat in the first row of folding chairs. John turned around for one more look at his grandfather and went to a chair near the wall in the next to last row. Other family started to come in, and when all but four of the thirty-two folding chairs were filled, a man went behind the lecturn and switched on some music. Two volunteer firemen in white shirts with gold epaulets came in and stood at either side of the room.

The minister read some general passages and some of the women cried, and the men would sit with their arms crossed and their lower lips sticking out, nodding at what the minister said, and when one of the women started to cry, they turned around to see who it was. After it was over, Johnny and Mrs. Wilcox were the last to leave. The others had been called to the waiting cars and were lined up to go to the cemetery.

Johnny closed his eyes and said "Grandfather!" out loud, and something inside him urged him to reach out and touch him, but Johnny was afraid that he would feel cold and he held his hands back. He wondered if the dead really feel cold or if they are warm. The rail felt cold.

Mrs. Wilcox took his arm and they walked outside together. He walked over to his uncle's car at the head of the line. They gave him his bag. His grandmother was crying and he kissed her goodbye. Then he went down to the bus sign and waited half an hour in the snow before the bus came.

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NONCIRCULATING

