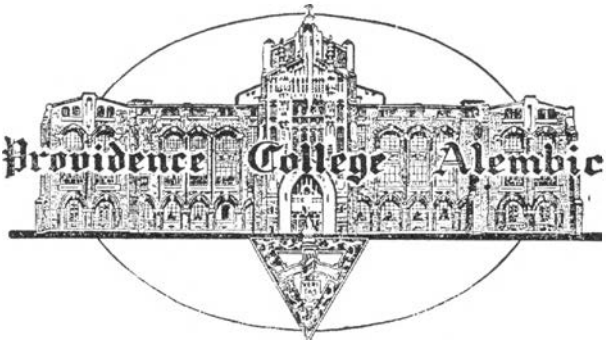
Walking in the wake of a spring rain, I
Saw this puddle there, mirroring the moon.
So still, so sharp it shone: this welcome boon
Of the night in a puddle-gathered sky,
With all the clustered, courtly stars so deft
At flattery. Such sudden wonder caught
My breath away. It was so right, I thought
The moon had fallen there. Then wonder left
As quick before the rippling wind as it
Had come. A mirror's such an empty thing:
No soul, no life to live itself. We bring
To life in mirrors lies that we can't fit
Or wish into reality. Diane,
I have not made her mine and never can.

T. Doody, '65

ALEMBIC

MAY, 1964

THE ALEMBIC



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STUDENTS OF PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

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EDITORIAL:

Next year we hope to improve the content and expand the range of *The Alembic* by printing essays in other fields besides literature. Over the years the common complaint against this magazine has been that concentration on creative writing limits not only its quality but also its appeal to the general reader. By publishing articles on mathematics, science, politics, economics, etc., we will attempt to stimulate greater interest in a periodical which should be a vital organ for the expression of student thought.

In order to take up once again our role in serious discussion on this campus, we plan to publish a symposium on Dominican education in the first issue next year. No one goes through this school without some thought about the education he is receiving. *The Alembic* would like to provide an opportunity for this thought to be voiced in a public forum. For, only through discussion will the student come to appreciate the worth of the four years he spends on this campus.

Therefore, we invite articles on this matter which should be of vital concern to every student. For later issues, in addition to articles on non-literary subjects which will be of general interest to the student body, we desire a wide variety of contributions: book reviews, humorous articles, pieces in or on foreign languages, cartoons, etc.

The Alembic challenges the student body to make *their* magazine a worthwhile enterprise and a true representative of the mind of the student at Providence College with the confidence that they need only the chance to prove themselves.

—Kenneth Daly

Tale of a Blind Child

By Michael Castelluccio '64

The just-made fire snapped calmly in the morning still. The boy rolled over in bed, exposing his face to the strange warmth. When he could feel the heat folding its soft touch into his hair, he lifted the corner of his pillow and covered his face with it. He listened for the sounds of his mother making breakfast, but everything was quiet except for the noise in the hearth. Maybe she was outside getting water. He curled his knees up, and then turned his head on the pillow so that he could listen to the fire. It was the strangest thing in the house—the fire. When he broke up small branches in his hands for kindling, it made the same sound as it did now burning in the hearth, but then it couldn't hurt you. The sticks were thin and hard—sometimes even cold. It was only when they were in the fireplace. And when he carried the ashes out in the bucket, all that was left was a soft, dry sand. He rolled on to his back and remembered when his mother had made him feel the matches. But they were sticks too; and when you rubbed the end on something, they snapped too like the twigs. Somehow the fire was in the wood, but you couldn't feel it unless it was in the fireplace or unless it made that noise. He frowned to himself. His father had laughed at him for being afraid of carrying the wood too close to the fireplace, but he didn't care. He once had a dream about carrying an armful of small branches into the house. He forgot and carried it too close to the fireplace. In one ear-splitting crack it all began to burn in his arms, and he was too afraid to drop it.

He heard the cabin door open and close. It was his mother—he could tell by her footsteps. He pulled the

covers up and pretended he was asleep. She came over to his bed. When he could feel her leaning over to kiss him, he suddenly reached up and clumsily pulled her face down to his.

"Oh, don't ever scare me like that," she said against his face. He only laughed. Her face and hair were cold from her being outside.

"C'mon now," she said loosening herself from him, "you have to get up now. Your breakfast will be ready in just a couple of minutes."

As he was sitting on the edge of the bed tying his shoes, he heard his father come in. He sat up and listened with a smile on his face as he heard him come over to him. "Well, s'bout time you got up." He felt his father's hands on his sides, and the air brushed his face as he was lifted high above and away from everything except the feel of the strong hands. Below him his father said, "I was up for half an hour, and you were still sleeping like a cat. On this bed!" He fell and bounced on the bed. He began to wrestle with his father's arms as he felt the blankets being wrapped around him. "Jest like this," his father explained," jest like a cat in a bag." The boy was laughing too hard to struggle anymore.

"Stop your playin' you two, and come over here for breakfast," his mother said from across the room.

He felt the quilt being unwrapped, and as his father said, "C'mon tabby," he was lifted and carried to the table under his father's arm.

In his chair he reached for the edge of the table.

"What's for breakfast, son?" his father asked.

It was a game he liked to play. Pulling himself up in his seat, he leaned over the table. A warm dampness curled over his face and up past his ears. But before he could say 'cereal', his mother stopped him with an angry voice.

"I told you I don't want him doin' that. Sniffin' like a dog over his food."

He waited, and then his father quietly said, "Em, the boy's got a headful o' darkness. He don't have no other way o' learnin'."

The boy sat back in his chair and slowly felt for his spoon. Nothing else was said. It was always that way when his father talked about blindness or darkness, and he didn't understand. The darkness in his head was the same as everybody else. He knew tomorrow was Sunday. He could hear the wind just like everybody else, and he knew that sometimes it was filled with rain or snow. He could remember what happened yesterday. Sometimes, he even knew what would happen tomorrow. He couldn't understand why it frightened his mother. He remembered the time he heard her crying when she was talking about it.

After breakfast and dishes, he went out on the porch to wait for the afternoon. Right after lunch, he and his father would be going into town. He sat on the top step idly chewing on the peg whistle his father had made for him out of a piece of willow branch. The chickens were almost quiet on the other side of the yard. He listened to them, and then leaned back to hear if his mother was still in the house. She was—he could hear the broom. Stepping off the porch, he felt around with his bare feet for stones. He found two the right size and picked them up. Leaning towards the porch he could still hear the distant sound of the scratching broom. He straightened up and

threw one of the stones across the yard. It thumped a few times, but that was all. The second he threw with more force. He didn't hear it land, for that corner of the yard exploded in an instant of clucking and squawking. Laughing, he hurried around the side of the house.

He marched towards the apple trees in the field behind the house. For each time one of his feet struck the ground, he sounded a shrill note on his whistle. Underneath the trees, he collected a mound of small hard apples. Then, tossing them in the air, he covered his head and waited for them to come back and hit the ground. Sometimes they would thump down through the branches of the trees, and sometimes they would even hit him. He could throw them as high as the wind.

After playing in the field for a while, he went back to the house. He felt his way through the doorway and stepped inside.

"Ma," he called.

"You don't have to shout so. I'm right here."

He turned to the voice in the corner. "Ma, can I go down by the brook for a while?"

"It's almost lunch time. What do you want to go down there for?"

"Aw, I won't be long. I promise."

His mother was quiet for a few seconds, and then she said, "All right. But you be back for lunch, you hear. And don't come back with mud all over you like last time."

"Oh, no." he promised, "I won't."

He stopped at the top of the path. Standing perfectly

still, he tried to listen through the sound of the wind in the high grass. He was searching for the brook down at the bottom of the hill. He could just hear it faintly, when a sudden light gust of wind noisily brushed past the back of his head. Frowning, he started down the hill.

Almost half-way down the incline he stopped. The sharp clicking noise continued for a few seconds, and then there was nothing. It was several feet in front of him, and whatever it was it was alive. He stood motionless, waiting. Slowly and very carefully he began to feel around with his feet. His right foot stopped against the edge of a stone. Barely moving his arm in his sleeve, he slowly reached down. It came at him. It rushed his head and then lifted up over him. He fell sideways and rolled. The earth pitched, slamming into his back. He rolled again, and he kicked his feet trying to right himself. Half-erect, he lurched forward and a large rock stopped his face with a crack.

Slowly, very slowly the dizzying confusion settled. His hand pressed hard against the deep cut above his eye. He was crying, and at the same time snorting trying to clear the smell of pain from his nostrils. Only a stupid pheasant he said to himself. A stupid pheasant. He turned and sat with his back against the rock. A thin line of blood ran warmly down his face and throat into the collar of his shirt. 'They'll rush you when they get scared', he remembered his father saying. Suddenly, he stopped crying. There was something moving in the hand that covered his eye. He couldn't feel it in his hand, but there were a thousand little pieces of something floating in it. He pressed his palm harder into his eye. There were more of them now. He froze. It wasn't in his hand, it was under it. He quickly yanked his hand away.

The right side of his head immediately filled with a strange hollow kind of pain. He wasn't touching the grass in front of him, but he could feel it in his head. He could feel the thin film of blood that ran over his eye in everything that was in front of him. He quickly covered his eye. Everything was close again—the feel of the rock against his back, the grass he sat on, the sound of the brook behind him. He turned and faced himself towards the sound of the water. Slowly, he took his hand away from his eye. The brook was far away, and it was covered with the same pieces that his hand had pressed into his eye. He turned his head as quickly and in as many directions as he could. Everything was so much bigger, and so far away.

The woman walked towards the path. She stopped at the beginning of the descent and was ready to call him when she saw him running up the path. He slipped and fell. She was about to run down to him when she saw that he was looking up at her. Crying and laughing at the same time, he called to her.

The Three-Sided Mirror

By James H. Napier '66

The three-sided mirror silently stands
In the unsettled shadows of the room;
And in angular views reflects each man's
Form somewhere, sometime, before the tomb.

With hesitant steps each in his turn
Approaches, to dart an apprehensive glance;
Some turn away to uneasily laugh in scorn—
Some rigidly stare with unwavering stance.

And how many will stagger toward the end
In horror, seeing just the deformed; and
How few will recognize the odd blend
And calmly nod, for they truly understand.

Darcie

By Christopher Cimarusti '64

Specters resurrected from the sepulchre of the unconscious
To haunt the conscious which entombed them.
Memories, long enchrysalised,
Take wing and alight where they will.
Echoes of she of the sun-tipped hair.

Eyes which betrayed the secrets of her thoughts
Before her lips could whisper them to mine.
Eyes in whose light I could do no wrong;
None, save loving her.
"Dark eyes, but dearer far than those which mock the hyacinthine bell."

Not understanding, the moth embraces the flame which consumes it
Knowing, my love an immolation of the spirit.

She walks with Him now,
And I walk alone.

Mississippi Cotton Fields

By John Eagleson '64

If you go north out of Shelby, Miss., on U. S. Route 61, you will pass abandoned shanties on either side of the road. A few miles from town, near where the high tension lines cross the road, there is one that sits back about fifty yards from the highway on the edge of a sprawling cotton plantation. The shack is empty, sitting on lopsided cinder-block legs that hold it above the dampness. You can barely make out between the weeds the path up to the broken steps of the porch.

The porch roof sags now that the end post has rotted and buckled. Wind and rain have torn away most of the tarpaper roof and have twisted the rusty stovepipe that pokes out near the peak. Broken windows peer like sad eyes through the wide, warped planks of the weather-beaten walls. The front door hangs cockeyed on one hinge. Under the porch eaves swallows have built a nest, for there is no one to scare them away. Way in the back is the little tumble-down outhouse with its crescent moon cut in the door. To the left of the house is a giant willow that provides some shade in the hot months. It is the only thing that has not gone to ruin. By the tree is the water pump, locked tight by rust.

The house is quiet now. You can hear only the swallows and the locusts and the occasional passing car out on the highway. But wait here. Sit out under the willow. If you look and listen hard enough and long enough, maybe you will hear the back door slam as young Robert goes out with the pail to fetch water for his mother, who is preparing supper in the kitchen. He hurries to finish his chores

so that he might still have a little more time to climb in the willow before supper is ready. There are no weeds in the front yard, for the younger children have worn the ground bare playing jacks on their hands and knees. The front door, set firmly on its hinges, is constantly banging as little Nellie runs in to ask her mother for just one more piece of sugarbread. The windows are not broken, but decorated with red and white muslin curtains.

It's picking time, late in July, and the men in their straw hats and the women in their colored kerchiefs dot the green and white fields. They work all day, the older children too, with their bags on their shoulders, snatching the white fluffs from the bolls. From here by the willow you can hear them singing even when they are working all the way over by the owner's mansion. At the end of each row the pickers empty their bags into split-wood baskets, which a horse-drawn wagon takes to the gin. Sometimes the driver lets young Robert ride with him all the way.

But this was before. If you visit the bottom lands of the Yazoo Delta during picking time now, you will see no colored kerchiefs. A mighty red picking machine devours the crop, its lone operator guiding the pipe which greedily sucks up the white fibers. Nor will you hear any singing, only the click-clack of the picker hurrying over the plantation. Sometimes a few workers are needed — strippers who come out from town to glean from the field stray and scattered bits which the machine missed. The rest of the pickers have gone to Chicago and St. Louis and Detroit to find work. Their wooden shacks are empty, and swallows build nests in their eaves.

Lethe's Delights

a parody of *Memorabilia* by e. e. cummins

By James Farrelly '64

O
heavens didn't you see the
sign: stop. you might even
look
and listen if you would.
deaf New York
that you are
turn
those Empire ears this way
and
Jersey swamps rejoice
the cherry has
been pitted
and *la chambre is prete*
pour la nuit—
that means
you are my coccophilia . . .
o beautiful for spacious
skies
Forever amber
I see overhead
with the dry and rancid rain that
falls
on my bald hairy head
wetting me to the quick
I'm sick—what a filthy city
this Nouvelle York (Mary Martin
does)
better to brave the dewy marshlands
on the Passaic side.
La dame with the lantern in

her—heaven send us rain—hand . . .
is like the virgo meek
Hudson and the Stygian corps
the raucous, railing corps
of tugs tugs tugs whataloada
passing passing whataloada
passengers of Westchester, Queens or whathaveyou
discontents from Bronx
and that tiny stream of lyn—what a crew
whatta crew—cut from queenships, westwalks
walk west to exit
s'il vous plait, silver plate.
—Fire islands sweetest money-men
who take a nickel too nick or two
are all nymphs of
six kind little et neuf new too
and flushing the meadow for fair
to flush the 00000000 as they come
soixante quatre
you see the year of il duce—again.
pause for the glossy ocean's side
speaks to fellows long deceased
Longfellow and
his avant-garde Evangeline
or is it post mortem well
wouldn't it be lovely
by the fireside
as they used to say in school—

O PRs where are you
Blackest dawn

thus city city two
O would I be a blader-switched
since that bodkin is here bared
Aw, forget it!

On Barren Earth

By Gregory Prior '65

John Grady stopped his car on the narrow, sloping road next to a large grove of fading pine trees. The slowly dying heat of the summer evening still hung in the air though the sun had disappeared behind the top of the hill. The sky in the east had already lost the bright hot blue of the day, changing now in deepening shades of grey into night. In the west, the light of the setting sun painted the soft wisps of evening clouds lavender.

Slowly he folded his long body out of the small car and took a few tentative steps through the pine grove. He felt vaguely uncomfortable and strange although he had been here many times before and stood often in the shadow of the pine trees. "You have to come back and face it sometime," he thought, walking now with firmer steps down the gentle slope of the hill. He moved out of the grove and stood looking down at the water at the bottom of the hill. The water, an inlet of a large bay, was smooth and dark, shining like polished black marble. With his eyes fixed on the water, he walked down the hill, quickening his steps as the slope became steeper. When he reached the bottom, he stood on the wall which protected the land from the slow, rhythmic assault of the waves. "The sea is different here," he thought, "more personal. No that's not true. It's just the memories that go along with it that make it different. That heavy stinging odor, for instance . . . It's not the smell of the sea at all, but the smell of evening walks and muffled conversations."

He turned around slowly to look up the hill and through the trees at the view he knew he was avoiding. It was a view he had seen many times before—the large grey

chateau, solid and heavy as if it had been sculptured from rock; the yellow brick chapel, trying in vain to match the grandeur of the chateau; the simple dormitories, small and unpretentious, dwarfed by the other buildings—all silhouetted against the evening sky. But he had never seen the buildings when he was so different himself, so alone. Before he had looked at the buildings with others who, standing black-robed on the sea wall, shared the life of the place, the life of the seminary, with him. But that was gone now. He was no longer part of this place. He had had a pleasant life here, slow, ordered, and protected. Everyone at St. Phillip's Seminary moved in harmony, like the parts of a great clock toward the same end. There had been an unspoken union here, a union that the buildings and grounds themselves seemed to reflect. The stone walls, the trees and the grass all appeared to be joined as if they had an eternally prepared purpose.

He had loved this place, the protection of the life and the quiet order of the days and, in the five months since he had left, he had been constantly drawn back to it. He had returned now after a long drive to try to recapture the peace of the cool mornings, the heavy sweetness of the Masses and the joy of the friendships he had experienced here.

"I missed the spring this year," he thought, as he looked up at the buildings now deserted for the summer. "The grass is pale now. The green doesn't last long really. It comes to the ground late and is bleached early by the sun. That was my favorite time here, when it was green. I only saw the spring here twice. That makes only about seven weeks of green. But I always seem to remember this place as green. Perhaps I should have stayed for the spring here again. Then in just two years, I would have been a priest. But I think now that what I did was right. I may

have known it even then, when I was riding the train to meet Fr. Flynn. The way it was I did the right thing. Yes, I see it now. It hurt, but I'm glad it happened. It was bound to happen sometime and I'm glad it happened to me then. It had all started on that train."

* * * * *

He did not like trains and never had. They were always too slow, too dirty and too crowded. The one he was riding on had walls covered with a sticky grey slime, the residue of many years of service. The seat next to the window which he had carefully chosen for himself as the best available had bald spots of wear on its strawberry-red upholstery and broken springs sticking up through the fabric. The view outside the window was equally decayed, broad stretches of rocky fields covered with dirty patches of hard-frozen snow. The train had rumbled for forty miles through the bleak New England landscape, stopping several times at collapsing wooden stations, standing completely alone next to the track. There did not seem to be life in these stations, yet people shuffled off and on at every stop. They seemed to him rather in keeping with the stations, old, grey and tired. The area was farm country, rocky land which could no longer support itself, and the people were like the earth, empty and sterile.

He had never seen this area before, though he lived only fifty miles away. Fr. Johnson at the seminary had described it accurately enough, but John had not anticipated his reaction to it. He could feel little sympathy for people who allowed themselves to live like this. Their clothing was tattered, patched and yellowed with age. Even their smell revealed their decay, dank and musty like a rotting overturned log. He had been told that the people here were somewhat special people in desperate need of some-

thing to hold on to. He hoped that the people he would meet would not try to hold on too closely to him. He had agreed to come down here because he was interested in seeing how a priest really lived. It was the life he had chosen, he told himself, and it would be a good idea to see what it was really like. At the seminary, Fr. Johnson had told him that Fr. Flynn, the man he was to help, had too much work for one man to do, so he had agreed to go even though it meant giving up two weeks of vacation with his family. Now he was not sure he should have come.

The train began to slow and he saw another of the decaying stations come into view. It appeared to be somewhat larger than the previous stations because it had a freight siding and a lumber yard next to it. He could make out the name of the station on a fading sign on the station house wall. Burnfield, he thought. That's where I have to get off. At least there's some kind of activity here.

He stood up and stepped into the aisle over the fat legs of an old woman who had been sleeping in the seat next to him. The woman stirred and snorted slightly. Quietly, afraid he would be forced to speak to the woman if she woke, he lifted the suitcase from the rack above the woman's head. As the train ground to a halt, he stood in the center of the aisle, brushing the dust from his trim black suit. "I'll be awfully glad to get off this train," he thought, as he buttoned his topcoat and walked quickly to the door.

A gaunt, tawny-haired boy shuffled up to him as soon as he got off the train and reached for his bag.

"No thanks," he said, surprised. "Someone's meeting me."

"Yeah. O.K.," the boy said lazily as he turned his back and walked away.

The boy irked John, the way he tried to force his services on him. He did not want to have to talk to any of these people now.

Fr. Johnson had told him that Fr. Flynn would meet him at the train station but he was afraid that Fr. Flynn had not come. He did not see anyone here who looked like a priest. John had become slightly annoyed. Then a very tall, skinny man dressed in an old tan trenchcoat that flapped in the cold wind rushed up to him.

"Hi there," the man said, "you must be John Grady."

"Yes, that's right." John answered slowly. "Are you Fr. Flynn?"

"I sure am," the man answered. "And am I glad to see you. Boy am I glad to see you."

This was not what John had been expecting. After Fr. Johnson's description, he had been looking for a tired, grey-faced man, worn out by the exertions of his duties. But the man who stood in front of him was charged with energy. Even the air around him seemed to dance as he snatched up John's bag with one hand and grabbed him under the elbow with the other.

"I don't want to rush you," he said. "But I've got an awful lot to do."

"Well I'm here to help," John said as Fr. Flynn dragged him along the worn platform of the station. "So I don't mind being rushed." But I do mind being rushed, he thought. I wish he'd slow down.

They stepped down off the platform and moved over a dusty road toward a faded black 1952 Chevrolet sedan. Fr. Flynn walked up to the car and slapped the side of the car heavily. The car swayed slightly with the pressure.

"I know it's not much," Fr. Flynn said sheepishly. "But it's a lot better than the thing I was driving a couple

of months ago. A bunch of my parishioners chipped in to get me this. C'mon. Hop in." John watched Fr. Flynn as he swung the door open and threw his suitcase into the back seat, and then he slipped through the door Fr. Flynn was holding open, climbing over a pile of books to reach his side of the seat. As John settled back, Fr. Flynn hopped into the car and started the motor. The car roared into life, shaking violently like a storm-tossed boat.

"As I said, it isn't much," Fr. Flynn murmured as he threw the car into gear. The car shot down the rough road, moving quickly away from the buildings around the station toward the deserted hills and fields surrounding it.

Fr. Flynn sank back into his seat, propping one arm on the door and guiding the car lazily with the other. "I suppose Fr. Johnson at the Sem. filled you in pretty much about what my parish is like," he said.

"He certainly didn't make it sound too plush, but I'm anxious to do what I can here."

"Don't expect too much. This is no lay apostolate parish. I have all I can do to keep everybody going to church since the conditions around here aren't really inspiring to spirituality."

"Well it does seem depressed. The people act so tired and lazy."

"Tired, yes. Lazy, no. They are really willing to work, but they are tired, just like the land is tired. I get pretty tired myself because it's hard to grow any joy in people like these."

They fell into a sad silence, a malaise hanging over the two like a dark cloud separating them. This man is letting the people get him down, John thought. His nerves are being rasped by this place and I don't blame him. Everything here is so dirty, so cheap, so dead. The man

has to be happy with old presents like this car and feel indebted to lazy, stupid people for them. And that trenchcoat. I wonder where he picked that up.

Fr. Flynn slowed the car down slightly and swooped off the road into a run-down gas-station. The station consisted of a collapsing wooden shack with peeling brown paint and two ancient gas pumps. John had never seen gas pumps like that before. They were made of rusting grey metal and yellowing glass, and on the top there were white glass globes with a Mobilgas pegasus painted in fading red on each.

"Fill it up like always, Padre?" asked the old man who had come out of the shack. He appeared to John to have been swimming in heavy black grease.

"Sure thing, Sam," Fr. Flynn said.

The old man sauntered away and began to pump the gas into the car.

"Sam's one of my leading parishioners," Fr. Flynn said softly. "You'll be seeing a lot of him while you're here."

"Really?" John asked surprised. "He doesn't look like what I'd imagine an outstanding parishioner to be."

"Well I guess he doesn't, but he's a real operator. He's done an awful lot for the parish. You'll see him in action tonight at the bazaar we're having. He organized the whole thing."

"Anything else?" Sam asked when he walked up to the window.

"No, I guess not. How much do I owe you?"

"Nothing, Padre. You know," Sam answered, pretending to be hurt. That's a rather feeble joke, John thought.

Fr. Flynn laughed. "O. K. If you insist," Fr. Flynn said.

Now he's indebted to that grease monkey, too, John thought. No wonder that Sam thinks he has the right to call Fr. Flynn Padre. Fr. Flynn should know better than to take something for nothing.

Fr. Flynn started the car and roared off. He drove for another three miles until he came to a church with a small one-story house next door, both painted bright white and standing nakedly in a rocky field next to the road. Fr. Flynn pulled the car into the driveway. "Here we are," he said.

They stepped out of the car and moved quickly into the house. Fr. Flynn sat John at the table in the kitchen while he took his suitcases into the next room. John looked at the furniture in the kitchen. It's all about ready to fall apart, he thought. Old and unmatched, a collection of shoddy gifts from the parishioners, I'll bet.

"I hate to set you to work right away," Fr. Flynn said as he returned carrying a large cardboard box. But this stuff has to be done for the bazaar tonight." He set the box on the table and took out a handful of white cards. "These things need prices written on them. There's a list in the box that will tell you what to do. O.K."

"Sure. I think I can handle that," John answered slowly.

"I have to go over to the church basement to set some things up," Fr. Flynn said as he walked out the door.

This entire thing could be awfully dull, John thought as he started to work.

I was right, John mused while he lay in a narrow bed in the small room that night trying to sleep. It was dull. It was worse than dull. It was almost repulsive. All that noise and shouting. All those dirty people, jabbering like

parrots. And Sam from the gas-station presiding over the bazaar, preening like a rooster, slapping Fr. Flynn on the back and calling him Padre. Really it was ridiculous the way Fr. Flynn acted with those people, the way he ran around smiling at the women, tickling the children, joking with the men. He might just as well be a gas-station attendant himself. No wonder he was having trouble here. How can he expect to be an inspiration to these people when he acts just like they do? I hope I never get like that when I'm a priest.

John spent a restless night and woke in the morning still groggy with fatigue. He and Fr. Flynn walked in silence through the cool morning air to the church where John served Mass amid garish painted plaster statues and dark, poorly-finished woodwork. I'm just too tired to pray, John thought as he moved mechanically through the familiar actions of an altar boy. Anyway who could pray in surroundings like these.

At breakfast after Mass, Fr. Flynn looked up from his cup of black coffee. "I hope you're not too tired from last night," he said, "because I've got a favor to ask you."

"No that's all right," John answered quickly.

"There's a woman whose husband died a week ago—She's got four kids—I'd like you to take some of the left-over clothes and things from the bazaar out to her."

"Sure. I'll do it right after breakfast."

"Be careful with her though. I'm afraid she's been hurt a lot by her husband's death."

"I'll try to help her if I can."

"Well, don't try to force yourself on her. She'd resent that. She seems to resent almost everything. But if you

get a chance to help her, I'd appreciate it, because I don't seem to be able to reach her at all."

"Well, I'll see what I can do if the opportunity arises."

"Good. I've got the things packed in a box. You can take them in my car. You can't miss the house. It's on the only road that runs off the main road, just a couple of miles past the gas station."

When John walked outside carrying the box, the sky was covered with a heavy grey cloud. The fields around the rectory were dark and somber in the dull light. John stepped into the car and started down the road, trying to keep his eyes off the depressing hills and stark maple trees. He drove the car slowly, as he prepared himself for meeting this woman. He knew what she would be like—skin yellow like burnt wax, hair straight and uncombed, a voice sad and whining. He was not anxious to see her.

As the car passed the gas-station, John began to search for his turn. He found the road, a narrow trail that cut across the fields in two tracks, and turned. Suddenly he came upon the house, hidden behind a clump of bushes. It was not like the houses typical of the area, ancient wooden shacks made from heavy boards, decaying slowly like decomposing trees returning to the ground from which they had sprung. It was a shoddy new house, sided with gray beaverboard, a house that looked as if it had been forced onto the land, standing on four low concrete pillars as if the land was unwilling to touch it. The woman stood in front, as he had pictured her with two small children crawling around her knees.

John stopped the car and climbed out. Because he was carrying the box in front of him, he was forced to walk slowly and stiffly. He had the foolish feeling that he was walking in a solemn procession.

"Hey there, mista, whatcha want," the woman called hoarsely as John drew closer.

"Fr. Flynn sent me with these," John answered. He placed the box at the woman's feet. The two children stared at John wide-eyed from their hiding place behind the woman's knees.

"I'd like to know what good that's going to do," the woman snapped when she looked into the box.

"Fr. Flynn thought you could use these for your children."

"My children need their father," she said. They don't need second hand clothes and broken toys." The woman kicked the box quickly, spilling the contents onto the dry earth.

For a moment, John was stunned. I was afraid of this, he thought. Women like this are always too willing to show off their sorrow, always looking for a shoulder to cry on. Why can't they learn to suffer in silence instead of making everyone suffer with them.

"Please don't get angry," he said. "We can't do anything about your husband's death. You just have to accept it and go on from there."

"I don't want to accept it," she moaned. Why did it have to happen to me. He was only thirty years old."

"But you've got to accept it. His death was the will of God."

"I've heard too much of that already. I don't want any God who kills people."

He stared at her pale hostile face and she stared back at him angrily. How can I make her understand it, he thought. I can't help her. She's too stupid.

"There are some things we can't question," he said.

"Because there are no answers. You simply must accept them."

"But I don't want to accept it. I want an answer. Don't you understand? I want an answer."

Just as he was about to speak, the woman turned and ran into the house, slamming the door behind her with a violent crash. "Get out of here," she shouted from behind the door. "You and your stuck up religion."

John stood frozen for a moment and then moved blindly around the yard, picking up the scattered clothes and toys and throwing them into the box. When he had filled the box, he placed it carefully on a shaky wooden step next to the door and walked slowly to the car. He drove down the winding road slowly, trying to think. His mind seemed to work hesitantly as if he were in a trance. He could feel the pressure of the veins throbbing in his temples.

I can't stand people like that, he thought. They're all so stupid and lazy and dirty. They try to grab hold of you and drag you down to the earth with them. People shouldn't try to hold on to you. I've got to get away.

* * * * *

That had been five months ago. Afterward, when he had returned to the seminary, the woman had haunted him, her face mixing in a wild dance with the faces of Sam and all the other dry, dirty people at the bazaar who had crowded in on Fr. Flynn, almost holding on to his cassock. John's own cassock seemed to grow heavy on him as he had walked the seminary grounds weighed down by an inexplicable depression that had seemed to grow every day. The memory of the woman's yellow face and harsh voice had tormented him though he had not understood what it was that repelled him. He had told himself that the priesthood would not be worth a life in a dry, dead land full of bitter

faces like that woman's and, thought he knew he would miss the life in the seminary, he had left.

Today, before he had revisited the sloping hills and solid buildings of the seminary, he had gone back to Fr. Flynn's parish. He had felt compelled to see the rocky hills and dry fields of the land which had separated him from the life he loved. Slowly, still repelled, he travelled past the dead trees and tired people. Driving past the church, he had seen Fr. Flynn standing on the front steps, talking and laughing with the woman who had quarreled with him. He had been surprised and strangely confused. He had not expected her to go near a church again, so he stopped at Sam's gas-station in hopes of an explanation.

Sam had recognized him and had been full of questions about how he was doing. He had answered Sam's questions cautiously, trying to avoid the fact that he had left the seminary. Then, hastily, he had asked about the woman.

"Well, yes," Sam had answered, "it's true she was giving Fr. Flynn some trouble. I even tried to help straighten her out and she gave me a lot of trouble."

"Yes," he had answered, "I think I know the kind of thing you mean. I don't suppose it did much good though."

"I don't guess it did. I just sat her down and told her nicely to stop her nonsense. That we all have troubles around here and most of us offer them up. I don't imagine I converted her, but at least I got her to talk to Fr. Flynn.

"Then he was able to help her?"

"He must have been," Sam had answered.

Now as he stood looking up at the seminary buildings, John felt strangely free of the woman. He was able to tell himself that he could never help the woman and that there was no reason that he should try. He lived in a different

world from Fr. Flynn's dying parish, he felt, separated by a gap which he could not cross. People like Sam ought to be priests for Fr. Flynn's parishioners, he thought with a laugh. They think alike. Fr. Flynn might be willing to bring himself down to that level, John thought, but I can't and there's no reason why I should.

hymn

By George Welkey '64

we shall sit on the seashore
on the sand by the water
eating bananas and drinking wine
and watching the sky bleed out in a trickle
and what will the folks back in Tulsa think.
whatever will they think

in the valley the cherries grow
blossoms burning in the day's last glow
and sleeping like children when the night winds blow

you will watch the floating birds
high on the horizon
and i shall pick pink shells
some drilled out by marine worms
and some small ones
very small ones
still quite shiny
and what will the folks back in Tulsa think
whatever will they think
listen to the insolent sound

Hymn

that washes over us all around
lying where waves smash themselves to the ground

i shall lie and dream of daffodils
with golden-collared trumpets
hung upturned on a green frond
in serried toothy piles
now nowhere near
and you will dream of . . .
well . . .
whatever you will dream of . . .
and what will the folks back in Tulsa think
whatever will they think

watch the clouds as they swell the sky
and the wind as it hustles by
how i would god that i could fly

and we shall watch the gentle evening
come floating off the water
quiet and deep as the sea itself
we shall listen to its booming whisper
feel its shy caress
and learn
and know, though we are small
we are loved
and what will the folks back in Tulsa think
whatever will they think

when we shall have walked away
turned our backs upon this day
we still are but parts of creature clay

BOOK REVIEW:

By Thomas Jodziewicz '66

The *Quinque Viae* of St. Thomas can solve the question of God's existence; no, the *Quinque Viae* only approximate a solution. A nominal definition of God is to be used as an avenue of approach to the question of His existence; on the contrary, no nominal definition of God should be used.[1] These are not examples of Thomistic and non-Thomistic views on the question of how metaphysics can demonstrate the existence of God. Rather, these are all nominally, Thomistic views. This apparent divergency and incongruity of Thomistic thought is the reason for *Metaphysics and the Existence of God,* by Thomas C. O'Brien, O.P.

Pointing out the reality of this inconsistency in contemporary Thomism, Father O'Brien traces the source of the problem to a confusion concerning the question of God's existence caused by "historical influences and personal commitments inherent in the interpretations of current Thomistic philosophers."[2] There is, however, only one true criterion for a Thomist, that is, the philosophical principles unquestionably those of St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus, while Father O'Brien submits the question of God's existence, in Thomistic metaphysics, to a process pre-eminently metaphysics' own, reflexion; at the same time, this reflexion will be based on St. Thomas' first principles, as set forth in the *Commentary of Boetius' De Trinitate.* With this process, Father O'Brien intends to restore St. Thomas'

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[1] Thomas C. O'Brien, O.P., *Metaphysics and the Existence of God* (Washington, D. C., 1960), p. 2.

[2] p. 4.

principles to contemporary Thomism's treatment of God's existence.

Rather than presenting a mere chronological narration, Father O'Brien traces the development of certain "Thomistic" doctrines about God's existence, concerning himself first with their remote and proximate historical background in Thomistic metaphysics, and with their mode for considering His existence. He shows the influence of different philosophical systems on Thomism through the instrumentality of Thomistic converts in the nineteenth century Thomistic restoration. Especially important is the Thomistic assimilation of Christian Wolff's notions of philosophy, which resulted in a new approach to the demonstration of God's existence: the use of a nominal definition of God. As a result of this initial definition in the metaphysical process, Thomists assumed the task of rationally vindicating the conclusion *God exists.*[3] Father O'Brien points out that contemporary Thomists have been influenced by this Thomistic restoration period, resulting in widely divergent Thomistic views on the metaphysical question of God's existence.

With this background, the way is now prepared for a reflective metaphysical judgment on the question of God's existence, in terms of the specific nature and principles of Thomistic metaphysics. St. Thomas' two principles in his commentary on the *De Trinitate,* which are to be used in this reflexion, are the principles of extension and limitation. By the principle of extension, metaphysics (as the universal science, having being in common as its subject) must attain the common principles of all things, principles which are considered "divine", and which necessitate, there-

[3] p. 56.

fore, metaphysics' final attainment of God.[4] The principle of limitation states that metaphysics considers precisively separated being as its subject, and the positively separated (God) as principle of its subject.[5]

In explaining the principle of limitation, Father O'Brien makes an important distinction between the treatment of God in theology and in metaphysics. While theology takes advantage of revealed knowledge of God, metaphysics (without revealed knowledge) can only know God as a principle of its subject, being in common, since the scientific process which metaphysics uses depends on the apprehension of the subject in its essential nature.[6] God's essential nature is not attainable by the human intellect through its native powers, and therefore, God cannot be the subject of metaphysics as it is the subject of theology. For metaphysics, "the sole knowledge that can be acquired about them [separated substances] is through other realities which show that they exist, and something of their *nature as causes.*[7]

This principle of limitation both sounds the death knell for any Thomistic attempt to metaphysically defend an initial nominal definition of God, such as that employed by Canon Van Steenberghen, and also, dooms any type of Christian philosophy, such as that of M. Etienne Gilson, which transforms metaphysics into a theology by assuming prior knowledge of God. Yet, just how is God's existence introdued into Thomistic metaphysics?

> What the "question of God's existence" truly, in virtue of the nature of the science [metaphysics], amounts to is the institution of the process of solving the question propter quid [because of] arising from the exami-

[4] p. 105. [5] p. 151. [6] p. 153. [7] pp. 155-56.

> nation of the subject of the science itself. This process should not suddenly propose the problem of demonstrating God's existence, and accent the need for selecting a nominal definition of God; rather it should concentrate upon the significance of the aspects of composition and limitation seen through the investigation of the subject of the science.[8]

Finally, Father O'Brien makes a judgment on the use of the *Quinque Viae* in Thomistic metaphysics, showing their adherence to St. Thomas' and metaphysics' principles, with respect to their starting points, processes, and conclusions. The *Quinque Viae* all start with aspects of composition and limitation in existent reality, thus instituting causal investigations.[9] As such, the *Quinque Viae* are quite evidently showing "aspects of limitation which pose the need for causal investigations appropriate to the objective of the science in its final phase."[10]

Developed by reference to proper causality, the *Quinque Viae* are appropriate to metaphysics' scientific character. Seeking the cause which causes the form of an effect, metaphysics demonstrates a first, proper cause, thus concluding its quest with perfect scientific knowledge of its proper subject.[11]

The conclusions of the *Quinque Viae* are formally distinct, since each *Via* proceeds from a formally distinct aspect of reality.[12] Theology may claim an identification between the five conclusions and God, but philosophy may not, if it be true to itself. What metaphysics may do, is to investigate the propter quid of the conclusions of the *Quinque Viae*, which will lead metaphysics to a knowledge of subsisting being as a principle of metaphysics' own prop-

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[8] p. 214 [9] p. 227. [10] p. 227. [11] p. 235. [12] p. 235.

er subject, being in common. Thus, "the nature of metaphysics is respected, and the final achievement of its objective, science concerning its proper subject, is placed within its grasp."[13]

Father O'Brien adequately states his problem, and also seems to adequately handle it. His attention to and respect of genuine Thomistic principles is continued throughout the book. By frequently including summaries in his narrative, the author succeeds in keeping a fairly uninterrupted presentation of this difficult subject before a philosophical neophyte, whose interest might easily tend to lag a bit. Finally, his passion for disclaiming numerous "Thomistic" interpretations of St. Thomas' principles by eagerly comparing them with the actual principles of St. Thomas, is one more reason for the readability of this book.

[13] p. 239.

PRIZE WINNING PLAY

One Solution

By Michael Castelluccio

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SUSAN WILK
JOHN WILK
MARGARET

SCENE ONE

The kitchen of a middle-income, almost middle-aged couple. The walls are half yellow tile, and half yellow wallpaper. The table is covered with a yellow checked tablecloth, and with what seems to be an attempt at a prepared breakfast. SUSAN is at the stove mumbling above the sound of frying bacon.

SUSAN: *She is turning the bacon, and is at the same time trying to avoid being burned.* Ow . . . Oww . . . damn it . . . Oh, the hell with it. That idiot won't be able to tell if it's cooked anyway. . . . . .

She puts the bacon on a plate.
There is a light knock at the door, and MARGARET enters left.

MARGARET: Susan, do you have any maple syrup? I'm making pancakes, and I don't have anything to put on them.

SUSAN: It's in the cabinet over there.

MARGARET (*crossing*) : Something's burning, isn't it?

SUSAN: Yes, me.

MARGARET: Oh, Susan. Don't tell me you and John had another fight.

SUSAN: No, not since yesterday afternoon. Actually, I think we're improving, don't you? We spent a very peaceful evening last night. He was at the lab, and I was here.

MARGARET: Then why are you angry?

SUSAN: Just on principle, I suppose. After all, a mistake as big as our marriage deserves twenty-four hour consideration.

MARGARET: Well, I think it's as much your fault as his.

SUSAN: I know. I also said 'I do.'

MARGARET: No, I mean the way you pick on him. With everyone else he's so nice, and quiet and friendly.

SUSAN: He's quiet because he doesn't have anything to say. And as to his friendliness—he's friendly because he's afraid of everybody.

MARGARET: You're really very unfair . . . Well, I have to go up and finish breakfast for Fred. I'll be down after we're done. I want to tell you what the doctor had to say yesterday. He's been such a wonderful help.

SUSAN: Tell me, has that charlatan grown a beard yet?

MARGARET: He's one of the best heart specialists in the city.

SUSAN: He's a veterinarian.

MARGARET *(shocked)*: He is not . . . I'm not going to argue with you. I'll be down after breakfast.

She exits left.

SUSAN *(takes plate to table)*: Good Lord but this bacon is greasy.

JOHN enters right, and crosses to the table.

JOHN: Good morning, dear. Who were you talking to?

SUSAN: Margaret. She came down to get some maple syrup, and then almost began crying on my shoulder again about her heart.

JOHN: Now dear, for all we know she does have a heart condition.

SUSAN: Be a little more careful with your pronouns. *I* know that there's nothing wrong with her heart. And, furthermore, please don't refer to you and me as we. It implies friendship, and it's bad enough that I have you as a husband. I couldn't bear you as a friend.

JOHN (*laughing*): Very good. You're improving, dear. But go right ahead, you'll not be able to insult me this morning. I'm in too good a mood.

SUSAN: You can't be. You drank the last of it two nights ago.

JOHN: No. No. That isn't it. I puzzled the entire thing out last night, and I've finally hit on an infallible solution. I've decided what's to be done.

SUSAN: What's to be done about what?

JOHN: Just . . . what's to be done.

SUSAN: About what? (*mockingly*) Now don't tell me that you've discovered a way to make the rats at the lab talk. You've taught them to do everything else . . . It's strange the affinity you have for those stinking little moles. Almost as if they were children . . . your children. Oh well, they're in good company I suppose.

JOHN: Please dear, don't upset me this morning I'm excited already, and I certainly don't want to start off with one of those dreadful headaches of mine.

SUSAN: And just what do you have to be so excited about?

JOHN (*smugly*): My decision, of course.

SUSAN: Your decision about what?

JOHN: Our problem. You and me.

SUSAN: John, you've been thinking again. I've warned you against that. Whenever you do, I either end up feeling sorry for you, or for myself.

JOHN: Well, there's no need to worry now. I stopped immediately after I decided.

SUSAN (*irritated*): Decided what?

JOHN: Why, that one of us has to die.

SUSAN (*after a pause*): What did you say?

JOHN: It's the only way. Look (*counting on his fingers*) first of all, you can't get a divorce because it would kill that sickly hawk of a mother of yours. I can't get a divorce because it would permanently destroy my chances for ever getting a chair at the university. Running away from each other would be the same thing. But at the same time, I can't stand the sight of you much longer, and I'm certain you know your sentiments towards me much better than I do. So . . . one of us has to die. It will be just like running away, without the disastrous results that would follow if we really did run away.

SUSAN (*sitting down*): You're . . . you're serious, aren't you?

JOHN: Of course. Why do you think I'm so pleased?

SUSAN (*quietly*): You're going to kill me.

JOHN: No. No. Don't think of it that way. We'll be in competition. Whoever is more clever shall win. The loser shall merely . . . well, run away in a sense. And to

the victor, freedom Freedom—do you know what that means?

SUSAN (*gazing at the wall*) : It would depend on who went to the funeral as a guest, and who was carried there.

JOHN: Yes it would, wouldn't it? . . . Well, I have to be off to the library. I'd stop for breakfast, but I see as usual you haven't put yourself out any. It's amazing how you can always make eggs look as if they would have better remained in the hen. It doesn't matter, though. I'm too excited to eat anyway. Good-bye dear. I wish you luck. I may need it.

JOHN takes up his coat, and exits left.

SUSAN (*she is wide-eyed, and speaks slowly*) : He's gone out of his mind. He's mad . . . he must be. (*she rises and crosses down right*) He has to be . . . Surely it *is* the only way out, but he wouldn't . . . He knows I couldn't . . . *He would.* Of course he would. (*speaks more quickly now*) He's a biochemist. He knows everything about poisons, and where to place a mortal wound where it couldn't be detected, and . . . (*crosses down left*) Why that snake. He knows I'd be no match for him. He's probably on his way now to find the best way. That cowardly . . . Well, two can play at this. So we're in competition, eh. All right.

MARGARET enters left.

MARGARET: I just saw John leave. My but you look angry.

SUSAN: Well, how would you feel if your husband told you he was going to kill you?

MARGARET: Fred? Oh, he wouldn't have the stomach for that sort of thing.

SUSAN: It seems that mine does.

MARGARET: Does what?

SUSAN: Have the stomach for murder.

MARGARET: Oh, John would never hurt anybody. Susan, that's a terrible thing to say.

SUSAN: Well, I didn't say it. He did.

MARGARET: What did he say?

SUSAN: Will you pay attention? John said that he was going to kill me!

MARGARET (*crosses to table*): What a dreadful thing to tease about. Especially over breakfast.

SUSAN (*impatiently*): Margaret, he wasn't teasing, he meant it.

MARGARET (*sits down at the table*): Ohhh. You shouldn't tease me like that. You know about my heart. (*puts hand over her breast*)

SUSAN: You know there isn't anything wrong with your heart. It's just something to complain about—something that pays off in pity . . . You're going to be some help, I can see. Just sit there and be quiet while I think this thing out.

MARGARET: What do you have to think out?

SUSAN: How I'm going to kill John, of course.

MARGARET: Susan! Don't say things like that . . . Oh, I don't feel well at all. I think you have upset my stomach.

SUSAN: Will you please be quiet. (*crosses to stove and gets coffee pot—she places cup before MARGARET*) Here (*pours coffee*) and try to think more and complain less.

MARGARET: Thank you.

SUSAN returns the pot to the stove, and reseats herself at the table. She watches MARGARET drink.

SUSAN (*jumping up and pointing*): That's it! I'll poison his coffee.

MARGARET (*drops the cup and it splashes all over the table*): Aaaah. Look what you've made me do.

SUSAN (*unconcerned—sits down and returns to planning*): No, that would be too obvious. He'd expect that. Besides, I wouldn't know what kind of poison to use.

MARGARET (*wiping the coffee from her housecoat*): Susan, please stop this now. Why do you want to upset me like this?

SUSAN: Can't you understand that I'm serious?

MARGARET: No, I can't. John could never say anything like that. He never even yells at you, though Lord knows you need it sometimes. How could you even think something like . . .

SUSAN: Oh, you are so dense. Just sit there . . . (*musing again*) I can't use poison. He'd detect it too easily. Now if I had a gun . . . at night . . . I could say that I thought it was a burglar.

MARGARET (*cleaning the broken pieces of cup off the table*): It was one of your new cups, Susan. I'm sorry. But, really you shouldn't have startled me like that. (*dropping pieces into basket by the sink*) I think I'll have some juice. (*pouring from decanter on the sink*) Is it all right if I have some juice?

SUSAN: But I don't even have a permit, much less a gun. That would take weeks. By then I'd be dead.

MARGARET (*returning to the table*): This should add up to 300% of my minimum daily requirement of vitamin C. I had two glasses of grapefruit juice before I came down.

SUSAN: He'll probably avoid the window and stair landings when I'm around, so that wouldn't work. If there

was only some way that I could get him to work on the television set. I could accidentally put the plug in.

MARGARET: Would you please stop that horrible mumbling. I know that it's just a joke.

SUSAN: Oh, be quiet.

MARGARET: Go right ahead. But I know what you're doing. You don't think that I'm very smart, do you? Well just keep it up. This is your way of teasing me about my heart. Well I think it's terrible.

SUSAN: That's it! I've got it! Of course, he'd never expect that. It's too obvious.

MARGARET: What on earth are you talking about?

SUSAN: Physical violence!

MARGARET: Oh, yes. Physical violence . . . What about physical violence? I read a book last week . . .

SUSAN: Just be quiet, and let me think. Let's see . . . I could . . . hmmm . . . and then . . . Of course! It would be the last thing that he would expect. But the body — what would I do with that? . . . Oh well, first things first. (*standing up*) Margaret, come sit over here.

MARGARET: What?

SUSAN: Just come sit down over here. (*MARGARET changes chairs, and looks up at SUSAN*) Yes, now let's see. Oh yes, the paper. Here hold the paper, and pretend that you're drinking from this cup.

MARGARET: What is all this for?

SUSAN: Never mind. Now look straight ahead, and whatever you do, don't turn away from the paper. I'm going to leave the room, and I want you to see if you can hear me sneak up behind you.

MARGARET: But . . .

SUSAN: Be still. Just sit there, and look at the paper. And listen. (*she looks around the room to check other*

possible details) All right, everything's set . . . stop rattling the paper.

MARGARET: I'm not.

SUSAN: You are so. Your hand is shaking. You must be absolutely still so that you can hear me if I make any noise.

MARGARET: My hand is shaking. I told you not to upset me. It's very bad for my heart. The doctor said . . .

SUSAN: Never mind that. Just don't make any noise.

MARGARET: Why not?

SUSAN: Because I want to see if I can do it without startling him first.

MARGARET: Startling *him?*

SUSAN (*impatiently*): John, you idiot. You're playing John, and I'm going to murder you. (*she takes a large knife from the counter, and exits*)

MARGARET (*staring at the paper*): This is all so silly, I know that it's just a joke.

SUSAN enters right with a large butcher knife in her hand. She stealthily approaches MARGARET from behind.

MARGARET (*unsure now*): Are you there yet Susan?

SUSAN steps behind MARGARET, and suddenly thrusts the large knife under her chin.

MARGARET: Aieee (*she jumps up and is cut by the knife*) Aaaah, I'm bleeding. Susan, you . . .

SUSAN: You're cut!

MARGARET (*staggers to the sink*): You tried to kill me. I'm bleeding. Ohhh, I feel faint. I'm going to faint.

SUSAN: Let me see it. (*moves to her — she speaks now as if trying to reconcile herself not MARGARET*) Oh, it's not very deep at all. (*motions her to chair*) Here, sit down.

MARGARET (*resisting*): No. No. Ohhh, I feel sick. My heart! I'm dying. I'm going to die.

SUSAN (*irritated now*): Oh, will you shut up and sit down so I can clean that cut.

MARGARET (*leaning against the sink, she speaks more clearly now*) It's getting dark. Everything is filling with shadows. Ohhh, what will become of poor Fred? (*she falls to the floor*)

SUSAN: Oh, damn you. You would faint. (*she goes to the sink to get water*) Blood all over everything.

There is a noise on the stairway, and SUSAN turns. The sound comes closer.

Oh my God. If anyone comes in here and sees this!

JOHN enters left, sweeping the sound of his steps into the room with him. He is about to go into the bedroom when he sees SUSAN standing with a glass in her hand.

JOHN: I forgot my notes on . . . What have you done to Margaret.

SUSAN (*confused*): Uh . . . we were practicing your murder . . . and . . . I accidentally cut her and she fainted.

JOHN: With her eyes open?

SUSAN: What?

JOHN: Look, her eyes are open She hasn't fainted, she's dead!

SUSAN: But . . . but . . . She must have had a heart attack. She must have . . . It's not my fault. I couldn't have done it.

JOHN (*frightened*): I'm afraid you have, though. Oh, this is dreadful. It isn't at all the way that I planned it.

SUSAN: What?

JOHN: I expected you to tell everyone that I was going to kill you, and when you had told enough people I could have had you committed to an asylum. And I would have had plenty of witnesses. And now you've ruined everything.

SUSAN (*stunned*): You . . .

JOHN (*moves to MARGARET*): Good Lord, she looks ghastly. All that blood, and those blank staring eyes. Like something you see in the papers . . . (*looks at SUSAN quizzically*) Let me see your hands?

SUSAN (*hiding her hands behind her back*): Why?

JOHN: I thought so. There is blood on them. (*moves to the door, hand on chin*) Let me see. If . . .

SUSAN (*quickly*): What are you thinking?

JOHN (*to himself*): She killed her . . . but it might have been an accident . . .

SUSAN (*shrieking*): John!

JOHN: Be quiet . . . Yes . . . and then . . . Yes that's it! (*turning to SUSAN*) You killed her while rehearsing my murder.

SUSAN: No! It was an accident. She had a heart attack.

JOHN: Possibly, but the fact remains that you were rehearsing my murder. There can be no doubt that you're mad. Why else would you want to kill *me*?

SUSAN: STOP! STOP!

JOHN: And when I came in I was horrified. I left immediately, and locked you in. And out of compassion

for my poor sick wife, I called the police. (*smiling*) I'll be my own best witness.

SUSAN moves towards him, and he jumps back to the other side of the table.

Don't touch me!

SUSAN (*crouches as she speaks*) : No John. No. You killed her, and I saw it. You went mad and stabbed her.

JOHN: Nooo; Fred knows the time when she came down here. He was just leaving for work.

SUSAN: Yes, but you were still here, and I saw you kill her.

JOHN (*laughing*) : Look out the window. Parked on the other side.

SUSAN (*moves to window*) : Professor Livenn.

JOHN: Yes. Dr. Livenn. He picked me up this morning, and just now brought me back to get the notes I forgot. (*moves quickly to the door*) Keep that expression. It will help convince the police when they get here. (*he exits, and a click is heard as he locks the door*)

SUSAN (*screaming after him*) : Damn you! Damn you, and your moles and . . .

SUSAN glances quickly around her, and as the curtain falls she begins to quickly arrange herself, and the room.