

Through a Glass Darkly

by BETTY BREWSTER

Editor's Note: The following is the entry that was judged the best in the short story contest recently held by The Brunswickan.

Some nights, after you went to bed, you used to curl up and think about the time before you came to Aunt Anna's. It was very far-off and dim, like a fairy-tale heard last year, or the colours of a vanished bubble. Now and then you wondered if it were really only something you had dreamed, a bit of make-believe like the chimes you heard when the bluebells swayed in the wind, or the two funny little girls who wore the same dresses and lived in identical shady green forests deep in the black kitten's eyes. Still, even though it might be just make-believe, it was nice to squinch up your eyes, tight, tight, until you saw first of all a blackness like swirling water, then millions of little red lumps of fire going plop, plop into the dark waves, then a confusion of wavering colours, shifting and swaying, that slowly took form and became a tiny, bright picture into which you could step as if through an open door. Then you were sitting again on a little green footstool, watching your mother read. You would have liked to watch her always, she seemed to you so beautiful, with her startlingly blue eyes and her soft, black hair, through which the light glimmered purple and blue and pink, like a crow's wing in the April sun.

You used to wish that when you grew up you would look like your mother, but you would not have minded resembling your father either. You liked his grave grey eyes, and the absurd way his nose turned up, and his habit of wrinkling his forehead when he smiled. When he taught you to read you sat in his knee with a copy of Alice in Wonderland in front of you, and when you stumbled over the words you looked up for him to nod before you went on. There was a pleasant smell about him of tobacco and shaving lotion and old books. You liked, when you were tired of reading, to pretend you were asleep, so that you could lie back with your cheek rubbing against his scratchy coat and that comfortable odour tickling at your nose.

Some things you did not like to remember, though. You did not like to think of the time when your father was sick, and afterwards people told you that he had gone to heaven. Why did he have to go there, you wondered? Your mother might have been able to tell you, but your mother never talked to you again. There was a papery look about her face, and the flashlight beneath her skin had been turned off. It was not long before people came to take her away, and you went home with Aunt Anna. Once you asked Aunt Anna if your mother would ever come to take you back. She looked at you queer-

ly, and told you that your mother was sick, but perhaps she would be well some day, and would come for you. Your mother was sick in her mind. You wondered whether a sick mind would feel worse than a sick stomach. Probably not.

Aunt Anna was your mother's eldest sister, her half-sister. She was much, much older than your mother and did not look like her at all. She was fat (plump, Uncle Robert said) and her hair was brown with grey streaks in it. When she climbed upstairs at night, you could hear her stop and pant outside her bedroom door. You did not particularly like her, but probably you would have if she had been your mother. You supposed her own children were fond of her. Cousin Rose and Cousin Peter seemed to be, and probably Cousin Janet was too, only she wasn't home often enough for you to know. She was in high school and came home only for the week-ends.

That fall you started to school. The school was a little grey building with only one room. Behind it there was a blueberry patch where you came to pick berries in the holidays with Cousin Rose and Cousin Peter. The berries there hung in heavy clusters—"just like rope" Cousin Rose said, echoing Aunt Anna—and they were a pale, pale blue, so nearly the colour of the August sky that they seemed to reflect it. On the right-hand side of the school, beyond the pole fence which marked off the play-ground, was Uncle Robert's pasture, in summer a perfect paradise of clover and buttercups and purple vetch. It sloped up a hill where a few young maples grew, and among these trees you could glimpse the cattle, and hear now and then the heavy tonk-tonk of the bell on the leading cow. At the left of the school there was a sort of make-believe forest, a little spot of woods not big enough to be dangerous but wild enough to be exciting. Mayflowers grew there in the spring and trilliums, and lady's slippers, and lovely, long-stemmed purple violets, and fragrant white violets with tiny, twisted faces and centres thinly whiskered with black. You used to like to read there, sitting on a stump or on a bed of pine needles, with the sweet, wild tang of the woods in your nose and the cool ripple of leaves in your ears.

You were not allowed, though, to go into the real woods across the road. Sometimes you used to peep in under the thick green bough, imagining what weird monsters might inhabit the shadows. You wondered whether the rabbits and squirrels that emerged now and then into the clearing were transformed, when they reentered those shadows, into huge, ravenous beasts, ready to pounce hungrily upon any curious child who was tempted to follow the apparently harmless little creatures into the woods.

You were nearly eight when your mother died. They brought her home to be buried, and the coffin stood all night in Aunt Anna's parlour. The blinds were pulled down, and people walked in and out on tiptoe. Aunt Anna asked you if you wanted to see your mother. "There's nothing to be afraid of", she said. She just looks as if she were asleep." You looked inside the coffin but your mother was not there. There was a shell of her, with your mother's face and hair and hands, but it was not your mother. You remembered what your mother had looked like when she was asleep, with the warm light quivering under her face and her mouth all soft and relaxed. The shell of your mother in the coffin did not look like that. You told Aunt Anna that she had lied. You wanted to scream it, but you did not. Cousin Janet took you by the hand and led you out of the room. All about the room your uncles

The Men Tell

This is a short article in defense of men and their wearing apparel, recently discussed in this paper, also including a few remarks on women and their apparel. The coeds discussed tweed jackets, plaid shirts, ties and socks, shoes and baggy trousers. Don't you realize, dear coeds, that men have much more important things to think about than clothes? A man's studies are so important to him that he has no time either morning or evening to dandle over choice of tie and socks, or to press pants, while committing to memory twenty-one different formulae for morning lectures. It's usually a matter of grab and run. True—there are cleaners and pressers and we have been known to patronize them occasionally. Another reason men have so little time for clothes is that as a hobby many are undertaking extensive Commando courses and the like. You can't deny that the uniforms, either blue or khaki, seen around the campus are just tops in style.

Speaking of whiskers, don't you know that in these days of metal shortage it is patriotic to save razor blades? Because time is such an important factor in the busy college man's life you must realize what it means to wait for half an hour or an hour for a haircut, and the fantastic haircuts the coeds mentioned (which we have never seen) were probably the result of a man being engrossed in a text book while the barber went to town. To come down to the large shoes you saw—that, dear ladies, is a situation over which we have no control.

Now to say just a word about women and their clothes. We shall say very few words for two reasons. First, if we say too many this probably won't get published. Second, because we don't know much about women—or their clothes. To begin near the ground, we don't like their stockings, they ought to pull 'em up oftener and the seams wiggle at times. A lady—of indefinite age—suggested vehemently that coeds' skirts should be longer, but we won't argue about that. We gotta hand it to them, their skirts, sweaters, blouses, etc., etc., usually look O.K. but we want more color, though personally we don't like purple. We've often won-

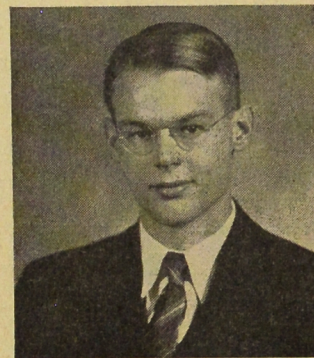
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and aunts seemed to gather themselves into one big frown, as if they had a single forehead staring at you in immovable anger.

You thought of that when you sat in church next day, squeezed in between Cousin Rose and Cousin Peter. You looked at Cousin Rose, sitting beside you. She was crying, and you wished you could cry too, but you couldn't. There was a hard little knot in your throat that ached when you swallowed. You tied your handkerchief into a knot, into two knots. Then you untied it again. You wished you could untie the knot in your throat at the same time. You knelt with the others, feeling the words falling down on you, heavy and meaningless, like words in a nightmare. When they started lowering the coffin into the grave, the knot got too big for your throat to hold and pushed the tears up into your eyes. You had dropped your handkerchief in the church, and Cousin Peter gave you his. His eyes were sorry for you, and a little frightened.

That night, after you went to bed, you tried to bring your mother's face before you again, but you could see only the shell-like face in the coffin. All the pictures of the time before you came to Aunt Anna's had grown dim somehow. You closed your eyes as tight as you could, but the pictures did not grow any brighter. Suddenly you knew that they would never come so close to you again, that they were ghosts now, not alive. You wanted to cry, but there was no use in crying. There would never be any use in crying, not anymore.

Let's Get Acquainted



COLIN RAMSAY

For our presentation this week, let's get acquainted with one of the senior scientists, Colin Ramsay.

Colin is a Montreal boy and came to U.N.B. three years ago to enroll in the scientific course. He is one of those students who has always been active throughout each year, the first year seeing him as secretary-treasurer of his class. In his sophomore year Colin was again secretary-treasurer, this time of the International Relations Club; also he was a reporter for The Brunswickan. During his third year "up the hill" he held the office of vice-president of the Science Club, was assistant sports editor on the college paper, took part in debating and acted in the capacity of assistant to Ken Carroll in running the Science Book Club. In this his senior year Colin has attained the presidency of the Science Club and is the S.R.C. representative for that organization as well as being the representative for the Pre-Meds.

Colin has ever shown a keen enthusiasm for sports, his particular fields being track, basketball and badminton. In this latter game he won the Fredericton Badminton Championship in 1942. One of his specialties is captaining interclass and intermural basketball teams.

In whatever you do, Colin, be it in sports, captaining, or just plain science we know you will do your best as you have ever done while with your Alma Mater. Best of luck in everything.

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