

Oh, Jesus. With a head like the "Hindenburg" the kind of shakes a Studebaker gets at 95 and two English I classes sitting there shoving pins in UCLA dolls.

"I can't do it, man. I'm sorry."

So it started: he called me mercenary and pig-headed and said that from now on my name was shit in this town. So I said that if my name was Shit, he'd pronounce it Shirt or Short.

And then he said something and then I said something and then I held the phone away from my ear like a mother-in-law joke and then I hung up.

I felt awful. Worse than before. And I knew I had two choices. I could call my mother or I could have a couple of drinks.

Now Locklin has told me more than once that it's never smart to call your mother, so I had a short one and then one a little longer. I was starting to get well when the phone rang.

"It's Gerry Locklin," he said, "It was either you or my mother."

"Trouble in Long Beach?"

"Out of the fucking blue. I was just sitting here having a fifth of Beaujolais to get my eyes open and the phone rang.

"Some culture-hustler on the line and the first thing he said was, "Is this Mr. Lapland? Mr. Gary Lapland?"

"Ron, from then on it was downhill all the way."

#### No Visible Means Of Support

The two blind students who are in love meet in the center of the drive,

canes tucked under their arms like crutches.

No, wait.

Another look and I see they do not  
touch the ground after all,

only one another.

-- Ronald Koertge

Pasadena CA

the bells were ringing for me and my gal

i was reading a book yesterday  
when the doorbell rang.  
it was a bad book,  
but it was necessary that i read it.  
in order not to be interrupted  
on those rare occasions  
when i am trying to do some work,  
i give almost nobody my address or telephone number.  
nonetheless, the doorbell went ding-dong.

it was a hare-krishna.  
he wore a shaved head, salmon negligee,  
and bad skin.  
i sympathize with bad skin,  
having always had a bad skin myself,  
but that does not oblige me to enjoy  
the sight of it.

"happy tomorrow," he said,  
"i have a book i'd like you to read."  
it was the bhagavad-gita.  
"i've read it," i said,  
"i've read it five or six times;  
i teach folklore-mythology."  
"oh," he said, visibly disconcerted,  
"then perhaps you'd care to make a contribution."  
"do you recall," i asked, "the advice  
that krishna tendered us concerning panhandlers?"  
"no," he said, tugging at his pigtail.  
"it's in the apocrypha," i said;  
"a loose translation would be 'fuck 'em.'"  
and i shut the door in his face.

a while later the doorbell rang again,  
ding-dong-ding-dong.  
it was a straight-looking young man