

The Holidays

And whatever happened to the maiden aunts? Without them the scoundrel-cousins can't have a couple of drinks and say, "How's it goin', Thelma. You still sleepin' on that same old cucumber?"

And the grannies who didn't believe in suitcases so they wore everything they owned and got off the train with their arms straight out like snowmen?

And the gooney uncles who talk about Satan in the wall paper?
And the cute-as-hell babies?
And the skinney, useless nephews?

Ladies of my acquaintance are sad these holidays, and Bob and I are not much good to such mad women who want to fill up their houses and laugh like crazy and hug everybody and perspire in the big old kitchen;

laugh and perspire and hug; laugh and baste and hug and
kiss;
hug two people at once; hug in the kitchen; bedroom;
porch; hug
sitting down, standing up, propped against the wall.

Instead Sue lives in Long Beach among the Weight-Watchers and my own true love sees another icy-fingered sawbones, makes long distance calls to her parents and wonders what happened to her buccaneer brother now living in a suburb and chewing on his wrists.

As the two of them stand in the center of the empty room, their hands moving slowly through the ransacked air, they remind me of strong, careless swimmers who realize that they have gone too far and their only chance now is to try for the other, the distant shore.

The Addict

went to Taos with her boyfriend who started to kid her about forgetting the stuff.

Panic.

He had to show it to her, let her hold it, give her a taste. That's when she knew she was hooked.

Now she regrets it all and wonders why she ever got involved with somebody like that. Now she has a

new life in a new town with a new boyfriend
who lives at home.

Once when she and Bill were drinking beer in
the kitchen, his mother came in and mopped the
floor for two hours, and if he isn't in by
1:00 on the weekends she calls Barb
and wants to know where he is.

Sometimes he doesn't come over like he promised;
other times he is simply mean and she cries and
wonders why she ever got involved with
somebody like that.

On weeknights, his mother calls at 10:00.

Killing Time

A young man on his wife's
three-speed
watching

freshman football practice,
a six-pack of Burgermeister
riding in the
baby-seat.

With Jose Feliciano Leading The Way

Double-parked
the couples
pour out of
City Hall

Laocoön

I no longer envy the
sabbatical
cat

who cannot go outside
when the hose
is lying on
the bottom
step.

new licenses
mortarboard
against the
rain