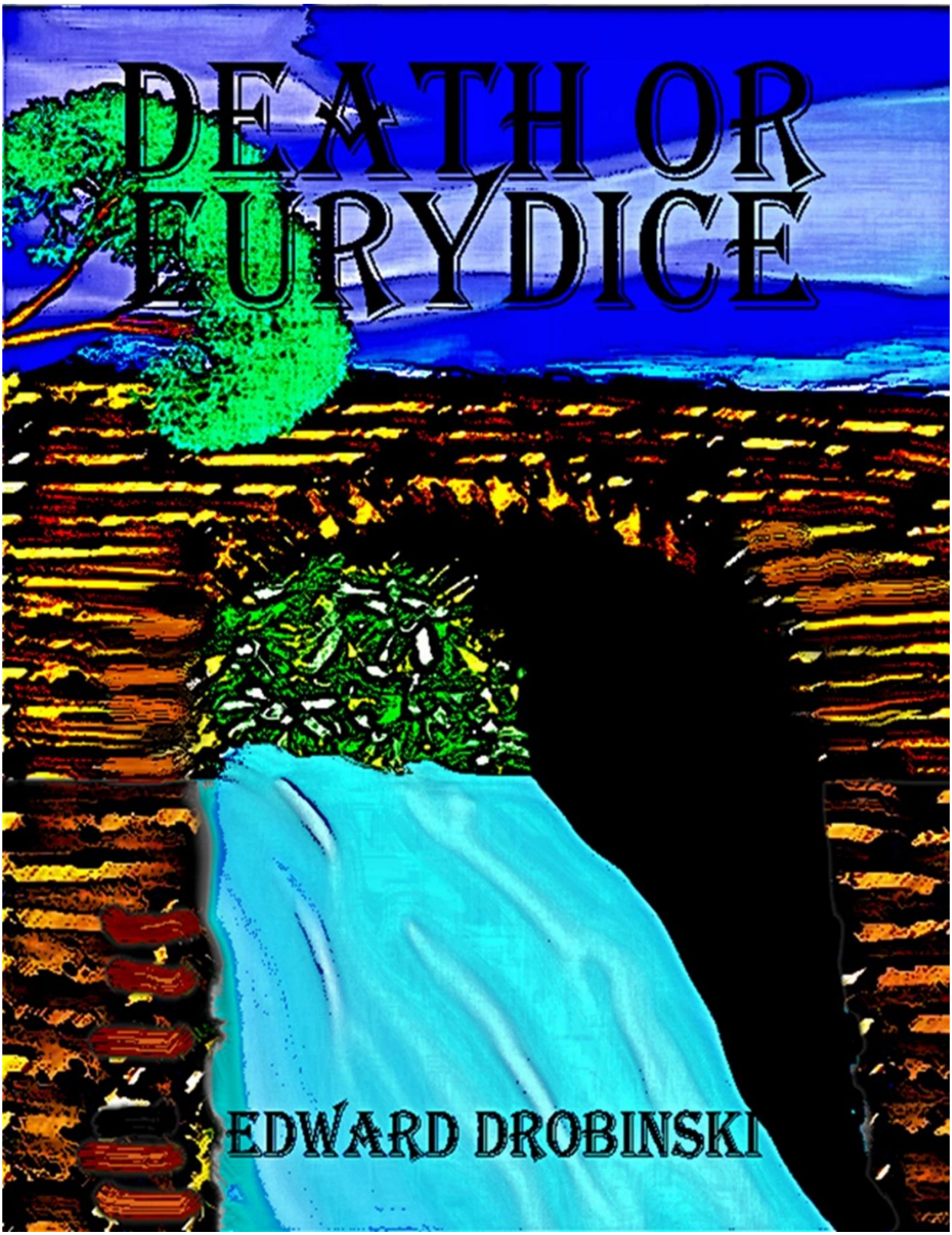
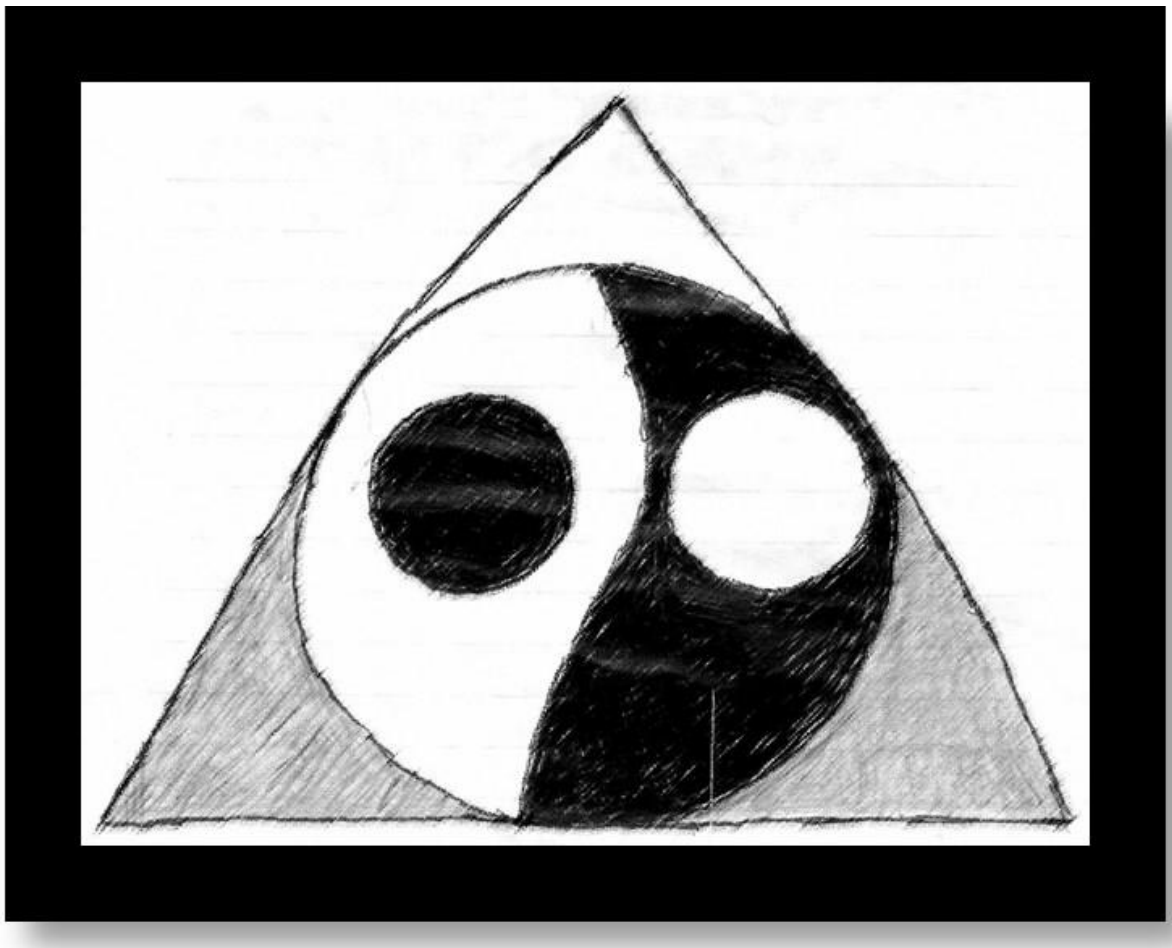
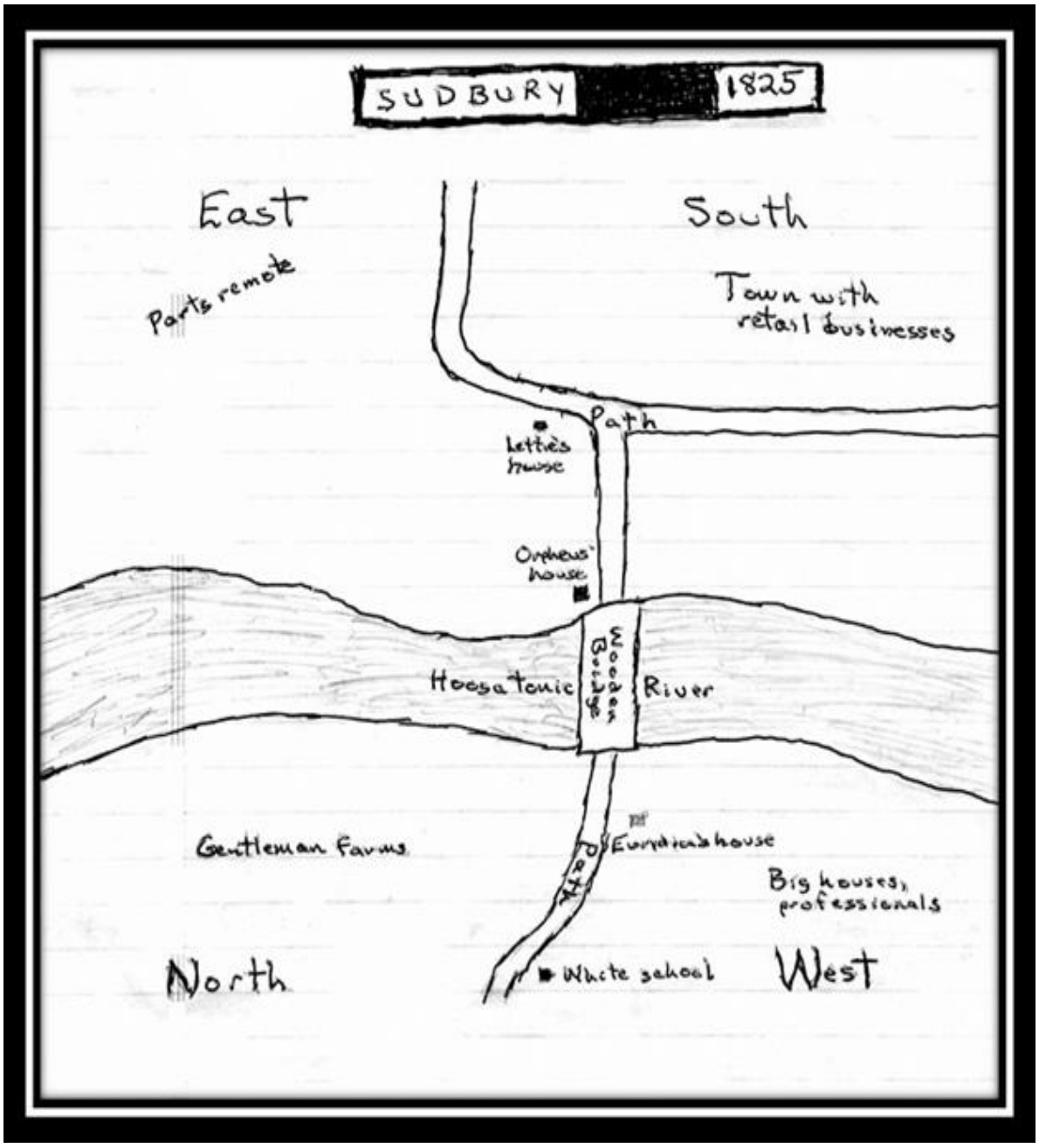

DEATH OR EURYDICE
EDWARD DROBINSKI

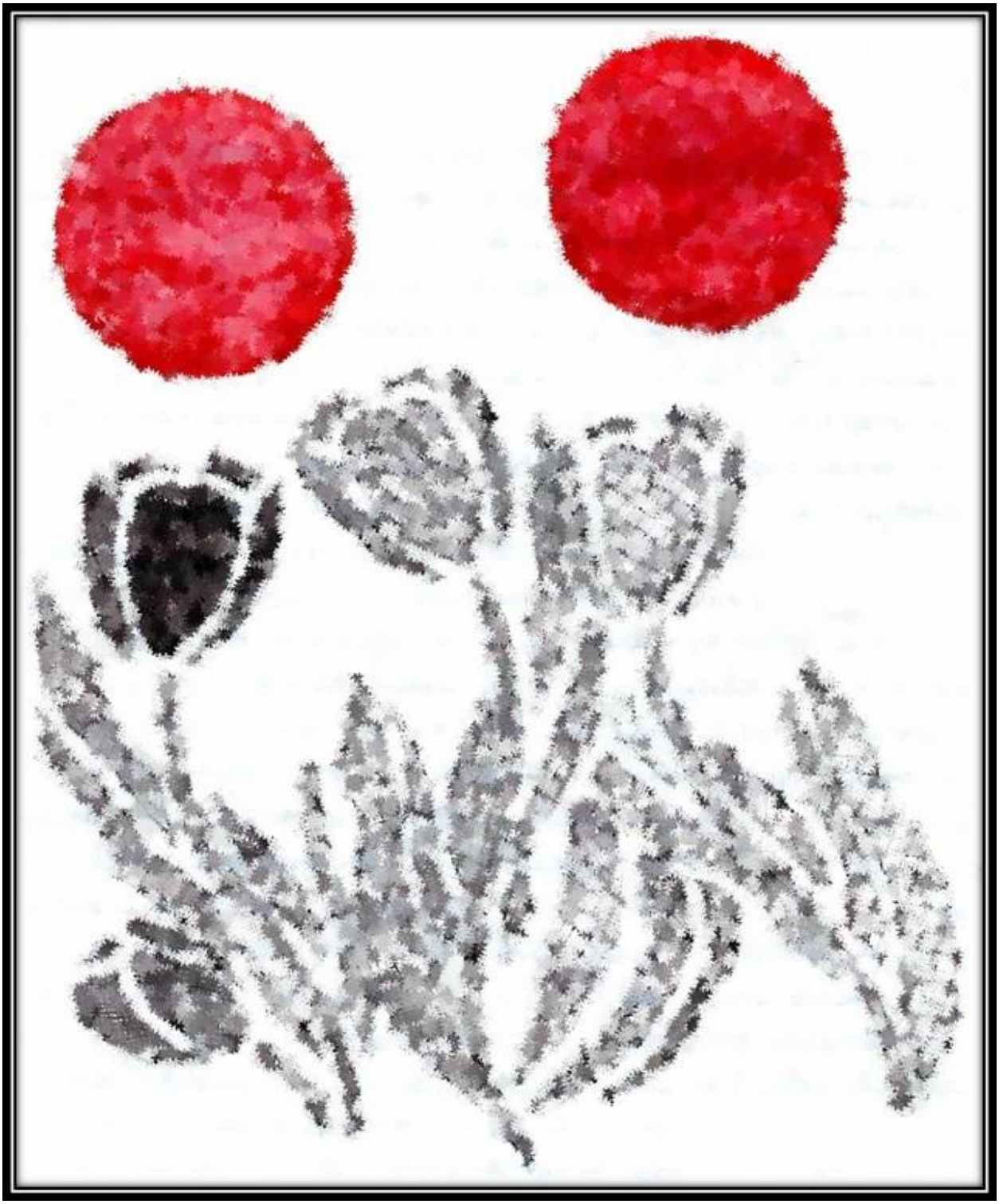
Death Or Eurydice



By

Edward Drobinski


SUDBURY
1825
East
Parts remote
South
Town with retail businesses
Path
Lettie's house
Orpheus' house
Hoosatonic
Wooden Bridge
River
Gentleman Farms
Path
Eurydice's house
Big houses, professionals
North
White school
West



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Chapter 1- Rising From the Deep

Frigid northern night winds coldly kissed the summer gardens goodbye. Inch by inch, joy by joy, they howled an eternal song, while happily and viciously introducing time. He went inside the classically columned, one story stone building, hoping to find some warmth and illumination, willing to settle for either.

He briskly walked down the dark, unpopulated, stark hallway glimpsing the doors closed to him and had no interest in them. At the end he encountered one of the oak variety stained a dark brown, with a black, rectangular sign, containing golden brass letters which said "S-U-P-R-E-SPACE-E-SPACE-C-O-U-R-T". (SUPRE E COURT) The tarnished "M" lay on the plushy light brown carpet, which covered a floor of indeterminate substance. The "M" was now companion to other debauched debris, rubbish, trash and junk. The inch deep undisturbed dust suggested long term abandonment. He picked up and pocketed a 1793 large cent, which was standing on its edge, half buried in the grime; ostensibly the coin's source of support. It displayed a woman's head with long flowing hair on the obverse and a wreath on the reverse. He thought it appropriate. He then tried the loose knob on the door and was surprised how easily it swung open. The room was lit with buzzing overhead tubular lights. The walls, ceilings

and floors were painted an irregular, but strangely equalized cream shade of white.

There were only two distractions from the two paintings hung on the wall straight ahead. One was a lavender blue marble fountain, which sprayed water two feet in the air, in which the light from the one and only small window near the ceiling gave the moisture laden bouquet a rainbow effect on occasion. The other was a stable black masonry composite bench, on which he sat and beheld the shadows of life.

The one on the left got his curiosity first, as he noticed that it wasn't really a true painting at all, when he detected movement. The sky was a light purple covered in various shades of blue, darker at the top, lighter near the horizon. The bright yellow sun partially eclipsed its red companion and was setting on the right of the canvas. It further lightened the shades of blue in the proximity, while leaving the other blues unenhanced. Two red tanagers were flying furiously, suggesting that they desperately had to find something.

The earth was comprised of two masses of land with jagged and rounded edges. The left mass was deep green with black lines indicating some kind of topography, while its escort was a deep brown, speckled with orange dots and didn't seem to indicate an irregular surface. The masses continually swayed, sometimes toward each other, sometimes away. When they moved

together they appeared to be, unsuccessfully trying to lock their disparate edges together. When in each other's proximity, the colors moderated into six lighter shades of green on the left and six lighter shades of brown on the right. When the masses moved apart the space between alternated between black and white, as if controlled by a light switch. Propelled by an invisible wind, the dark billowing clouds often blocked the sun's desire to highlight the light shades of green and brown. When the sky was clear the rays gave the earthly masses a golden tint, deepest when both suns were at the center. An intermittent stream, like a hillside waterfall which appears during times of heavy storm, poured from one small part of the sky into the area between the jagged and rounded edges, disappearing into the wound, but not before providing enough nourishment to produce a few small purple flowers at the edges.

The canvas on the right displayed an alternate form of rhythm. It was substantially similar to its mate on the left, with only a few discriminating exterior details differing. The yellow and red suns sat almost motionless near the center of the sky. The two land masses were successful in interlocking, the lighter shades of green and brown given a deep golden tint by the two orbs at their zenith. No longer having a bottomless pit to fall through, the now continuous waterfall which poured from the sky formed a north-south river. The overabundant water

found its way east and west too, filling in straight soft spots of the earth. The voluminous beads of sweat formed a cross, the proximity of which was covered with flowers of every color and variety. Thirty red tanagers were on the ground, sitting among the flowers or drinking the water. Two were effortlessly exploring the sky.

He lost track of time as he contentedly and incandescently stared at the right picture.

Furiously, the door opened, producing a coarse, impudent and discordant thud when it slammed shut, breaking his pleasant reverie. He turned around to see a short, thin, severely balding and sallow complexioned man, who appeared to be about forty years of age, enter the room, nervously smoking a cigarette. The man paid no attention to him and moved quickly to the painting at the right. He removed a can from his right jacket pocket, dipped his left hand into it and proceeded to paint the letters “F–A–N–T–A–S–Y” in dripping black across the canvas. He stepped back a foot, to admire his work, then turned and left the room, smirking, not bothering to take note of anything else, satisfied that his work was done.

Orpheus Christopher woke with a start, quickly sitting up in bed. He thought he got a fleeting view of a black figure at the foot of it, just as the uninvited intruder disappeared. The

trespasser seemed to have a wingspan and made him think of a six foot raven. Coming from Boston, he wasn't used to being around a lot of beasts, especially huge, somewhat ominous ones. But, it was gone and he could begin his usual day. The sun was not yet above the green hills, but its radiance was evident through his open windows. The glow in the cloudless sky made him feel as comfortable as one could be subsequent to a potential attack.

He got out of the trundle bed and went downstairs to the kitchen. Mom already had a cooking fire going, perilously raising the temperature and was hunched over, leaning into it, despite it being an already toasty July 4, 1825. The fireplace was brick and, next to it stood a few scary looking, iron kitchen utensils and various sized metal pots. This equipment came with the house and Orpheus and his family were just beginning to get used to the "rural" ways of Sudbury, Massachusetts.

"Good morning, Or," she said, without looking up.

"Good morning, Ma."

He sat at the table which was Mom's pride and joy, being of the delicate and stylish Heppelwhite variety. It had six thin legs with golden metal encasements near the feet and two other unused gate-leg attachments for expansion in case of plentiful company. Made of mahogany, with reddish brown stain and gold leaf inlays, it was quite an impressive sight. As visitors

usually congregated in the kitchen, Mom wanted this to be the best room and it was. He gazed at his industrious mother, her five foot two slender frame ensconced in a sheer white, ruffled, floor length dress.

He said; "Do you know if Dad is going to need me help him make nails today?"

She straightened up and pushed the long blond hair back off her sweating, pale face. She looked at him and said as if the answer was obvious; "I'd suspect so. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I guess I'm just trying to calculate out how much time I have for making pots today. I've got some new ideas I'm anxious to try out." They heard a loud clop, clip, clop on the hardly packed dirt road outside. Orpheus went to a wood shuttered window and opened it. Joe McCready was sitting on his wagon, holding the reins to Pokey, his 35 year old, brown, agreeable stallion, which helped him deliver milk. Seeing his head out the window, Joe yelled out; "Orpheus, make sure you're at the parade today."

"Sure, Joe. I wouldn't miss it." He thought, "Oh, no, another impediment to pot making. This is the forty-ninth anniversary of the revolution. The fiftieth should be a bigger deal. I'd rather wait for that one."

On the other side of town Eurydice Paul finished the breakfast prepared for her by the live-in maid, Betsy. Sitting in the kitchen, usually populated only by servants, she said; "I'd better get moving before Dad finds me here." Past experience had taught her that while her father would not openly chastise her for mingling with the hired help, he would do subtle things to discourage repeat performances, such as conjuring up chores that the two would have to immediately attend to.

She was always interested in hearing Betsy's stories about her time in slavery in Alabama and her escape by pretense of having the flu. Since no one would dare catching it, she was able to slip out of the farm compound without much difficulty, eventually getting to Massachusetts with the help of many sympathetic wagoneers. Eurydice often wondered about the net results, but never said so. When Betsy described the parties down South, Eurydice thought she may well have been describing some things that were much more interesting than "free" Massachusetts. She also knew that Betsy just might be confining herself to the best side of the story, not wanting to be someone to pity. Eurydice was also conscious of the fact that she had never experienced slavery and could never truly understand what that was like and didn't want to find out. Still, it troubled her that the "free" life she had, living her entire nineteen

year life in “non-slave states” seemed pretty limited. More than one former associate called her a spoiled brat, of course, behind her back.

Her father, Reverend James Paul, was not one to tolerate much frivolity. A six foot tall, robust man with short black hair which showed some signs of departure on top, he saw the world as a place for suffering and praying, despite mouthing platitudes to loving Christ and his raising of the dead. At age fourteen Eurydice decided that her father was just another hypocrite, as she never observed him doing anything she would call the least bit painful. His verbally stated area of highest concern seemed dominated by greed rather than creed. Didn’t he know that his chosen theosophy said “God will provide,” “Consider the lilies of the field,” and all that other “Golden Calf” kind of shit? What was this fascination with the expected weekly donation, mortgages and household help remuneration? Despite vows of poverty taken by church priests, the family always lived in very fine, elegantly furnished dwellings, which legally were church property, but that was a mere subterfuge to her. She didn’t mind the pleasant surroundings in the least and didn’t want to live a life of sacrifice, but considered calling this life one of poverty was too ridiculous to warrant any serious comment, as “what it is” is “what it is” and that’s all there was to it. Her father’s closest encounters with suffering occurred

during his regular routine of telling parishioners what they should be doing “In the name of God, almighty,” and enduring the groans. She had recurrent dreams of an irrigated field with a dry, elevated, three foot wide wooden road through it. Her father briskly walked the high path in immaculate pale golden silk robes, denying access to anyone else. The lay people slogged through the mud and fell well behind him. He chastised them for being lazy, telling them that they must try harder, as they wallowed in the foot deep dark brown mud, doing their best to keep up.

Eurydice raised her five foot, eight inch, 150 pound, ample body from the simply planked, plain kitchen table and slowly said; “Hey, Betsy.”

Betsy turned her forty year old kerchiefed head, away from the fire in the floor to ceiling cooking oven. Her slightly overweight five foot five frame turned and her semi-toothless mouth replied; “Startin’ out early, aren’t you?”

“Betsy, I want you to think up another story to tell me tomorrow.”

“What kind of story do you want to hear?”

Eurydice dragged out; “Love,” as she exited the kitchen door and greeted a pretty, new day. A half hour after sunrise it was cool enough to take a comfortable fast walk over the green treed hills to the side of town where most of the parishioners lived.

Passing by her father's unoccupied new church and school, she encountered an area covered with eight and nine room white clapboard houses, much like her own, each situated on about an acre. The strong light of the day revealed no imperfections. She noted the few remaining farms, growing corn, on the wetlands bordering the Hoosatonic River. The area was very well maintained, but she wondered by who? On her half mile walk down slate pathways, she saw no one. She was disappointed as she was in a particularly good frame of mind and thought it was a perfect day to greet her new neighbors. Her light ebony black skin stood out from the sheer white summer dress she was wearing and glistened in the continually rising sun dead ahead. She crossed the covered wooden bridge over the river and the path became dirt.

With his father still sleeping, Orpheus got into the usual routine. The radiant sun, now unencumbered by the sloping topography, he carried his five foot, nine inch, 150 pound frame to the "still on its legs" wooden barn in the backyard, loaded ten of his pots onto a small wagon and pulled them to the roadside of his parent's five room, side-halled half Cape Cod. He immediately realized that he had forgotten something and when he retraced his steps, he noticed Molly prancing over to the edge of her corral and her high-pitched, snorting whinny made it

known, in no uncertain terms, that she was hungry. He went back to the barn to retrieve a bale of hay and threw it over the corral fence. Molly was now occupied and presumably content. He drained the water from her trough, primed the stone well and carried her buckets of fresh water. Molly surprised the busy water boy and gave him a push on the shoulder with her big dark brown head, causing his long light brown hair to fall on his face. He said; "Hey, girl," as he spilled some of the water on his light blue dungarees. When he regained his balance he pushed the hair off his face with his left hand and rubbed her head with his right. He professed his apologies for being late, gave her a kiss on the snout, then returned to the barn and retrieved the wooden sign he had painted white, emblazoned with black lettering that said "**POTS--10¢**". When he carried it to the front of the house he saw her smiling face, illuminated by the sun behind him and in front of her. He had his back to it and she had difficulty making out his features until they were about ten feet apart. He shyly said; "Hi," as he placed the sign in front of the cart.

"Hi," she said; "You know you are the first person I've seen outside this morning."

"That's strange. My name is Orpheus. What's yours?"

"Eurydice."

They both were silent for a few seconds, staring into each other's eyes, no doubt wondering why that sounded portentous.

He finally said; "Where did you come from?"

She almost laughed and said; "What a way to phrase a question. I live on the other side of town now. I just crossed the bridge. The water looked very calm today."

"I've never really noticed it much. We've only been here a few months. We've been busy getting settled and I've been using my spare time to make these pots. Want one?"

Eurydice was again surprised at his directness, but thought it cute. She wrinkled her brow, to effect a discerning look and said; "Maybe. Let me get a better look at them." She picked one up, revolved it around in her hands, put it down and picked up another. "You put different designs on each one, don't you?"

"Yes. I don't think I could make a duplicate if I wanted to. I quickly scratch carve flowers on them before they turn solid and then paint them. I have to do it quickly and as a consequence I don't get that overly studied effect."

He smiled sheepishly, realizing that some people equate overly studied with perfection. She didn't reveal her predilections and took a quick look at the ten items for sale. She noticed that all pots were exactly the same shape and orange brown color, but each flower did, indeed, exhibit a different form and hue. She was attracted to a deep purple one, picked it