

This is the authentic version.

Two Girls: A Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue

*Missed winning First Prize
by one vote.*

One of the forms depression takes with me is shopping.
I bought a silk shirt today, and a novel by a radical feminist,
and a tape of Margo Mirowsky playing some Chopin nocturnes.

Yes, she is the little girl I was once in love with.
That is . . . she was. That is . . . as you know, Dmitri, I've
never had the slightest erotic desire for a woman. And yet my
love for Margo did reach such towering proportions it could
probably even be called tragic.

And what else did I do this afternoon? Well, I went to
a café and--this was before Ty recognized me, of course--can you
believe it, Dmitri, there she was, sitting at a table across from
me. But I didn't notice it right away. I had taken out my notebook
and was staring at the first sentence of what I'd been writing: "We
were lapping libations of Lillet and lager and listening all largo
to Lalo and Lully and you." I was staring at that and wondering
why I couldn't seem to get beyond it and thinking, Such is the nature
of depression.

I know some of the reasons for my depression, yes. Oh,
there's really only one: to be a nonwriting writer is the worst
kind of sadness there is. And you know I've been this way ever
since my book of stories was published. Absolutely hopeless, my

dear. And did not Freud or someone say that all artists are fundamentally depressives anyway? This is the thought I had when I looked up from my notebook and my cup of tea and saw the melancholy eyes of Margo Mirowsky looking straight across the room at me.

Recognized me only generically, I think, if she recognized me at all. Those lapis lazuli afternoons on Amphitryon Street are long past. But she is like me, I understand she goes into hiding for months, even years altogether . . . the interview in the Times hinted at this, and you may remember that recital we went to at Carnegie Hall was her first in ages. So she was looking at me across the room. And then her eyes were downcast while she sipped at some iced drink and I was able to examine her strange ugly clothes --a parka the chartreuse color of bananas and wrinkled Indian drawstring pants--and her hair en brosse, and to think about what a little beauty she had been as a child.

I can still feel the mystery and magic she had for me, that frail, pale being who did not go to the public school as the other children did. A lady teacher carrying a briefcase went to the great white house on Amphitryon Street in the mornings and after that Margo practiced the piano for six hours every day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays. The sound of her piano

almost never stopped during the long hours I attended her. She was as lonely and slavish as I--but I in my funny clothes and short haircut looked like a caricature by Sir John Tenniel, whereas she was beautiful. Ah, I can still see her head bent over her skates--for at exactly four o'clock each afternoon the white door of her house opened and there she was, blinking a bit in the lapis lazuli light of the dying sun, and would sit on the top step to put on her silver rollerskates. She looked like piano music itself to me, with her waist-length glossy bronze curls over which she wore a brown velvet beret, her slender limbs and pale hands and white, sharp, delicate features. This was her recess, I realized as she trundled down the steps. With an air of fulfilling a grave responsibility she would skate in front of and halfway round the house, which was on the corner, for one hour. After that she would sit gracefully on the top step, take off her silver skates and go back in, the white door miraculously opening to some unspoken command--or at least, I could not hear any words, but only the whirr of her skates and sometimes the sound of leaves falling.

Otherwise she never left the house, which remained folded round her all night while she slept and all morning and most of the long largo afternoon, like a large leaf keeping warm a small flower. . . . And you ask me, Dmitri, what there is to be depressed about in addition to the fact that I'm not writing anymore. Look:

there is already an implied criticism of my father in these few brief words I've addressed to you--and apparently this cannot be left out of my work. I tried to leave it out of my book of stories. And yet it is there, and my father understood this, and it is clear to me from his long silence, it is soul-crushingly clear that he hates my book of stories, he whose approval I so much wanted . . . but the world is full of other kinds of lamentation as well. When the alarm clock rang this afternoon I heard myself saying, "Oh, all the hell right." Isn't that depressing? Let us leave the thought of my spiritual gloom and consider information given me by my son: there are only two professional artists other than himself on the staff of the High School of Art and Music. One woman teaching painting there is really a needlepoint teacher. Onward and upward with the arts, as Stewart Klein might say. And did I tell you about the old couple who run the appetizing store on Broadway? the wife died, and the husband opened that day for business as usual. And as for Mother Nature, which of course is what we've been discussing all along, a fully-grown tooth with roots was discovered in North Carolina growing in a boy's foot--

But I was describing for you the way I'd hurry home from school, throw my bookbag onto a chair, drink a glass of milk and leave without speaking to my mother. I'd race all the way over

to Amphitryon Street. I'd collapse on the stone step in front of someone's house, gulping air and gazing intently across the street. The sound of the piano would drift to me slowly under the heavy trees which were laced together two and two to make a dark green vault above my head. She would be playing a simple scale. My soul was stilled by the luminous splash of notes that were like secrets about to be unveiled. Her piano trembled, breathed, rose into the air. I strove toward her and strained every nerve, hands holding up my hair even though my hair was very short. Now she played a scale something like the other but on deeper notes. And now she played the two scales with both hands together--but it sounded like four hands--faster and faster. What delight, what elegance, what wit, what poetry and power. I wondered if some of it were Bach, my mother's specialty. I imagined her pale clean hands skittering and slithering and sparkling up and down the white and black keyboard. Now she stopped angrily and broke into a melody. I knew the melody although I did not know its name--perhaps it was "Träumerei"--and in my mind I sang it as she played. But this too she left unfinished, this song of passion and longing that we both knew, and went back to the scales, playing them loudly, triumphantly.

I am telling you all this, of course, in the midst of a monumental depression, and have just this moment taken out my compact

and noticed that my eyes are the color of my taedium vitae blues. Gray, that is. Sometimes they are other colors. Did you know that Marie-Hélène de Rothschild sleeps in a room with bullet-proof windows? And that Harcourt Brace owns Seaworld and other amusement attractions and fifteen fish-and-chips restaurants? Stuff like that tears the heart out of me, Dmitri. Also, I dreamed I ran for governor of New Jersey and received only four votes. And you, my dear, said you do not know why I received as many votes as four, as I am not in any way qualified to be governor of New Jersey. This reminds me of the fact that women hold less than three percent of executive-level jobs. A depressing place, the world.

There was a neighborhood legend that the girl on Amphitryon Street had played for the President's wife. I used to picture the President's wife drawing on her gloves and saying as she prepared to leave: "Franklin, I am going to Bell Village to hear Margo Mirowsky play the piano. She is a genius and a very talented, marvelous, beautiful, important little girl." And then the President's wife boarded a train and came to Bell Village and knocked on the white door, and when it was opened she said: "I am the First Lady of the Land." What would I do if such a thing happened? I would mutter something like, "I have often thought about you and seen your photo in the magazines at my Aunt Grace's house." Then I would faint. But she--I'd think--she, who must have many eminent visitors, shook

the President's wife's hand in a very gracious and grownup manner and said: "I was expecting you. What would you care to hear me play? I can play anything, you know." Then the President's wife sat down on the silken sofa and Margo's mother brought her English tea in a white china cup and sugar in a silver bowl and cream in a silver pitcher and Margo went to the piano and played--the beautiful song of passion and longing. Finally the President's wife stood up with tears in her eyes, crying out: "I shall remember this as long as I live." And then perhaps she stayed to dinner. I knew nothing of this, I was home doing my homework or reading Lewis Carroll. All through dinner she was sad and thoughtful. . . . "Your daughter is undoubtedly the greatest genius I have ever heard play the piano," she said. Margo's parents looked upon her and proudly smiled. . . .

One time a woman came out of the house behind me and was sweeping the porch. She descended the step with her broom, spoke to me in a kind voice:

"Why are you forever sitting in front of my house? Haven't you got anyone to play with?"

I did not answer.

"Who do you belong to, little girl? Do you live round here?"

"No ma'am. I live--over there." I pointed to the distance.

"You ought to go back to your own street and find someone to play with. Your mother will be wondering where you are. Have

you got a mother?" she asked doubtfully.

"Yes."

I rose from the stone step and trailed off reluctantly. The woman watched me go, then turned back to her sweeping. I walked, listening, to the other corner opposite Margo's house, and stood leaning against a sycamore.

Her life, her look, her house, her trees, her afternoons, her music ran together with all the fairy tales I had read. . . . I asked myself, Has there ever been in my life anything like this love?

I remembered the years when my father seemed so wise. I would follow him round the house until he became annoyed and demanded I leave him. When he arose from a chair I would sit in it awhile. Everything he touched was dear to me. He went to the kitchen for a glass of water. I pretended to be thirsty so I could drink from the same glass. My mother too had fascinated me, though not in the same way. It was more the appurtenances surrounding my mother that were exciting. The cabinets full of Schirmer volumes, and the upright piano that I was forbidden to touch. . . . When she left the house to shop or to go to her lessons I would dash upstairs to my parents' bedroom and look at the flowered voile dresses in the closet. I would open a drawer of what my mother called the bureau and touch my fingers to the stockings with runs in them and the camisoles and corsets and pink rayon bloomers. I would look at the strangeness

of myself in the mirror. I would sniff at the gift perfume bottles that had stood unopened on the top of the bureau for as long as I could remember. A gloomy oil painting of a woman in brown playing a brown guitar in a brown garden hung at the head of the bed where my mother and father slept. My mother had once looked at it and said: "She ought to be doing her housework." So I would cast a reproachful glance at the painting and murmur, "You ought to be doing your housework." My mother hardly ever did any housework. She was always playing Bach on the piano in my father's study or on the organ in some church, or going to her organ lessons in New York City. When the house became too dirty and disordered my father simply called in a maid for a few days. It was hard for me to repeat things my mother said, for there were very few of them--at least, that she said to me. She did advise me once that I would never get married, as men do not like women who read books. Schirmer volumes of Bach and Beethoven were not included in this proscription, she explained. My mother, my mother, who was almost as beautiful as Margo Mirowsky, and had long brown velvet hair which she bobbed when I was five, and spent most of her waking hours at the piano or out, and never learned to cook anything except lentil soup, and hardly ever spoke to me, and laughed at me and left them off when I suggested she wear her pearls for a picture my father was taking of her--my mother, at whom I tried smiling sometimes, but it didn't work. Eventually I lost interest

in both of my stern, silent parents, after years of adoring them and following them around with nothing but hope in my heart.

I was talking about love. At school, because I was so scared most of the time, there was almost no one I could look at this way and think about. Or rather, there was a boy named Winston. I wanted to walk home with Winston, since we lived in the same neighborhood and I liked him, but at three o'clock he was always the first one out and far ahead of the others on his way home, alone. It used to comfort me a little to gaze at his stubborn white face as he sat with his eyes downcast, determined not to be called upon and seemingly examining the inkstained carvings on his wooden desk. He was the only child in my class besides me who came to school knowing how to read and write. I always thought it was my father who'd taught me to read and write when I was an infant but when I asked him later he claimed I'd picked it up by myself--in fact, he claimed both of us were reading Bret Harte and William Dean Howells at about the same time, I without the slightest prior instruction. That happened to me in the public school too: I never had there a language lesson I needed, not for the whole eight years. But is it possible, Dmitri, I became literate as a toddler without anyone's help, as he assured me --other than the help of living in a houseful of books and having his sublime example to admire. I suppose I have to accept my father's word on this matter, as he is extremely proud of never having spent

much time with me.

Literacy did not seem to be of very much help when you went to school, and I knew how scared Winston was. Once in the second grade he wet himself in the classroom because he was so scared, and everyone laughed when the teacher discovered what had happened, and Winston cried. I felt pity and sympathy because when I was in the first grade I used to throw up from being scared. Then I became scared about throwing up, and twice I swallowed the vomit as it rose in my throat, and kept it down. This was possibly the most heroic thing I have ever done. Oh, I tell you it was terrible, comparable only to some other such harrowing experience as childbirth But all that was the year before and then Winston joined a gang of rough boys who toured the schoolyard hitting people during recess. I did not like him anymore. There were other people in the school that I did not like either. But I reflected that perhaps these feelings of violence and hate were what was expected of you. Perhaps they were a part of good citizenship or something. Yes, sometimes I would think of forming a gang like the one Winston belonged to, except that I was too small to be a member of it so I would be the president of it instead. I would plan the maneuvers and then sit quietly on the sidelines reading a book. The members would be the biggest and strongest boys and girls in the school. Under my direction they would tour the schoolyard systematically annihilating all the children who had ever humiliated me and hurt me. Then I would tell them to go

right into the school and jump on the crazy teachers who had slapped my hands and screamed at me until I was sick. One woman struck me, her hellish face shrieking into mine like something out of Hieronymus Bosch, just because I corrected a grammatical error of hers--the only reason for my action being that she'd been teaching it to the class. The members of my gang would right this wrong, they would strangle this teacher and others and bang their heads against the cement floor of the schoolyard until they were killed!

But this idea did not really appeal to me very much. It did not appeal to me because it was repulsive and I could not do it. Even if I were to use some quieter method, poison perhaps or something out of Edgar Allan Poe . . . but I still could not do it. No, it would be a much better idea for a person of my sort to write stories about these people when I grew up, as soon as I found out how. That was definitely what I would do, I decided. And besides, what chance would I have of forming a gang? Did I not know after all this time that I could not even get into one of the gangs the other girls had formed? They did not like me. They would have no part of me. At night in my bed I wept and wondered the reason for this. I thought it was because my mother, without ever speaking to me, used to cut my hair so short that it hung not quite to the lobes of my ears. I dreamed often of running away from home to someplace I could let my hair grow long. I would grow long shiny curls reaching to my waist.

Then a lady teacher would put her arm about me--that happened once to another girl as I stood in the doorway of the classroom watching --and kiss me on the cheek and murmur: "You exquisite creature." And then the little girls would invite me to go to the movies with them on Saturdays to see Myrna Loy and Melvyn Douglas. And they would not do as they were doing at that time, which was to rush at me in the schoolyard with a ferocity that stunned me and yell jingles at me. They would dance round me with their hands joined, shrieking:

"North, South, East, West,
Which is the one that you like best?"

It is so strange to me nowadays to think about these little girls all of whom are my age now, and can you imagine how amazed I was to be recognized by Ty in the café this afternoon, but as I was saying these little girls are my age these days, only a little bit younger than Margo who was also there . . . it seems to me they are all ridden by divorce, shame, cancer, obesity, alcoholism, despair and money troubles, and taking courses at a community college in an effort to meet a man. Or perhaps they are all writing a novel about how horrible men are. Whatever the route, it's downhill all the way, life is. Ah my dear friend, my heart is absolutely broken for the human race, and I . . . though why shouldn't I assume they've become accomplished and successful? I think it was because of the way Margo

Mirowsky looked in the café this afternoon, in her strange ugly clothes and with her hair en brosse and her melancholy eyes downcast. She's an accomplished, successful person, and seemed to me as though she were not across the room from me but somewhere very distant, languishing behind a vast wave of sorrow. Has she lost someone? I don't know. Have not we all lost someone? Those girls, Dmitri, where are they now, those little girls who were so pretty and brownhaired and delicate and large and full of life, looking like the cheerful children Boucher painted to represent the arts and sciences in the Frick Collection and dancing round me with their hands joined, shrieking:

"North, South, East, West,
Which is the one that you like best?"

I would stand there with my tongue lolling stupidly in my mouth. In my agony I could hardly recognize one of their sun-blurred heads. And then, thought I, suppose I were to look hard at one girl and to point, saying, "I like you best." Might not the other smirk or simper or snicker or utter an outright scream of contemptuous laughter? That surely was the point of the game. I would say, "I offer myself to you," only to hear the retort, "But why? I don't want you." I was silent. They grew tired of waiting, they released me, laughing shrilly, and dashed away over the cement. . . . I walked by myself for a while and sat timidly on the edge of a bench. Another group of little girls was there, excitedly talking. Each group seemed to have its own executive committee and an inflexible membership. It occurred to me that perhaps these groups had been

formed in kindergarten. My father had not allowed me to go to kindergarten, saying it was quite soon enough to start school when you were six. And now it was too late, they would never accept me. . . . Until the bell rang I remained on the edge of the bench cowering under my chopped-off hair, at first sitting up straight with folded hands as in class, then slumping over with a long grim stare at my black gown and at the shoes my father had bought me that were much too big for me but that would fit in a year or so, when they would be too dilapidated for wear. . . . I wondered with all my dark being what it must be like to be not silent but one of them, a talking, laughing little girl, clad in a pretty dress and coat instead of in something awful that Aunt Grace used to wear to the opera. It must be that, I thought, it must be the strange, sophisticated rags my father made me wear, the satin bodices of which would be adorned with an occasional winestain or cigaret burn. Sometimes in the midst of my mounting fear and shame I took out my arithmetic notebook and wrote the most beautiful words I knew:

"Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimm'd by human tears."

And I looked at the words and read them over and over, and then I closed up my arithmetic notebook and sat straight with hands folded. I realized the words made no sense, as tears would cause alabaster to gleam rather than cause it to grow dim as the song

said. And yet they seemed to me very beautiful words, and I was forced to consider that poetry did not have to make sense. . . .

And then in the afternoons there was Margo, for whom I waited so ceaselessly, to whom I knew I would never speak, having no desire to approach her.

The trembling piano had stopped. "Come out, come out, Margo Mirowsky!" silently I cried.

Waiting, I let my eyes wander in the blueness over the tops of the sycamores and white houses of Amphitryon Street and tried to decide what time it was. The trees were like heavy green hair in an endless chignon, waving in a mild wind soft as a cheek. I saw suddenly the woman who had spoken to me. She was sitting on her porch, a folded newspaper in her hands, but her eyes were lifted and looking at me. She shook her head slowly in a puzzled manner.

I moved round the sycamore until I was half-hidden. If she came down the steps to speak to me again I would say: "I am waiting for someone, thank you." If you said "thank you" it sounded quite grownup.

I gazed at the white door and the four front windows of the house on the corner and now for the first time it seemed to me that there was something different today. Why had I not noticed it before? The windows were dim behind curtains of dark ivory lace--but something had changed, everything had changed. Perhaps the furniture, which I

could not see, had been shifted slightly. . . . No, it was something concerning the soul of the house. The house had a proud and rather insolent look, as though it had come to Bell Village by mistake and were going to loosen itself from the green lawn and fly off, carrying its wonderful child and her piano and her white embroidered bedroom and all the people who lived only for her, caring for her so tenderly, teaching her the best sorts of skills, or perhaps she was a kind of Mozart and never needed to be taught anything . . . people who admired her, who saw that no harm ever came to her, who did not mind her reading under the covers with a flashlight at night, who did not scream at her nor demand to be left alone. . . .

Silently I cried, "Come out, come out, Margo Mirowsky!"

The white door opened and she appeared, silver skates strapped together on her arm. For a moment she stood on the step, blinking. . . .

She wore her dark brown velvet beret, a dark green coat, white stockings. Her little face was pointed and pale, hardly seen under that mass of flagrant hair. She was the color of the street with its green and brown sycamores and pale houses. Her face was silent and shut as the doors of houses . . . and there was only the sound of leaves falling.

She sat down on the top step and fastened her skates. She

stood up and rolled off on one skate, calmly, seeming a bit bored.

"Look out, Margo Mirowsky! Don't fall!" I wanted to shout to her.

But now she was coming down the cement walk, her little white-stockinged legs working swiftly, obediently. A child rollerskating by herself in front of her house in the lapis lazuli late afternoon, alone. Her shiny bronze curls swung and brushed against her back as she whirled by.

She stopped and looked down absently at the light green lawn. She kicked the toe of her skate into the grass and dug at the turf. She was thinking of something. Of what was she thinking?

This glimpse of her in all her trembling, pale humanity, subject to the suffering and perplexity of thought--this glimpse of her filled me with a sad excitement and I could not remain where I was. I glided out from behind the sycamore and walked down the block across the street from her, pretending I was going somewhere or perhaps taking a short stroll before supper.

I stopped, turned my head wordlessly to this small girl I had been pining over since relinquishing my mother and father and Winston. Our eyes met. My eyes were gray some of the time, I knew, and I could not see what color hers were. I looked like a particularly funny caricature by Sir John Tenniel and the other

girl was pretty. She and I stared at each other.

And then Margo Mirowsky whanged her ball-bearing silver skate down hard on the sidewalk and rolled off. . . .

After a while she knelt, untied one skate and slung it onto the lawn. Her coat drowned her as she knelt, making her look like a gleaming brown flower hugged in a huge green wool leaf. She stood up, pushed herself along with one knee bent and her small foot in its brown pump held in the air.

Now she skated faster and faster, as fast as her hands would go sparkling up and down the keyboard, but on one foot only, balancing herself with wan hands upstretched. I had the feeling then that she cared about my watching her. She was performing for me.

She even tried to dance with her skate on. . . .

The sun was going down. She paused, turned her tired white face with its piercing eyes which I now saw were brown in my direction. Ah, she was small. . . . She was facing me but did not look at me. The white house behind her seemed to grow larger, tremulous with change. There were shadows behind the curtains of dark ivory lace. I shivered and leaned for solace against the sycamore.

She tossed her head, her hair whirled round her face. She began to sing:

"Tomorrow I am going to Paris,
To Paris, to Paris, France.
Yes, I'm going to Paris, France!
To study with Mister Vittorio!"

I wound my arms round the sycamore and leaned my head

against it.

"Yes, I'm sailing on the one o'clock boat
To Paris, to Paris, France.
This is my last afternoon,
My last afternoon in this stoopid town!"

I lifted my head and now she and I were looking straight at each other with an intense, almost angry glare. Her song was a real melody which I had never heard her play. I knew all the melodies she played. She went on in her high, small but strong voice.

"For I'm sailing to Paris, France.
And my mother and the maid and my father and my tutor
Are going with me
But not my piano-teacher
Because I'm going to study in Paris, France,
With Mister Vittorio who is a very famous artiste."

She smiled self-consciously and flashed her widened eyes at me.

"And I shall live in a beautiful big hotel
In Paris, Paris, France.
And if there is ever any time when I am not working
I'll visit César Franck in the Montparnasse Cemetery
And say to him: O, let me wear French dresses
And delightful high-heeled shoes
And sit at the Café Dôme reading the Dadaists.
Let me paint myself gold
And be regularly raped at the Bal des Quat'z Arts on July second.
Let the people talk more interestingly than they do in French
conversation manuals.

Let me have some fun for a change,
Especially at the Bal des Quat'z Arts on July second
In Paris, Paris, France.
Let me never have to look at another pair of rollerskates!
And still, make me a true siren and the most fantastical
of prodigies,
Apportioning some of her time to such recherche pursuits
as the douceur de vivre.
Just be sure, old chap, I'm pacified with regular doses of
glamour and enchantment,
So I can bear the ennui. Take care of me in my new home, please.
And let me be the envy of everyone
In stoopid Bell Village, and New York, and Boston,
And Paris, Paris, France."

She posed and smiled. . . .

"Time, darling." A woman's voice behind the open white door. Anguish was causing me to hear and see with greater clarity than usual. I wasn't sure I'd caught everything in her song--hadn't there been a passage about becoming the lover of Colette and Jean Cocteau, or perhaps it was Apollinaire she'd mentioned. "Have you been enjoying yourself?" asked Margo's mother. "I like to see you enjoying yourself. Often you seem so sad. Are you excited about tomorrow?"

It was really true, then. Margo unfastened her skate quickly, picked up the other one and went in without another word or glance.

I clapped my hand to my forehead and rushed down the street.

"Now I'll be a stowaway, like that man in the book . . . I'll go home and pack a couple of things--my pen and pencil set, the bunny rabbit sweater Aunt Grace gave me for Christmas, my copy of Through the Looking Glass because that's the one that has 'Jabberwocky' in it . . . just the things I value most and maybe an apple or an orange--and in the morning instead of going to school I'll . . . get on the boat. How? They won't see me, I'm so small. . . . I'll run away! Yes! to Paris, France. I'll come with you, Margo." And I began to sob.

"Oh Margo, Margo Mirowsky, how can I stay here if you go way. . . ?"

Les petites misères de la vie humaine, eh wot Dmitri? Just

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another one of the little miseries such as death and loss. Margo was soon replaced in my affections by an English teacher named Luis Feld, who wanted me to be a literary critic. And the next time I saw that little girl was at a piano recital she gave at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, but we were both grownup by then and I was sitting with my husband . . . I was sitting wondering why she had not married. And later I had the interview in the Times to pore over, which did not tell me very much except that she had been born in Bell Village, and left most of the rest in legend and dream. Sometimes I thought she had been married but did not live with him, and lived only with musicians and composers or great artists and writers--yet I do not know this, nor anything else about her even though she sang to me, and I feel a great sadness flowing through her life like fingers flowing down a keyboard, and draw back from it in wonder and awe, sometimes laughing a lot because the world inspires such sadness in me. But more often I weep, as I did when I discovered I do not like a work of Stravinsky entitled "In Memoriam Dylan Thomas"--and how to describe for you, Dmitri, the furor of those tears of frustration and despair, aroused not by Stravinsky's poem but by my dislike for it? Ah, let it go. And what else is there about the world? Well, a girl of sixteen brought her young boyfriend into the Greystone Coiffures yesterday to have his hair cut. She paid, and gave him a dollar for the tip. I found that singularly

depressing. And then while I was waiting for my breast exam I saw a girl who was reading a novel and whistling "How Are Things in Glocca Morra"--and when she finished that song she turned a page and began to whistle "Red Roses for a Blue Lady." As a novelist I was not only depressed but definitely annoyed. And what else? Names are often quite depressing. Tennis star Vitas Gerulaitis--it sounds like a disease of old age. And did you know that the pioneer neurosurgeon Harvey Cushing was a hysterically choleric morphine addict? And that Elizabeth Taylor now weighs one hundred sixty-seven pounds? And that I still haven't heard from my father and that the rapport between the WASP father and his daughter is the coolest of all human relationships? And that my son asked me, "What was the name of that painter who was Utrillo's mother" and I answered instantly, "Suzanne Valadon"? I don't know how I knew this, did not know that I knew it, rather resent knowing it. And that the man in the appetizing store whose companion of forty years died opened for business as usual--oh I spoke of him didn't I, I can't get over the fellow, he blows my mind. And I don't think I told you about the ketchup--today at the cafe I heard someone say to the waiter, "Please bring me some brand of ketchup other than Heinz, because I don't have time to wait." And what else? Well, did you know that there are times when I cannot listen to anyone except Haydn? And that I felt like reading The Cenci the other night when I was thinking about my father and was disgusted to find

I had a complete Swinburne but not a complete Shelley? And that Freud said what all artists want is fame, money and beautiful lovers? And that I have dredged my memory for these remarks I have addressed to you and that Millhauser said memory is merely one form of imagination? And that Dostoevsky said men are created to torment one another? And that two women in an apartment on my street were found shot to death this morning? And that there is a sign in Notre Dame Church in Montreal which says, "Pardonnez-nous nos indifférences"? And that John Cage once presented an evening of silence, which you would not go to with me, so I went alone, and it was really quite charming . . . I do hope I'm not depressing you overmuch. And then there was the way we left each other yesterday morning, Dmitri: you refused to kiss me when I got out of the car, saying that neither of us deserved a kiss. . . .

Of course, for the most part the thing that's getting me down's my inability to create prose about love and despair in the lives of my mother and other musicians I have known. You know, Dmitri--whatever it is that keeps me from writing beyond: "We were lapping libations of Lillet and lager and listening all largo to Lalo and Lully and you." Although it's true that just before meeting you this evening I did realize I was going to have my heroine wear flocked stockings with clocks on them.

Two things happened in the next moment. I looked up from

my notebook to see that Margo Mirowsky had gone. And I saw a man glance at me and do a doubletake and then begin to hurry toward me, winding his way among the café tables, his hand outstretched and an eager smile upon his face.

"Excuse me, but don't we know each other from Paris thirty years ago?" said he--and yes, he was Ty, the Bronx boy with whom my husband and I had made a film, who'd left Paris in August of nineteen forty-nine to become a writer and director of films and live in Sweden ever since. "I think you may be about to make another of your appearances in my fiction," I told him, laughing with the joy that had begun to make a small, temporary dent in my depression. We summoned the waiter and soon had tureens careening with truffles and trifle and toffee and teapots with teaberry tea--

But that, my dear, as they say, is another story, and quite the end of this one.

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Ruth Jespersen

Two Girls: A Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue