"Let me begin with this interesting question. Can an animal commit suicide? That's not idly put. The question goes to the heart of Darwinian evolution. That we have a physiology in common with animals doesn't have to be proven anymore. Nor that we have certain behavioral patterns in common with them--aggression, mating, etc. But do they share the death instinct with us, and if we can demonstrate that they do, that even a mouse can commit suicide, are we not justified in suspecting a neurological basis, a genetic programming to the death instinct?"

Professor Destygian leaned against the platform, on top of which was a large cage of pyrex glass, surrounded by a mass of electrical equipment, with two observable compartments in the cage and an observable mouse lethargically looking for food along the clean edges of its compartment. A youthful looking, athletic man, his body still lithe, his shirtsleeves rolled up informally, Professor Destygian often arrived at his office in sweats, having jogged in the four miles from his house on the edge of University Town.

The cement, lead-colored auditorium matched the color of the winter light that came in through the windows on the side of the lecture hall, blending inner and outer space with gray continuity, except for the heads bobbing from seats practically filled to capacity. He was a popular lecturer ("There's a suppressed interest in the subject," he said modestly, "most people are closet suicides.") because of his commitment to the study, an intellectual passion he communicated to his students who willingly played Dr. Watson to this agile Sherlock Holmes who led them down fascinating trails in search of a clue to themselves. He sensed those who were there out of personal panic, victims of an incapacitated life urge, who knew that nothing could be taken for granted, least of all the desire to live.

It had taken him ten years to persuade the university to establish a Center for the Study of Suicide. "There are no taboo sub-

j e c t s in science," he had argued with the Department of Neurophysiology, "not since Masters and Johnson." There was one predictable raised eyebrow. It belonged to Professor Kraize ("our mascot gadfly," Destygian called him.) "Everything's a science," Kraize wheezed from his overweight body. "Pretty soon we'll have a science to measure how much whites shit compared to blacks, and we shall call it the Racial Theory of Elimination." Of the eight department members there, Kraize had objected to the proposals of all of them. He had objected to every proposal in the last fifteen years. ("Damn right," he said, "the last decent proposal we had here was that Chinese fellow who wanted to practice acupuncture on frogs.")

No one addressed himself to the comment. No one addressed Kraize anymore about anything. Progress had tossed him aside, but he could not be gotten rid of. He was a hangover from the past, but persistent. No one could silence him or dispense with a respectful nod in his direction. He had "done great things in his time," had built the department singlehandedly from nothing, had supported it with lonely, indefatigable energy. He could
say, "None of you would be here except for me." "True, true," they answered, bowed and scraped, and moved on.

Destygian continued: "It was Durkheim's genius to insist that suicide could not be regarded only as a psychological phenomenon, that even so individual an act as suicide revealed sociological patterns, a collective aptitude for suicide, as he called it. But the fact is that suicide is an individual act. A single person decides to act against the accumulated sociological wisdom of millennia ("Every soldier in war does that," Kraize barked). True," Destygian nodded. "Perhaps someday we'll find out why. I don't see, in theory, why we shouldn't be able to, but at the moment my experiment deals with the neurophysiological makeup of the suicide, the suicide as an individual, not the suicide as a collective phenomenon. The suicide does not follow external orders. He follows internal orders, we might even say an internal clock. The soldier in battle believes he will survive; he doesn't expect to die, except through bad luck. The suicide is hell bent on death. Durkheim went too far in his effort to make the study of suicide scientific. It is scientific, but not because we can tabulate sociological statistics about it. What we need is a formal model of the death instinct. For all the rare occurrences of collective suicide--I don't lightly dismiss these episodes--still, they are episodic, while individual suicide goes on all the time. Historically, biologically, suicide is the act of the single individual, not the group. Durkheim's dicta do not explain why certain people commit suicide and others do not." ("Certain people commit adultery and others do not."--Kraize). Destygian paused. "True. And what do we make of that?" (Kraize swung his unwieldy body with glee. "We don't make a science out it.") ("Only he laughs at his jokes," Destygian said to his wife. "True," Kraize said.)

"Let's get on with it," the chairman said.

Destygian knew the apple was his, but he bit into it courteously. "With due respect for Professor Kraize's objections, which, believe me when I say I have considered time and again with great seriousness, the fact is that we have an epidemic of suicide now, and it is clear that we must develop a predictive mechanism. I must ask you, then, if you want to unravel the mystery of suicide, if you know of any way to proceed other than what I have outlined?" His lectures were filled to capacity, as he knew they would be if given the chance to develop the center. "It's the last frontier to self-knowledge."

He lifted his pointer in the direction of the large screen which hung behind the platform, with the image of a mouse magnified one hundred times on it. "Is suicide an expression of the subconscious collective, as Durkheim suggested, or of the singular will, as we shall demonstrate. If an animal can commit suicide, if a mouse can commit suicide, can we speak of suicide as the expression of collective mousedom?"

Frank, Professor Destygian's future son-in-law, he hoped, appreciated the remark but didn't share in the laughter it caused. He was too peculiarly poised, he confessed to Kate, "to laugh at anything with a clear conscience, unless it was unambiguously funny." His, he confessed, was a subliminal personality, "the result of two centuries of suppression which he was actively negating." He referred to himself as the last American Calvinist who was certain God would punish him for throwing a snowball at an innocent creature, and he would have liked to have had Professor Destygian's manner, particularly his manner of handling Kate. Professor Destygian was unflappable there. Frank was the opposite. Kate made his nerves sing like wires in the wind; she made his body, his "unfortunate" body—flat feet, concave chest—groan like a dry branch in the cold. He confessed to being unheroic, finicky, and nervous about everything. He did not drive his own car; he did not dance; he did not jog. The only time he had any peace from a sense of deflation was when he was in the laboratory, he mistakenly confessed to her. "Listen," he said to her, "if we're going to continue to see each other (I must be crazy to hope this, he thought) let's not try to convert each other. Life is going to be impossible unless we can learn to live with each other."

"Sure," Kate said. "Here's the missionary married to the headhunter who sacrifices babies to the god Teetototo. Every night he comes home, hangs up his shrunken heads and tells her about his day's work hauling kids into the volcano so that the gods can go on a glee feast. Here is Kate, the good wife,
dusting off the heads each day with the piano top and aspidistra, sitting down, and playing 'Nearer My God To Thee,' and promising never to talk about her missionary work."

"If you think of me like that, why don't you go away," he said, not even above self-pity and masochism. "I must disgust you."

"You do disgust me; that is 5/8 of you does. I've warned you and warned you, Frank. If you stay around, I'll suck your soul out. It's my duty to transform you into an ordinary, sinning human, the kind that God can recognize."

True. She never lied to him. "Change, or stop seeing me." (Professor Destygian's advice on how to handle Kate covered everything but this ultimatum.)

He felt sorry for himself that from a world of females (52% of the population), he was obsessed with her. She was unlike any woman he had imagined falling in love with. He needed warmth and genuineness. Refuge. He wasn't like what most women thought men were like. Why was reality so aberrant? He walked on feet that pained him most of the time—all the time in the winter. His posture was awkward. He was forever slipping on the ice or catching his toe in a crack. He was maternal himself, he told her. "It's the old masculine impulse to protect." Her wonderful hair blew across his face.

They had taken a boat ride down the Hudson on their first date, from Poughkeepsie to New York, August moon in a dark sky, band playing in the cocktail lounge, water washing anciently along the sides of the boat. He was, by his own admission, "archaically" romantic and felt small hope for himself in the world of liberated women. "Not that I don't agree with them in theory," he said, "philosophically, logically, they're absolutely right. But in my heart of hearts," he smiled at her solicitously, "I don't see myself as the beast they keep telling me I am."

Her hair blew back and forth in the dark night, first embracing him, then masking her face so that only her eyes glittered with moonlight and amusement. ("I won't comfort you," she said, "and don't say I didn't warn you. I warn everybody.")

It was after their third or fourth date that she began to send him "suicide notes," as she called them. "Love letters are tacky, don't you think?" He was disappointed to hear this. When she had proposed an exchange "of our deepest thoughts about life, about death, about each other," snatches of gossip about Heloise and Abelard floated into his brain. Parallels formed immediately. He was ten years older than Kate, almost professionally established, while she had no intellectual interests of any kind. "None," she said. She was Professor Destygian's daughter, but so unlike him. "Exactly the opposite," she said, "which just goes to show you." She was rough and smooth, harsh and adorable. She had an angelic face, the kind that belonged on top of a Christmas tree, luminous skin, hazel eyes, blonde lashes. He could not understand how someone so enchanting could be so bitchy, and blamed his misguided ideas about women on his practical virginity. "There isn't anything bitchy about me," she refuted his complaint, "except my truth."

His heart fluttered with anticipation when her first letter arrived, and rapidly underwent a sobering chill: "My dearest Frank, you asked me the other day what makes me so bitchy. I told you, and you didn't believe me. It's the noise in my head, the monitoring bell that goes off in Dad's office on the mezzanine floor of Basement level D, corridor 2, when one of the mice has slipped over the edge of its raft and has drowned. The bell is driving me crazy. It keeps me awake at night. Dad thinks it's insanity which keeps me awake, and he keeps me equipped with sleeping pills. But it's his bell that keeps me awake. I hear it even when I take three sleeping pills. Nothing blocks out the sound for me. Why is it you don't believe me when I tell you this? Your disbelief is driving me crazy! There must be some place where people will believe me and where I won't hear that bell. I am like a transvestite who has the gender of one body and the longing of another. I have the body of a human and the soul of another species, a woodchuck or a mouse, a flimsy creature who should have escaped the notice of human curiosity. Now I wonder when it sinks beneath the water in the tank whether its eyes open again and it watches the light break on the surface as I did when I slipped beneath the ice in Miller's Pond a few years ago. Why am I condemned to relive their deaths, and you are not? Why do I feel its heart in my throat, and you do not? How is it we are so
different? We only look as if we belong to the same species. One of us is human, and one of us is animal. If you're the human, I must be the animal. I cannot bear the glare of Dad's humanity. I belong in the dark. I am not afraid of anything beneath the earth."

Professor Destygian climbed up to the platform. "I can't claim originality for this experiment," he said. "I do owe a small share of my ideas on how to proceed to Lamuth Schaefer, with respect to this particular experimental model, but I trust you are all familiar with my own models, the drowning experiments." He looked meaningfully at the audience. "Anyone who isn't, please familiarize yourself with them as soon as possible. Basement level D, corridor 2. Track on down there and spend some time, enough time to notice the different patterns each mouse exhibits. Here, we can only follow in the tracks of Schaefer, who, as you know, never completed the experiment. That should not be charged against him. His pioneer work remains seminal, but my own experiments add immeasurably to Schaefer's ideas on observing suicide in an animal, because under the conditions of my experiment, we prove that, even in a mouse, the struggle against death varies a good deal. Some are able to hold out for three days, quite astonishingly I should say, while others succumb in two days. Even in a mouse, we are up against fluctuation, variation, singularity. I do not know how to account for singularity, except genetically. The tendency to give in to death, to drop off, so to speak, the collapse of the psychological condition simply is singular. We are up against—pardon the old-fashioned words—choice and will—even in a mouse. Our challenge, as scientists, is to create the right conditions, to design the mechanism that will allow the phenomena of choice and will to be exhibited."

He signalled for the projector to be turned off, and the mouse disappeared from the screen. It was a welcome relief to Frank, who, sitting near the beam of light, was blinded from seeing anything. Gray dominated the room again. Outside, a dead lead sky. But no snow. Thank God for that, Frank thought. He hated to drive in a car in the snow, hated to walk in the snow. "Ban snow," he said to Kate every time they had an argument about his work. "Ban me," she said and stuck her tongue out at him. Her usual comment.

Professor Destygian reached inside the cage, took out the mouse and perched it on the flat of his hand. The animal, roused from its lethargy and hunger, weakly began to feel for food along the edges of the hand. Finding nothing, it ceased to move and peered at the grey space of students. "You see that this animal is aware of the limits to its living space," Professor Destygian said. "It knows where the edge is. How does it know this? How do we know—even a child—that if we throw ourselves from a certain height, we will kill ourselves? Some of us experience an intoxication with that idea. We don't know if the mouse does. But we do know that if you cause it sufficient stress, it will choose death, even as you and I would. Can we say, then, that the animal has made a rational choice between pain and death? Disturbing question."

The door to the lecture hall clicked open. Heads turned, briefly. Pens stopped writing, briefly. A snicker here and there was to be heard, a comment on the intruder, not on Professor Destygian. The door closed. The click echoed in the large auditorium. The mouse stood up on Professor Destygian's hand and perked its worried eyes in the direction of the noise. Otherwise, the interruption was inconsequential, and the heads turned back to the bifurcated cage on the platform, surrounded by the electrical equipment.
Professor Destygian paused, too, also briefly. His recovery time to his daughter’s presence was exemplary. She moved down the steps in the auditorium, clutching a book to her chest with ludicrous tenderness (it said it all), her marvelous hair betraying innocence all the same. She found Frank’s row, picked him out by “the wondrous roundness of his head, covered by a peculiar black, sleek mat,” and unabashedly asked three people to move, so that she could sit next to him. “Hungry?” she whispered and slid a chocolate bar out from her pocket. He accepted quickly, knowing she would ask in a louder voice if he refused. Professor Destygian put the mouse back into the cage and signalled for the projector to be turned on again. “I have a few slides of the structure of the cage,” he said, his voice coming out from the bash of light, “which you should see before we proceed any further, so that you will know exactly what is going on. Our primary concern was, to begin with, to find out whether it was possible at all to do research on suicide. Laboratory, experimental research. Once we clarified the problem in terms of whether an animal can discriminate between a safe room and a lethal room, can tell us by signs or behavior that he does discriminate, that he knows that a certain chamber will cause his death, we can then simply say that, yes, even a mouse can anticipate death, can recognize a dangerous situation, wholly new to itself, not in the nature of things, so to speak, as, say, when a mouse can recognize a cat as dangerous because we say he is programmed by nature to do so. Mice are not programmed by nature to recognize chambers with painted stripes on them, so that when a mouse signals that he knows that such a chamber is lethal, we must accept the fact that he has recognized death in a new arrangement, that he has learned that he can die in a way he has not yet anticipated. This is what Schaefer attempted, by allowing an observer mouse behind a plexiglass to observe the destiny of an experimental mouse who, when it entered Chamber B, which was painted with stripes and which had a grid floor for electrocuting it, the observer mouse learned that Chamber B was lethal. If we could then observe our observer mouse, when given the free choice between Chamber A and Chamber B, chooses Chamber B after avoiding it on other occasions, we are forced to conclude that the act was deliberate and that it showed intent. This mouse which you see here on my hand has observed the tragedy of a dozen experimental mice in Chamber B. He knows that Chamber B is lethal, and we know that he knows. How do we know he knows? Simply by putting cheese in there. Our observer mouse does not enter Chamber B to get at the cheese. He has learned that Chamber B is lethal. But make him choose. Make him hungry, or make Chamber A less comfortable for it, with small electric shocks, not lethal, but stressful, and increasingly more stressful. Narrow the margin of safety and comfort. Design a scale of stress, increase the stress according to it and observe the observer mouse begin to deliberate. There is a stress point at which our mouse will enter Chamber B, and we can measure that stress point.”

Kate put her hand across Frank’s eyes. “Perish the thought,” she whispered. “Kate, don’t do this,” he whispered back with alarm. “Why not?” she whispered. “It’s my life,” he said. “That’s irrelevant,” she whispered, “even if it were someone else’s, I would do the same thing.”

“Kate, get your hands off my eyes,” he whispered as forcefully as a whisper could manage. He was, of course, determined not to attract attention. That was, of course, her aim.

“She wants you to think she’s mad.” Professor Destygian said the first time Frank was introduced to her. “That’s her cover.”

His wife paused in serving out the quiche and said in a balanced tone that came with practice, affably and firmly, “No, darling, Kate really is mad. It’s you who wants us to think that Kate isn’t mad.”

“Don’t take any notice, Frank” Kate said, passing him a piece of quiche, “we’ve had this quarrel many times. We vote democratically here whether I’m mad or not. You’ll have to vote, too, Frank. In fact, I need your vote. It’s Dad and Ben against Man and me. Your vote will break the tie.”

“Kate’s not entitled to vote on an issue concerning herself,” her brother said. “It’s two against Kate. I’m certain she’s not mad. Dad, after all, knows his medicine.”

“Kate should be the authority on her own madness,” Mrs. Destygian said.

“Nonsense!” Professor Destygian flung his napkin down on his plate. “To ask Kate! Since she’s dissimulating, how can we trust...
what she says."

"I never lie," Kate said. "I am mad, but I am not a liar."

"Frankly, it's not much of a choice," her brother said.

"There you are," Mrs. Destygian said. She paused again, with the server in her hand and an expression suggesting something rude in the family politics. "I don't understand why you would prefer to call your daughter a liar."

"That's because mad people don't have status anymore," Kate said, "but liars do."

Frank wondered how many assistants Professor Destygian had brought home to dinner to meet his daughter. "Lots," Kate told him later. "Dad has one triumphant idea about me. I'm dissimulating and will tire of my game sooner or later, and Mom is well meaning but floppy."

"It was a shock to us," Mrs. Destygian said. "Catherine always performed so well, we didn't have a clue in the world to think that anything was wrong."

"Nothing is wrong," Professor Destygian said, "except that Kate wants to punish me by making me think she is mad. It's a symbolic disguise."

"If anything," Mrs. Destygian said, passing out the quiche, "it was Ben we worried about. He couldn't read until he was ten. You remember how worried we were," she said to her husband.

"I was never worried about Ben. I always knew Ben was bright."

"We were lucky to find a college that would take Ben in," Mrs. Destygian said, "though he performs brilliantly now. It's as if Kate and Ben have traded places."

There seemed to be a moral in this, about unpredictability, but it was not the one that disturbed Mrs. Destygian.

"Mom means I'm a disappointment," Kate said. "Her definition of my madness is that I left college in my third year. But it is true that I was just like everybody else until I got to be twenty, or at least everybody thought I was like everybody else. Even I thought so. But I assure you," she told him later, "I am certifiably and honorably mad. I keep a diary of my madness and review it every week with my shrink. Everything goes into it. Dreams, rage, masturbation, everything but my genes." Standing on the edge of Miller's Pond, she watched him from under the curve of her tam, then skated away with an expression that made him admire Professor Destygian's unflappability. ("Oh, you will discover, all right, that living with Kate is quite a discipline.") Frank, of course, did not skate and stood on the edge of the pond, miserably cold, resenting Kate's indifference to the temperature.

She came back and said to him, her breath curling between them, "Don't say I didn't warn you. There will be no happiness with me."

It was a sobering comment but one which he was prepared to meet. "I never expected life to be a bowl of cherries." ("For God's sake," his future father-in-law had said, "don't contradict Kate. The strategy to use with her is mental jujitsu. Absorb her opposition. She only says things to get you to oppose her. Don't do it. I never contradict anything she says.") Of course, he did on the issue of whether she was mad, but Frank did not feel it would be tactful to point this out.

Kate stood up in the lecture hall and said in a quivering but stentorian voice, "Professor Destygian, I object to this experiment on grounds of morality, ethics, religion, science, and absurdity. Free the mouse. If you wish to study the death instinct, watch me." She gathered up her book, her candy bar, her coat, her hat, her mittens, her scarf, and excused herself as she made her way out of the aisle.

Frank waivered, without a clue about whether to stay or to follow her. If she were really in pain, he told himself later, of course he would have gone after her (he could always get the notes from someone later or from Professor Destygian himself). If he went after her, it might look as if he were taking a stand against his future father-in-law. If he could only go after her—as he longed to do because he couldn't bear to have anything come between them ("I can accept your judgment about me, Kate—I'll learn to live with it as long as I don't have to live without you") and not have anyone think he
was taking her side. If he could make a speech to the world that he went after Kate not because he believed her but because he wanted her even though he didn't believe anything she said.

She stood at the door, waiting, waiting for him. Her cheeks swelled and wobbled, a sure sign that she would stick her tongue out at him. But she didn't. She did nothing else. She waited, then stuck her tam on her head and left.

The door clicked open and closed. The lecture ended twelve minutes later. Professor Destygian removed the mouse from the cage and laid its lifeless body on the desk. Frank left as soon as the lecture was over. He fled down the corridor and the steps outside the building, hoping that Kate would be waiting for him at one of their meeting places, the library steps, the coffee bar. icy rain began to fall, precisely the precipitation he hated the most and for which he was unprepared. No boots or hat. "Damn you, Kate," he muttered and hurried across the quadrangle to the library. Outside, on the top step, he picked up her mitten. Unmistakably hers. "O.K., Kate, I know you're in here," he said and dashed through the library, up and down four flights, in and out of the reading room, the periodical room, the stacks. "Damn you, Kate, I have your mitten. I know you came in here." He stuffed the mitten in his pocket and left the library.

He had no doubt she was watching him from behind every tree as he crossed the quadrangle again to the cafeteria. The paths were slippery, and he clenched his teeth. Icicles hung from the great fir trees lining the paths, and their trunks gleamed with ice. "Damn you, Kate," he said again. Inside the turnstile door her scarf hung on the brass rail, but no one in the cafeteria had seen her. If she had entered, she would have been noticed. Everyone knew who she was. He stuffed the scarf in his pocket and left. Outside, he yelled, "Damn you, Kate, stop playing games. Grow up." Students hurried by, collars up against the icy rain. They giggled. He ignored them. He was too miserably cold to care about his pride. "Kate," he shouted, waving her scarf, "it is time to end this child's play. I know you don't want us to go on like this forever." ("I don't want to be a lonely voice crying in the wilderness," she had written him. "I want to be your wife and have children and leave this terrible no-man's land I am living in.") "Kate," he called, "answer me.

It was getting dark. The sky was black and purple, the color of winter storm. The icy rain fell down inside his collar. His feet were very wet and very cold. Lights were going out in the buildings around him.

"O.K., Kate," he said, "I know where you've gone. I know your tricks." He hurried back across the quadrangle to the lab building and took the elevator down to Basement level D, corridor 2. The chamber was dark, except for the light coming from the mezzanine floor where the monitoring board was and from a red bulb at the end of the chamber which signalled an exit. The observation bench near the tank of water was half in light and half in shadow where a sound hung in the shrouded air. His shoes left pools of slippery water on the cement floor. He felt alongside the wall for the light switch, cursing the research assistant who should have been at the monitoring board. The switch found, the chamber was lit up, and he spotted her tam at the end of the bench. "Kate!" he screamed and snatched at the hat. A note was underneath it: "You don't have much time, Frank." A mouse blinked its eyes at him from the pool of water. Round and round it went on its raft, under its electrical bonnet, blinking its eyes at Frank, and closing its eyes, and fighting them open again. A sliver of light clung fiercely to the rims of its eyes as they closed and opened, closed and opened with this confusion of knowledge, which once had known sleep as comfort and now knew sleep as death. Then the lids closed and the mouse sank beneath the water.

"Kate!" Frank shouted. The monitoring alarm went off. A sleepy assistant shouted out, "Who's there?" as he came down the corridor.

"The least you can do is to stay awake on the job," Frank said and shoved Kate's hat at him as an indictment. "Have you seen her?"

"No, sir," the assistant said, feeling he had been rebuked unfairly, "no one's been here."

"The hat fell from the sky?"

"You just took it from your pocket," the assistant said with vindictive logic and...
climbed the steel stairs to the monitoring board, where he shut off the alarm. "Do you want a readout?"
"I want to know why you're not doing your job," Frank said and left. He took the elevator back up and called Kate's house. Only Ben was home. "Don't worry," Ben said. "This is Kate at her best. Be smart, Frank. It's a cold night. You'd be a fool to chase her all over town."

"Precisely my thoughts," Frank said to himself. Enough is enough. Perhaps he ought to accept the inevitable, that life with her was impossible. There was a pool of icy water in the Plone booth where flakes had dropped from his hair, his coat, his pants, his shoes. Enough was enough. He hung the phone back and caught a bus to his small apartment. He took off his icy clothes, took a hot shower, and wrapped himself in his old flannel bathrobe. "There you go," he said to himself, re-assembling self and creaturely comfort.

In the morning, the weather was still detestable, as he described it. He dressed and caught the campus bus for his office. There on the desk was a note in Kate's handwriting. He snatched at it with relief. "Good ol' Kate," he thought, even happy to have her malice. "Do not accept Dad's explanation," it said. He stuffed the note in his pocket.

The rest of the day passed without another note from her. Not a word anywhere. Not a quirky sign or a mean rebuttal. By midafternoon, Frank did not know whether to feel relieved or apprehensive again. Professor Destygian came and went to his lectures and his office without a sign of worry. Frank disguised his. He said to himself, "It would be just like Kate to come up with this new strategy of silence." ("In addition to never opposing Kate," Professor Destygian once said, "and learning how to keep you balance, you have to learn how to ignore her and go on with your work.") At the end of the day, he called her home as a matter of noblesse oblige. "Let me speak to your father," he said when Ben answered.

"He's gone to bed. He's got a bad cold and laryngitis. He said to tell you to go to sleep. If you're determined to marry Kate, you'll need all the strength you've got. Don't say we didn't warn you."

"Right," Frank laughed, chastened. He took off his bathrobe and got into bed. ("In addition to never opposing Kate," Professor Destygian said, "don't let her suck you into her world. That's the main point.")

Frank wrestled with the problem all night. Worry about Kate and determination not to get sucked into worry—when she was probably laughing at him right now—probably standing outside, beneath his window in the street, laughing at him—struggled within him all night. Twice he was tempted to get out of bed and look down into the street. Once, he actually did. The street was empty, but a suspicious shadow waved from behind a tree. Not clear if it was a branch in the wind or Kate, Frank mumbled, "Damn you," to whomever, "even if it's you, I'm not going down, and crawled back into his warm bed, bathrobe, slippers, and all.

Still, peace did not come. Kate, or her.
shadow, was omnipresent, and he fought the temptation to call her home again or to dress and go down to the street to check the shadow. "If her father wasn’t worried, why should I be?"

Thus, he slept or imagined he slept or slept and imagined he was awake, watching, and listening. A question hung over him, between sleep and awakening: But what was life without her? A bell rang. He sat up, shocked to discover that he had been sleeping. There was gray, icy dawn in the window. Something freezing was falling. Depressing signals from nature. It was not night. It was not day. The phone was ringing. It was Professor Destygian.

Frank dressed and called for a taxi. The apprehension rose from the hole where he had stuffed it. The windshield wipers on the taxi clicked and clicked, but the freezing rain fell too fast. Twice in the short drive to Miller’s Pond, the driver had to get out and scrape the window clean. They finally arrived. A small crowd of youngsters on the edge, three telling their story to the town newspaper, police cars, Ben, and Professor Destygian waiting for him.

A police officer approached Frank solicitously, deferential before the facts of life and death he was called upon to set down in his notebook. Mrs. Destygian had not come. Otherwise, the scene was as it should be. A group of youngsters walked out on the ice as far as they dared, excited and properly awed by their discovery, gesticulating and pointing to the cold black hole for the benefit of the newcomers who had not had the privilege of the discovery, the chance to interpret the signs: a book in the middle of the frozen pond, a coat and shoes, a crack in the ice.

"Dreadful accident," Professor Destygian said in the fractured whisper of laryngitis. His eyes were red and rheumy in the shadow of his winter beret. Ben hovered close to him, grimly honest in the understanding that death does not change the facts of life. He took charge of the police reporters and the newsmen, an arrangement which they professed to understand, considering the circumstances.

Little by little, the crowd went away. Professor Destygian told Frank he was welcome to come back to his house and spend the night there, but Frank declined. "You mustn’t blame yourself," Professor Destygian said, his voice crackling. Frank thanked him for the comfort. "You ought to go home," Professor Destygian whispered. Ben said he should get in their car, and they would drive him home, but Frank assured them that he would be all right and urged them to go. Long after they left, long after everyone had gone, his body stiffened with vigilance at the edge of the pond. When he was conscious of how cold he was, he turned and walked back the two miles to the campus, moving his feet as best he could in their caked mud and ice.

It was late afternoon. The road was very frozen and only a single car passed him on the way. Luckily, there was no wind to stir the cold. The sub-zero temperature seemed purifying rather than menacing, and it was only after he slipped twice, once so violently that he wrenched his back in the effort to keep from falling, that he realized how cold the air was and how dangerously slippery the road was.

The sun was gone by the time he got to the campus, and almost all the buildings were dark, except for the library, a light here and there in an office, and in the basement of the science building. The few students who went by were huddled down into their coats and walked quickly. He crossed the quadrangle to the science building, the cafeteria, the library, still with the habit of expecting to see or hear a sign of her, her muffled malice, her measuring eyes. The one thing he was still sure Kate would not do is not have the last word, but the great fir trees lining the walks of the quadrangle were wrapped in ice and were utterly motionless and utterly still.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Alan Herscovici
Second Nature: The Animal-Rights Controversy
Montreal: CBC Enterprises, 1985
209p, preface, notes, bibliography, index
$12.95 paper