

# Longing of the Broken-Hearted

*by* Jerry Ratch

I remember sitting on the screened-in front porch of my house on Illinois Street that summer that we met. I had just come up from school at downstate Illinois. I remember eating a peach and listening to the sounds in my neighborhood, just listening. The roof of my mind had been torn off the previous year by Lynda, that girl from Lombard. I remember seeing her one time that summer driving past in a red Corvette going the other way, with her foot on the throttle, going fast. Turned out to be her husband's car. She had twins, one for each breast, she laughed. "Boy, it sure hurts when they cry, wanting to be fed, you know?" Her mouth always opened, trying for that old innocence that she never really had.

All the sounds were new to me, as I sat there on my porch, as if I had been dead previously and was simply reborn. I began writing things down after Lynda had exposed me to, well, everything there was in the world. I heard all sounds differently than I did before her. So she was like a catalyst, to life, I guess. She had put an end to one life. But that was when another began, like a seed springing back to life after a great fire.

The sounds of birds, occasional car tires along the street, the ever-present power mower cutting the suburban lawns under the tall elms (no longer there, because of the Dutch Elm disease, in the now naked suburbs.) Each sound new to me.

Then that summer there was you, in Louie Weaser's car. And we looked in each others' eyes and we both knew what the other was thinking. And yes, I would write for hours in my bedroom and yes, you would sit and watch me writing and it was the longing of the broken-hearted that put us there.

