

# Pandora's Box

*by* John Wentworth Chapin

I.

It's blistering hot on the balcony, and everyone's trashed, including you. They'll be hooking up, puking, passing out, fighting, talking about old cartoons, crying, the whole human drama. The only way you can sort everyone out is Monday morning: the pretenders ride the train to work and the fuckups are sleeping in.

II.

Mrs. Horne is in her chair near the window, a blanket on her lap, bright sun streaming across her shins and feet. She was parked here about an hour ago, bathed in warmth and looking at the bleak institutional lawn beyond. For the last twenty minutes, she's been getting colder as the shadows lengthen, but the staff is busy with the folks who really need them.

III.

*Our children: a dream. Tall, my hair, your skin — beautiful. If you were mine for more than just tonight, I'd imagine more, but I'm going to stop there, before the darkness sets in.*

IV.

I want to put the lilies down in front of their gravestone; the florist put a green easel on the back so they'd stand up. But something in me can't stand to bend over like that in front of the grave — I was going to throw up or scream and that would piss my sister off. I kick the leaves away but end up leaving the flowers on the stone. My sister stubs out her cigarette at a safe distance.

