

Stuart Dybek  
**SUNDAY AT THE ZOO**

We decided to stop drinking and spend Sunday at the zoo. It was going nicely until she worked herself up over the observation that it was a horrible thing to cage the animals.

*"That's not very profound,"* I said, "everybody who goes to the zoo feels that sometime."

*"Oh, you cruel bastard,"* she screamed, "I'm not *everybody!*"

She bellied over the guardrail and flung herself against the bars of the wolves' cage.

Three wolves had been circling and as soon as she touched the bars they froze, fur bristling along their spines.

She had her arms stuck in between the bars up to her shoulders and as much of her face as she could wedge in yelling, "Eat me! Eat me!" to the wolves.

Just that week the newspapers had carried an account of how a small girl had an arm gnawed off – she'd reach in to pet them and one wolf held it while the other ate. It was, in fact, what had led us, along with the crowd, relentlessly to the wolves' cage.

But the wolves held their ground, snarling, stiff-legged.

An attendant came running down the aisle between the fence and cages and grabbed her by the hair and throat, wrestling her back. She locked her arms around the bars and he kept slapping her face with a thick, purplish slab of meat he must have been feeding to one of the animals.

"I'll give you, 'Eat me, Eat me,'" he grinned, kicking her down.

At that instant all three wolves rushed against the bars so that they shook, and you could hear their teeth breaking on the metal. Their bloodied snouts jabbed through, snapping at air.

"Stop abusing that woman," I shouted from the crowd.

Gordon Jackson

**BILLY'S GIRL**

First Billy was on the raft and then he was not. Sun shone on the blue water. Carmine looked for him in the bathhouse, at the popcorn stand where he liked to waste time with Camille, then down by the lifeguard station. But nobody had seen him. If I catch that kid, Carmine said to me in the bathhouse, but I hadn't seen him either, what could I see from behind the counter there except a little stretch of open water, the sun bright on the big lake, pines in the distance. Occasionally someone would stroll by but I hadn't seen Billy at all, he could still be out there hiding among the big float tanks underneath the boards, his break over, turn up later rake in hand, why, Mr. D'Angelo, I've been clearing up this area like you told me to. It would be just like him.

But after a while they called the sheriff and two guys came into the bathhouse behind me and went into the storeroom where they keep the drag lines, these hooks as big as your head. By then it was late afternoon. The sheriff's guys were out there in their little boat putt-putting around the raft, lines hanging over the stern, when Billy's girlfriend came down that evening for a swim. When it was completely dark they switched on lights and kept at it.

He's only kidding, the way he always does, Billy's girlfriend said to me. She was perched on the edge of my counter swinging her legs, looking real good and knowing it. By then the place was pretty well cleared out. We went behind the rows of wire baskets and started to make out. There was nobody around, it was dark, and we sort of sank down on a pile of wet towels. Right away she stuck her tongue in my mouth. The towels gave off a sour odor. Her suit was still damp around the edges, I noticed. Out on the lake the motor died down again. Every so often they'd had to ease off, something tangled in the lines, seaweed or an old log. But this time it was Billy all right, like a big musky with all the fight gone out of him, hooked right through the eye the deputy said.