

The Vagabond's House (excerpt)
By Don Blanding

When I have a house . . . as I sometimes may . . .
 I'll suit my fancy in every way.
I'll fill it with things that have caught my eye
 In drifting from Iceland to Molokai.
It won't be correct or in period style,
But . . . oh, I've thought for a long, long while
 Of all the corners and all the nooks,
 Of all the bookshelves and all the books,
 The great big table, the deep soft chairs,
And the Chinese rug at the foot of the stairs
 (It's an old, old rug from far Chow Wan
 That a Chinese princess once walked on).

 I'll want a woodbox, scarred and rough
 For leaves and bark and odorous stuff,
 Like resinous knots and cones and gums,
 To toss on the flames when winter comes.

 There'll be driftwood powder to burn on logs
 And a shaggy rug for a couple of dogs,
 Boreas, winner of prize and cup,
 And Mickey, a lovable gutter-pup.
Thoroughbreds, both of them, right from the start,
 One by breeding, the other by heart.
 There are times when only a dog will do
For a friend . . . when you're beaten, sick and blue
 And the world's all wrong, for he won't care
 If you break and cry, or gouch and swear,
 For he'll let you know as he licks your hands
 That he's downright sorry . . . and understands.

 A long low shelf of teak will hold
 My best-loved books in leather and gold,
 While magazines lie on a bowlegged stand,
 In a polyglot mixture close at hand.

And there where the shadows fall I've planned
 To have a magnificent concert-grand
 With polished wood and ivory keys,
 For wild discordant rhapsodies,
 And moody things that I'll improvise
 To play the long gray dusk away
 And bid goodbye to another day.

Pictures . . . I think I'll have but three:
 One, in oil, of a windswept sea

The Vagabond's House (excerpt)
By Don Blanding

With the flying scud and the waves whipped white . . .
(I know the chap who can paint it right)
In lapis blue and deep jade green . . .
A great big smashing fine marine
That'll make you feel the spray in your face.
I'll hang it over my fireplace.

The second picture . . . is a freakish thing . . .
Gaudy and bright as a macaw's wing,
An impressionist smear called "Sin",
Its a nude on a striped zebra skin
By a Danish girl I knew in France.
My respectable friends would look askance
At the purple eyes and the scarlet hair,
At the pallid face and the evil stare
Of the sinister, beautiful vampire face.
I used to keep it about the place,
Because I liked it . . . but now I loathe the beastly thing,
And that's the way that I feel about sin.

But the picture I love the best of all
Will hang alone on my study wall
Where the sunset's glow and the moon's cold gleam
Will fall on the face, and make it seem
That the eyes in the picture are meeting mine,
That the lips are curved in the fine sweet line
Of that wistful, tender, provocative smile
That has stirred my heart for a wondrous while.
It's a sketch of the girl who loved too well
To tie me down to that bit of Hell
That a drifter knows when he know's he's held
By the soft, strong chains that passions weld.

It was best for her and for me, I know,
That she measured my love and bade me go _
For we both have our great illusion yet
Unsoiled, unspoiled by vain regret.
I won't deny that it makes me sad
To know that I've missed what I might have had.
But it's a clean sweet memory, quite apart,
And I've been faithful . . . in my heart.

Now the roof of my house must have a rakish dip

The Vagabond's House (excerpt)

By Don Blanding

To shadowy eaves where the rain can drip
In a damp persistent tuneful way;
It's a cheerful sound on a gloomy day.
And I want a shingle loose somewhere
To wail like a banshee in despair
When the wind is high and the storm-clouds race _
And I am snug by my fireplace.

On the gray-stone hearth there'll be a mat
For a scrappy, swaggering yellow cat
With a war-scarred face from a hundred fights
With neighbors' cats on moonlight nights.
A wise old Tom who can hold his own
And make my dogs let him alone.

Then, when my house is all complete
I'll stretch me out on the window seat
With a favorite book,
And I'll look about at my bachelor-nest
While the sun goes zooming down the west,
And the hot gold light will fall on my face
And make me think of some heathen place
That I've failed to see . . . that I've missed some way . . .
A place that I'd planned to find some day,
And I'll feel the lure of it driving me.
Oh damn! I know what the end will be- I'll go.

And my house... will fall away
While the mice by night and the moths by day
Will nibble the covers off all my books,
And the spiders weave in the shadowed nooks.
And my dogs . . . I'll see that they have a home
While I follow the sun, while I drift and roam
To the ends of the earth like a chip on the stream,
Like a straw on the wind, like a vagrant dream;
And the thought will strike with a swift sharp pain
That I probably never will build again
This house that I'll have in some far day _
Well . . . it's just a dream house, anyway.