



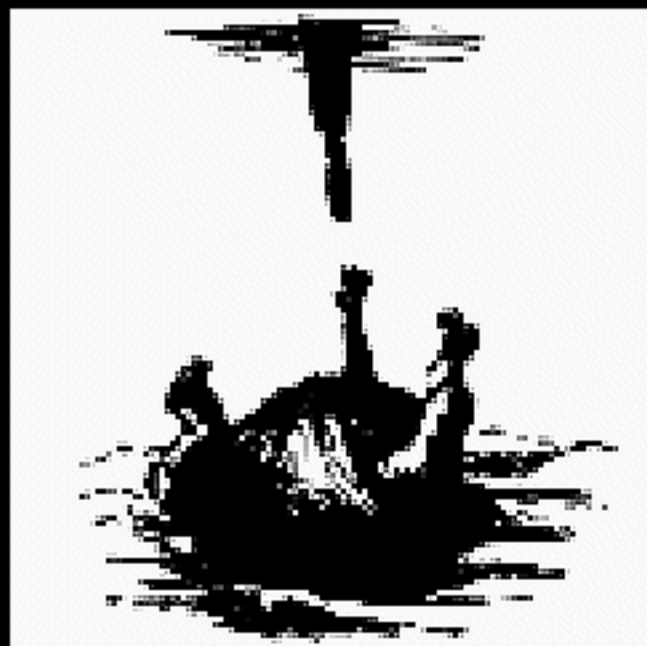
*Once upon a time there was a baby.*



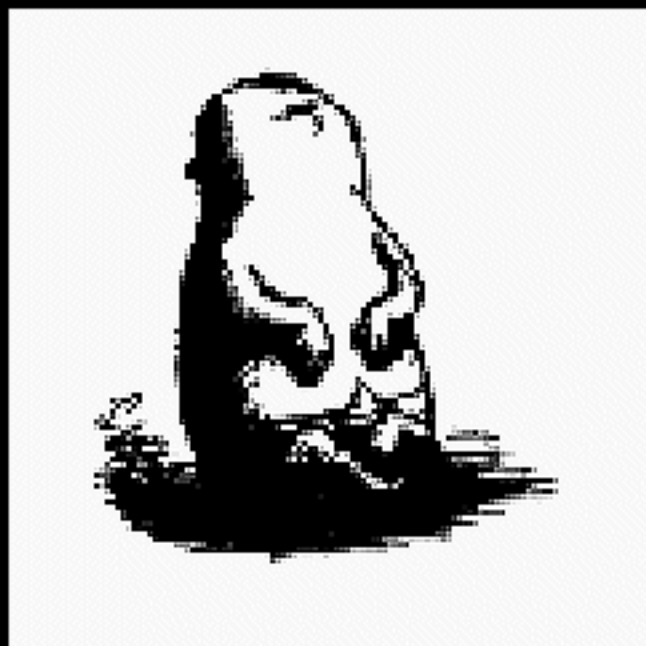
*It was worse than other babies. For one thing, it was larger.*



*Its body was not merely obese, but downright bloated.*



*One of its feet had too many toes, and the other one not enough.*



*its hands were both left ones.*



its nose was beaky, and appeared to be considerably older than the rest of it.



*Its tiny eyes were surrounded by large black rings due to fatigue, for its guilty conscience hardly ever allowed it to sleep.*





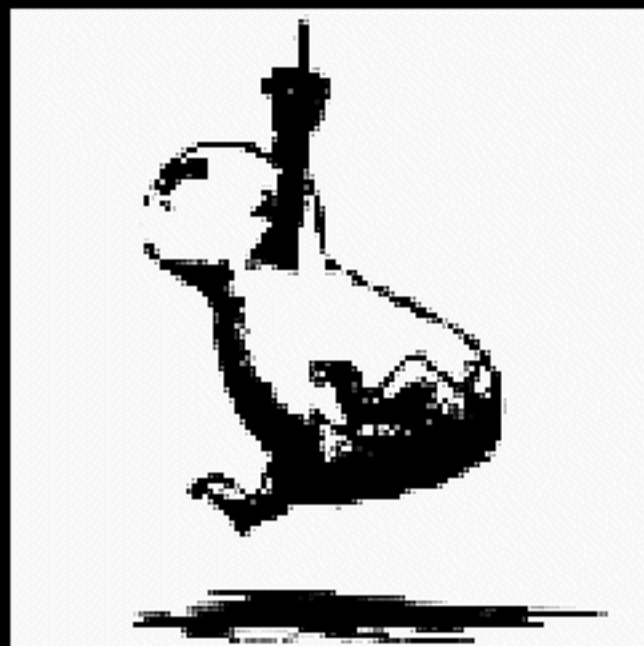
*It was usually damp and sticky for it wept a great deal.  
It was consumed by self-pity, which in this case was perfectly justified.*



it was capable of making only two sorts of noises,  
both of them nasty.



*The first was a choked gurgling reminiscent of faulty drains. It made this noise when it had succeeded in doing something particularly atrocious.*



The second was a thin shriek suggestive of fingernails on blackboards. It made this noise when it has been prevented from doing something particularly atrocious.



*Fortunately, it was unable to walk.*



It has never been given a name since no one cared to talk about it. When it was absolutely necessary to do so, it was referred to as the Beastly Baby.



*Dangerous objects were left about in the hope that it would do itself an injury, preferably fatal.*



*But it never did, and instead,  
hacked up the carpets with knives.*

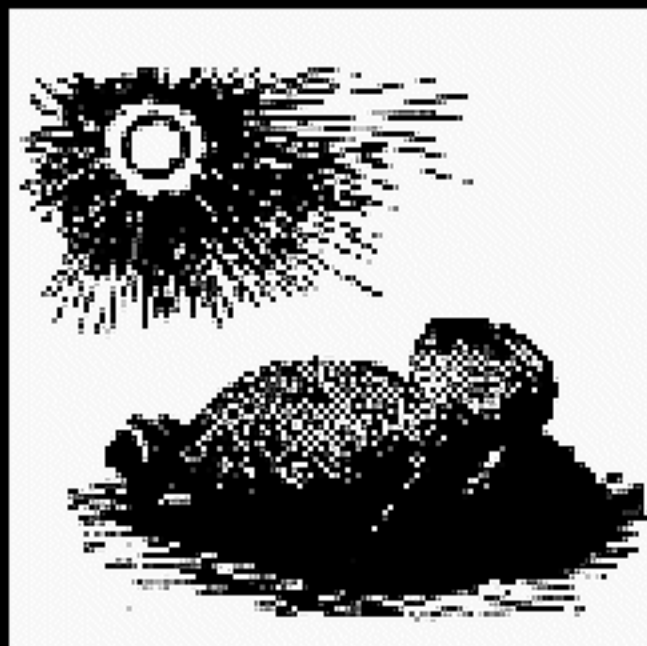




*Or burnt enormous holes in the upholstery with acid.*



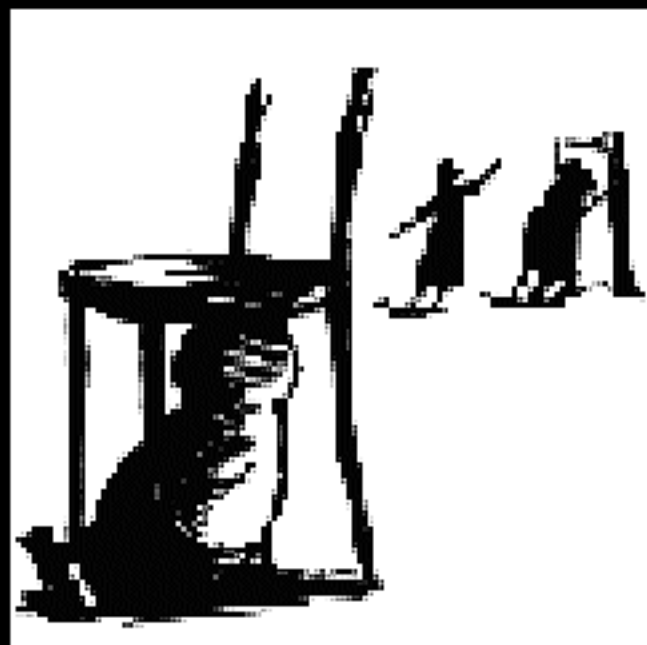
*Or shot bric-a-brac off the tables.*



*A day in the broiling sun had no other effect than to turn it a horrid purple.*



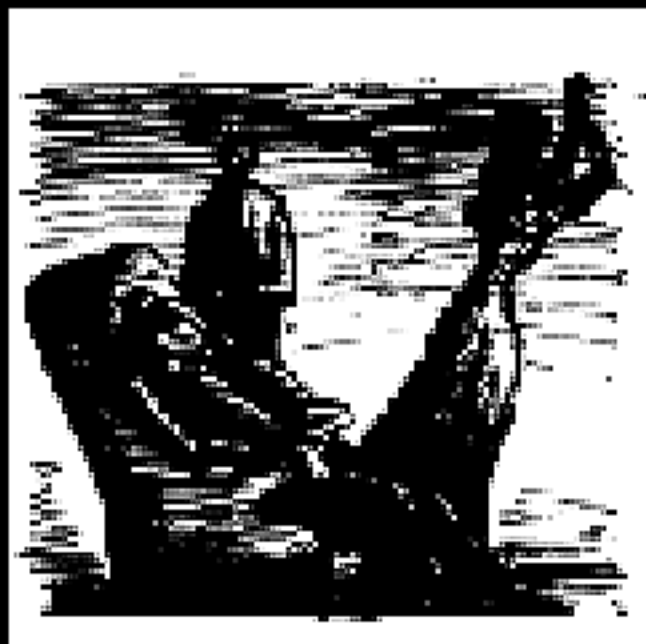
*When it was taken bathing, it always floated back to shore, festooned with slimy green weed.*



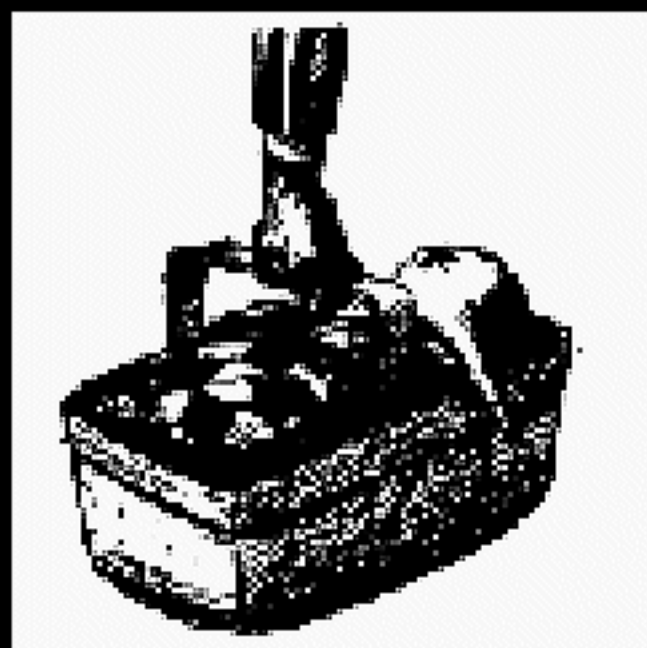
*In public places some officious person was certain to point out that it was in danger of being left behind.*



*Inevitably, a policeman was looking on whenever it was just about to be momentarily set down on a doorstep.*



*In the meantime, it grew larger and older every day,  
and what this would eventually lead to, no-one liked to think.*



*Then one day it was taken on a picnic.*





*It was set on an exposed ledge  
some distance from where the food was.*



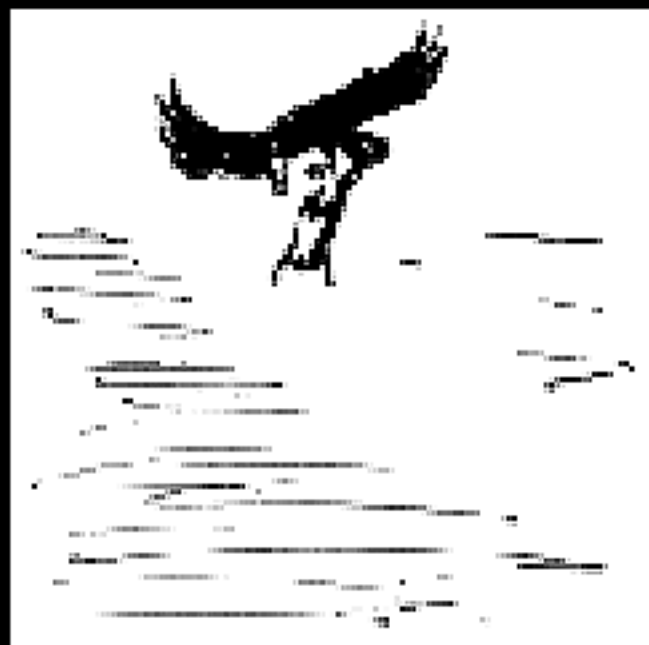
*A few minutes later, a passing eagle noticed it there.*



*The eagle, having never before been presented with this classic opportunity, carried it off.*



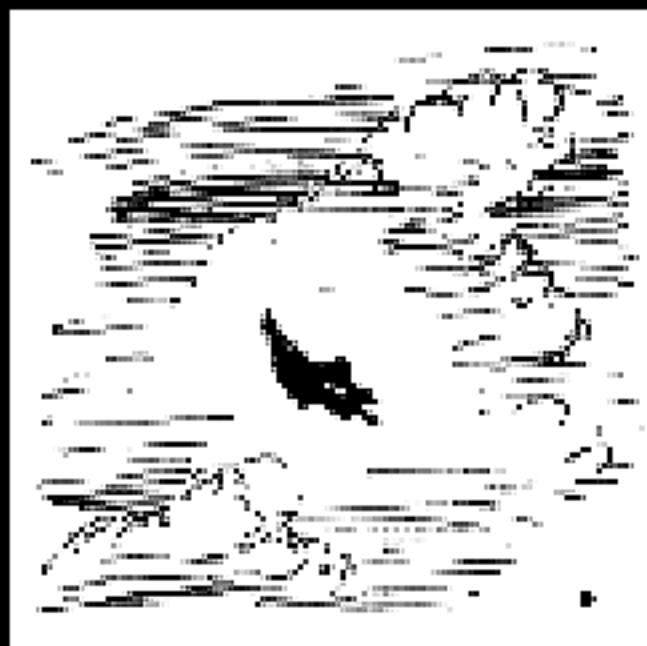
*The eagle found keeping hold of it more difficult than he had expected.*



He attempted to get a further grip on it with his beak.



*There was a wet sort of explosion,  
audible for several miles.*



*And that, thank heavens!  
was the end of the Beastly Baby.*







Edward Gorey  
1925 - 2000

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**06/2000**