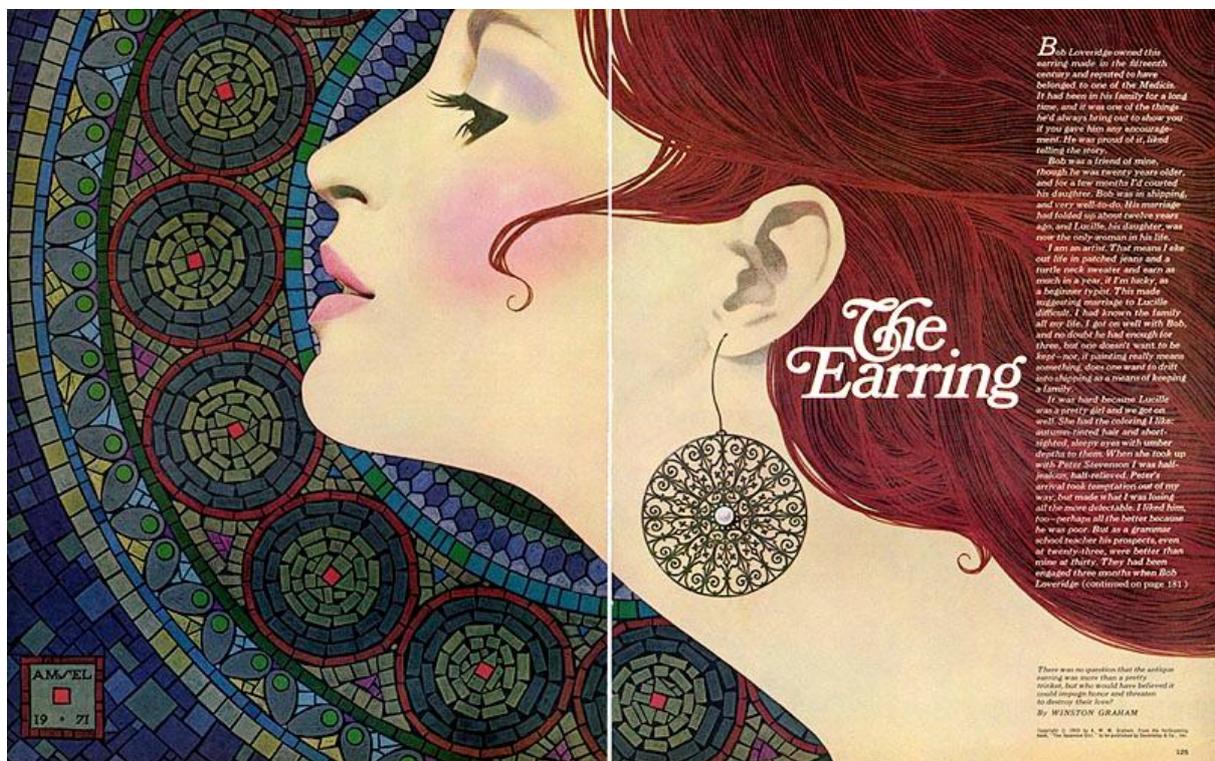


The Earring by Winston Graham

Bob Loveridge owned this earring made in the fifteenth century and reputed to have belonged to one of the Medicis. It had been in his family for a long time, and it was one of the things he'd always bring out if you gave him any encouragement. He was proud of it, liked telling the story.

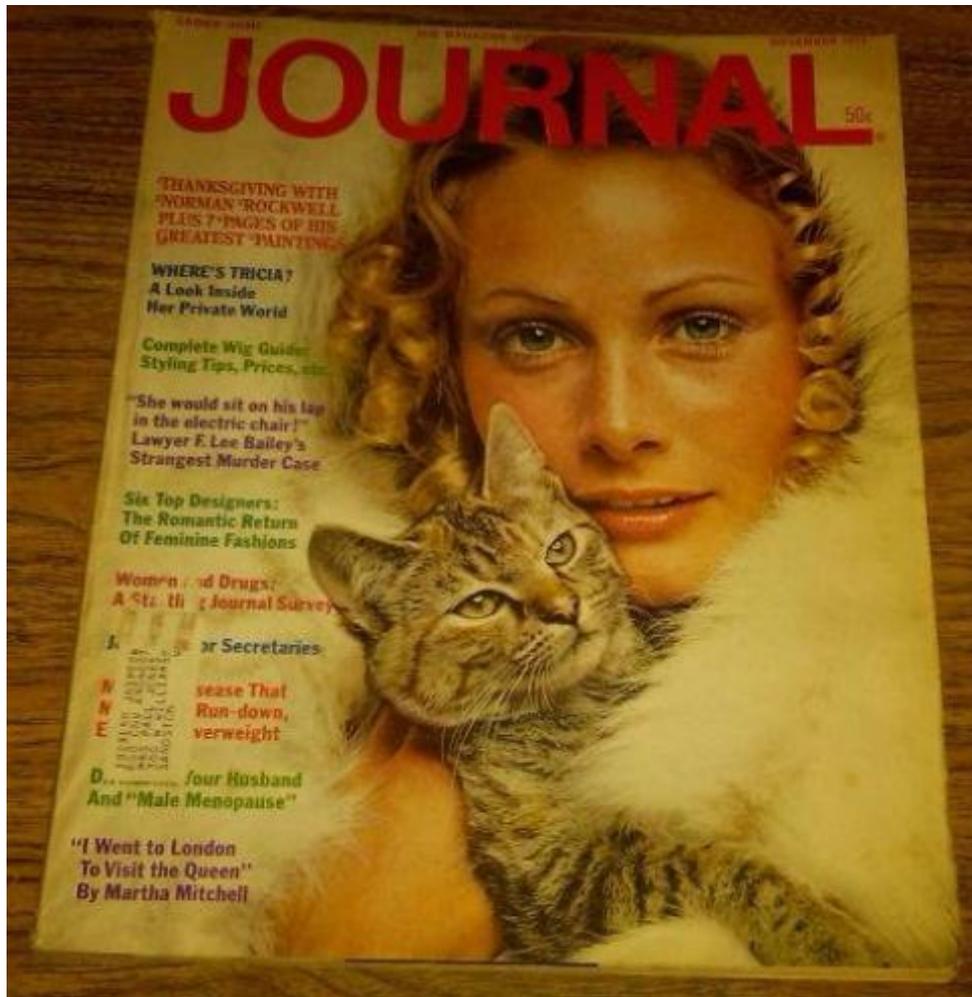
Bob was a friend of mine, though he was twenty years older, and for a few months I'd courted his daughter. Bob was in shipping, and very well-to-do. His marriage had folded up about twelve years ago, and Lucille, his daughter, was now the only woman in his life.



I am an artist. That means I eke out life in patched jeans and turtle neck sweater and earn as much in a year, if I'm lucky, as a beginner typist. This made suggesting marriage to Lucille difficult. I had known the family all my life. I got on well with Bob, and no doubt he had enough for three, but one doesn't *want* to be kept – nor, if painting really means something, does one want to drift into shipping as a means of keeping a family.

It was hard because Lucille was a pretty girl and we got on well. She had the colouring I like: auburn tinted hair and short-sighted, sleepy eyes with umber depths to them. When she took up with Peter Stevenson, I was half-jealous, half-relieved. Peter's arrival took temptation out of my way, but made what I was losing all the more delectable. I liked him too – perhaps all the better

because he was poor. But as a grammar school teacher, his prospects, even at twenty-three, were better than mine at thirty. They had been engaged three months when Bob Loveridge ...



First sentence revised in response to omission of “Medici” from story title. Prose after that appears to be a précised version of the 1971 *Japanese Girl* text.