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Shall We Get Him, Pappy?
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Not Sporting—But Fast

EDITORIAL

MARJORIE KARLIN

GEORGE I. DIXON

A. E. PEDERSEN, JR.

FLORA SAGEN

DONALD BUTLER

HELEN BRUTSCH

AGNES REGAN

ROBERT DELANEY

JANIS HENDRICKSON

VIC REINEMER

ROBERT CONN

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Winter, 1946

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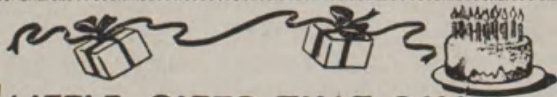
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mountaineer

WINTER 1946

VOLUME 4

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Shall We Get Him, Pappy?

EDITORIAL

IN THE Kentucky mountains, according to comic tradition, when a stranger comes in sight down the side of the branch one native yawns and remarks to his reclining parent, "Thar's one a them thar furriners. Let's git 'em, pappy," and leveling their feuding irons they pick him off like a squirrel on a fence rail.

In Montana the technique is more refined and the reasons more complex, but one line of thought essentially follows the same isolationist tendency. When Paul Meadows, University sociology professor, erstwhile member of the Montana Study, and supporter of the Missouri Valley Authority, came to the attention of the state this year the governor remarked that "too many foreigners with wild ideas" have been connected with the Montana Study and, at a State Board of Education meeting December 18 (reported in the Great Falls Tribune the following day), went on record as, on that ground, hesitating to favor the renewal of the state's appropriation to match the Rockefeller Foundation funds for the study, a neat try at picking an inconveniently lively squirrel off the Montana scene.

Governor Ford's general atti-

tude has been echoed more recently by C. J. Doherty in a Missoula County *Times* editorial February 1. With random slurs and questionable logic Doherty attacks Meadows and beats the drum for the Montana of "the great middle class, smaller industries and wide open spaces," prairies and mountains in which to bury our intellectual heads. Immediately behind both these attacks seems to be the question of Meadow's relationship to the MVA, which he has frequently supported in speeches, newspaper articles, and campus discussions. Baker Brownell, director of the Montana Study, has pointed out that on the subject of the MVA Meadows has spoken not as a member of the Study but as a University professor. Basically, therefore, the Meadows - MVA question involves the century-old question of academic freedom which Socrates defended when he swallowed his hemlock, the question of whether an educator in his profession must follow the dictates of the appropriation dolers, trembling for his salary, of whether a professor must conform to the existing political setup or pack his trunk for another governmental atmosphere.

But even more deeply rooted is

the question, reflected in the Meadows controversy, of Montana's attitude toward itself as a province existing sufficient unto itself in a state of perfection comparable to the beauty of its scenery and of freedom comparable to the sweep of its sage brush wastes. The state has some cultural and natural resources peculiar to itself; however, it can not exist in political or economic independence and it should not try to exist in intellectual isolation.

The closed corporation attitude applied to education becomes ridiculous. It is an obvious fact that only a small minority of the University's present faculty is Montana born or Montana educated, and that if the school were to seek to inbreed to the exclusion of men from other states and other schools it would not only cut off its great sources of knowledge and inspiration, but it would also cease to exist as a major educational institution. Graduate work of the caliber which most of the advanced professors have done is not available in this state. The variety of experiences and backgrounds from which they are able to give the student a broad view of life could not be experienced here.

The hue and cry against "foreigners" in the University rises from those who line up with Doherty in his resentment of even constructive criticism of the state. Many loyal sons will bristle at the least mention that there might be something to improve, although the condition will be obvious to all who open their eyes. Perhaps the reactionary Montanan has the same reasons, conscious or unconscious, for being wary of interested observers that the hillbilly has when he sights over his squirrel

gun at anyone in store clothes. The mountaineer is suspicious either because the stranger may pry about in search of his moonshine still hidden off in the thicket or because he may, in looking at the local living conditions, point out some improvements which will lead to a better life and so force the native to move from his lounging place on the front stoop and exert energy to do something about it. Montana admittedly has a few thickets which, if they were examined carefully, might be found to conceal embarrassing contents. But the average resentment of criticism may be closer to the other reason; if a native is forced to notice unfavorable conditions he must either admit his lack of interest in improvement or commit himself to crusading for reform. It is easier to sit comfortably in the warm sun with half-closed eyes and praise the scenery.

The isolationist tendency is also mirrored in the tradition that Montanans are basically different from other people, that they think differently and seek for different things in life than the people of New York and California. Perhaps this argument is not altogether fallacious if the Montanan in question has his thought focused on the state in a provincial narrowness, looking at only his own immediate locality in the light of his present, not his future. The hillbilly also may think differently from city-folk. He may let the road below his shack become an impassable mudhole without lifting a hand. He cannot get out of his hills, but he doesn't worry; he's not going anyplace.

Some Montana people may also question, as does Doherty, wheth-

er such men as Meadows, with knowledge and experience outside the state, may not interfere with its "slow, steady and healthy" development; a more pertinent question would be whether Montana will develop at all if she continues to look on as outsiders men who have an interest in the state and a broader perspective. Like the hillbilly who takes a pot shot

at all strangers and drives off the new doctor or the agricultural expert with power to make his life fuller, healthier and happier, some elements in Montana attack anyone with a disturbing idea. The cartoon mountaineer saves himself from the effort of stirring to meet a new idea, but he never gets further than the front stoop.

A. R.

In the Name of the Father

By MARJORIE KARLIN

JEAN HAD felt very happy and very proud inside when she and Lorraine strolled through the groups of chattering girls that clustered on the sidewalk outside of school. For the first time in the two weeks she had been here, she was going to someone's house after school. It had been very difficult to break the ice. Everyone seemed to know everyone else so well that all the after-lunch or recess-time conversations were composed of a kind of short-hand of nick-names, past events and special secrets to which an outsider had no key. She had walked home alone every afternoon to the empty house, empty because Daddy was in the hospital and Mother drove in to see him every day. She couldn't tell her Mother about it—Mother came home every night looking pale and sad and Jean could tell she only asked questions because she felt she had to. Jean had wished desperately that she could ask if they would ever move back when Daddy got out of the hospital, only if Daddy were out of the hospital, perhaps it wouldn't matter so much. Daddy laughed at almost everything that other people never thought was funny. Sometimes Jean didn't think it funny either and she

knew Daddy didn't, really, underneath, but he laughed anyway—the kind of laugh you laughed when you hit your funnybone. If you hadn't laughed, you would have cried, instead. It was better that way, though. Things that seemed too big went back into the proper size.

If she could only talk to Daddy now, perhaps she would feel less—well, guilty, she reflected, as she walked slowly down the street with Lorraine. Underneath the elation, she had a feeling that she was deceiving Lorraine. It had all started that morning at recess, when the little group of which Lorraine was queen began to talk of the famous underground church which was near Jean's old home. None of them, not even Lorraine, whose family took her everywhere they went, had been there. "I—I used to go there," Jean offered it timidly. She didn't really belong to the group, she felt. She felt they were merely permitting her to sit there because Miss Johnson, the teacher, had asked them to show Jean around the first day and she'd been too shy to talk to any of the other girls since. Suddenly, Jean was the center of attention. Everyone asked her questions about it until

the end of recess. Jean answered them all, her heart pounding with excitement, her hands clammy. Even Lorraine was hanging on every word. As the bell rang and everyone prepared to return to class, Lorraine seized her by the arm and whispered "Doing anything this afternoon?"

"Oh, no." Jean said it breathlessly.

"Want to come over and go roller-skating, or something?"

"Oh, I'd love to."

"See you after school, then."

Lorraine smiled brilliantly at the dazzled Jean and swept regally back to the classroom, at the head of her little train. Jean stood there, hardly daring to believe it. As she started slowly back, after the others, savoring her glory, it suddenly occurred to her that she must have given the impression of actually belonging to the church, of knowing every stone, that she had given an indication at last of being one of them. For church meant a great deal to them. Lorraine had talked of her younger sister's preparation for her first communion for one whole recess, and of the lovely new priest at St. Ann's for another. All the girls went to St. Ann's.

Jean had never known people who went to church the way people did here. Of course, Lenore, her best friend in the old school, had gone to temple on occasion, and so had some of the other girls. Daddy never made Jean go. He didn't believe in church or temple or anything. He even made Jean go to school on holidays. All the others—Lenore, Sally, Anita—stayed home. They thought it was awful that Jean went. "But, after all, you're just playing hooky," she used to defend herself. "All you do is go to the movies."

"Well, at least, it shows respect," Lenore always remarked virtuously. In her disapproving voice, Jean could hear the tones of Mrs. Reubens, Lenore's mother. Daddy and Mrs. Reubens couldn't bear each other. They had had a great argument once in which she had told him majestically that he was a traitor to his own. Daddy had laughed and laughed, the funnybone laugh, and then he had asked her to mind her own business. But she hadn't—she had gone right on and told Daddy he couldn't escape—the hand of the world was against all Jews. And he had said wearily, as though he had said it many times before, that it was ideas like hers on both sides that made it so.

"This isn't the old country, Sylvia," he had reminded her, "it's America. Not now, maybe, but someday."

"And I suppose," she had gone on angrily, "that it's a good idea to let that Maria of yours take Jean to church all the time? She'll be a nothing, that's what, a nothing!"

"I would be just as intolerant if I refused to allow her to attend any institution she wishes," he had answered. "She's got just as much right there as Christ has. After all, he was a Jew, too."

"Idealists," Mrs. Reuben had snapped. She had said it as though it were a bad name.

And Jean had continued to go to church with Maria, a native of Bavaria, to whom the mere idea of growing up without church on Sunday and sometimes during the week was horrifying. Even though she couldn't understand everything that was going on and wished that she were as competent as the others around her, Jean

loved the sight of the subdued light pouring through the stained-glass windows, gilding the dust motes that hung in the heavy, incense-laden air, and she loved the candles glimmering fitfully on the altar and the grave face of the white-robed Christ, and the chant of the priest and the brooding quiet. She could almost taste the feeling of satisfaction all the way home. She even enjoyed her stiff knees. Also, she had prayed for Mother and Daddy and Maria and Lenore and Sally and Mrs. Reubens. She had saved them all from harm until the next time she went to church—or temple. Maria said God was in church and Mrs. Reuben had said he was in temple. Daddy, of course, said He was in everyone.

It was a pleasant house that Lorraine lived in—white frame, with a big enclosed porch, and lots of plush furniture, and a deep-piled rug in the living-room. Lorraine's mother wasn't in, but she had left milk and cookies in the kitchen. As the two girls ate, Lorraine asked her all about the old school, and about her family. Jean told her all about Daddy's being in the hospital, too. They talked about the movies and their favorite actors and actresses, and then decided not to go roller-skating after all, and did a jig-saw puzzle instead.

"You know," Jean said, "To-

day is the first day I've been glad we moved here. I mean, I thought I'd never get to know anyone. Nobody seemed to want to talk to me or anything. Was—was anything wrong?"

Lorraine hesitated a moment. "No, that is—well, we're all so used to each other—I guess we don't see how we leave other kids out. And then you never really said anything until today. I certainly hope you'll come to church with me this Sunday. You know, it's funny—we thought you were Jewish until you started to talk about church today."

"Well, I am," Jean said quietly. "But I go to church anyway, sometimes."

Lorraine looked as though she were about to burst into tears. "I'm terribly sorry, I mean—you said you went to church and I thought—well, you said you went to church—"

How funny, thought Jean. Mrs. Reubens disapproves because I go to church sometimes instead of to temple and Lorraine seems to, too. It's really very funny—they both have so much in common. Suddenly she began to laugh—the funnybone laugh. It began to spread over the hurt and the confusion, inside. I'll have to tell Daddy, she kept thinking, that I know why he laughs. I'll certainly have to tell him.

The Problem

By GEORGE I. DIXON

IT IS TIME now when we should be fully fed up with the meaningless and inane observation, "The veteran has a problem," or, "The veteran is a problem," or, "Problems face the veteran." It is high time, too, that the veteran cease looking for favors, breaks, and prerogatives. It is time that the veteran stop seeking favor in the eyes of the public. It is high time that the veteran stop feeling that "he has made sacrifices, and should get something in return for them." He hasn't been paid off, it is true, but he hasn't done anything for which to be paid off. He has made an effort to save society; he hasn't done a task for which he should be paid.

The veteran isn't "a problem" or "the problem." The problem is society. The problem is equality, and a consciousness of society.

The veteran is brutally being forced into being "a problem" and "the problem." He can owe this idea of "problem" to society. But he cannot excuse himself from society, for he is as responsible for the attitude of society as anyone else. Especially in seeking gains on his veteran's prerogative is he becoming "his problem" and "the problem."

But again, the issue is being

forced upon him. And therefore, it has become necessary for him to act. On the University campus, there are represented perhaps 500 "problems" individually, and one mass, so-called "veteran problem." The principal issue, of course, is economic. The veteran's dole is, considering prices, unusually small, too small to maintain him and his dependents. That, we may or may not blame on society. Doing something about it, however, we can blame principally on the veteran, and little on society.

"The problem" is having a rough time making his ends meet. That's too bad. A great deal of it is his own fault, and of course, some of it can be blamed on society, but the veteran is also society. "The problem" (the veteran) may be paying too much rent for the hole in the wall in which he and his children have to live. But what has he done about it? He has met, and he has discussed this awful "housing situation," and he has stopped right there! That's great! It's a beginning. However, he has thrown the entire "housing situation" into the lap of the University and he honestly hopes that the University can do something about it.

Perhaps the University will. But that will not be soon. Five hundred men as individual problems represent 500 problems. Five hundred problems can gain a tremendous amount of sympathy. But "You can't pay off with sympathy." Whereas 500 problems united become a very definite thing with a purpose of solution. Five hundred united problems can represent 500 votes. They are also the votes of mothers and fathers, sisters, brothers and wives.. Five hundred problems can be estimated conservatively at 1500 votes. Fifteen hundred votes can mean 1500 letters sent to a Congressman or a president. Fifteen hundred signatures can sign a petition. Fifteen hundred constituents can sway a balance. Fifteen hundred searchers can more easily find houses for 500 persons, than 500 persons can find houses for 500 persons.

It is sickening to realize that men, fighting an organized war against organized fascism, have permitted themselves to become disorganized into "problems" without means and methods of solving these problems. It is sickening to realize that men trained in organized fighting units have permitted themselves to get panicked into submission in seeking equal rights, and *equal rights* is the crux of the veteran "problem," not the favors he can obtain. In seeking equal rights, the veteran can lift himself out of the abyss of being "the problem," and include society as a problem. He is society, and society is his problem. If the veteran can have the courage to lift himself from the "the problem" basis to a social problem basis, he includes approximately a thousand other students on the campus who are, in the vet-

eran-civilian set-up, *not* problems. The united veteran problem, in its transfer to a universal society problem, would gain another thousand signatures to a petition, another thousand searching pairs of eyes, and another thousand voices and minds interested in the same problem, *viz*, society's problem, not the veteran's problem.

Now, we can revert to the principal problem, that of economics. Sixty-five, and ninety dollars are handsome sums. In 1939, they would have been quite sufficient to allay most economic difficulties. The *real* value of the above sums is infinitely less than in 1939, however. And we cannot ameliorate a low economic status by an increase in those sums, for an increase in allowance would in the long run bring about an increase in prices and a subsequent decrease of purchasing money values. In short, costs must be decreased. And costs cannot be decreased without organization. Lack of organization brought about a statement in the local paper, for example,—in effect—"veterans would be *very glad* to pay forty-five to sixty-five dollars a month for rentals." And the paper neglected to say these rentals would bring privations. Also, the article passed un-refuted. The attitude of "the problem" at best was extremely apathetic. He put his tail between his legs, and let it go at that. An organization would have demanded a truer picture by the press. Organization can demand, and receive, truer pictures throughout.

We cannot afford to live with this idea that "we veterans" are faced with "a problem." Veterans are not alone. On the campus where minimum wages paid by the University to "inexperienced" freshmen run thirty to thirty-five

cents an hour, and a maximum of about fifty cents an hour for "experienced" seniors, the economic problem reaches the farthest extent of student society, veteran and non-veteran, and student wives. Amelioration of wage scales is not going to be gained by storming the doors of the University. There is a need for legislation. And legislation lies in the hands of the student society. And the student body (which includes veterans) has become so sorry for itself, and so isolated from fact, truth, and equality that it makes men wonder why they fought. Actually, minimum wages on this campus are *less than half* the minimum wage law set up by the national government for interstate commerce operatives; which brings "inexperienced" freshmen down to the level of sweat-shop workers, and certainly decreases efficiency of op-

eration on the campus. We have witnessed these inefficiencies.

The economic problem is really not that of the veteran alone. Only a very few of the women student workers can be classed in a veteran category. The crux of the problem is that of equality, and at present, equality is represented not so much by lack of finances, but by the purchasing power of finances. The veteran, sympathizing with himself so much, finds the situation acute. By looking around him a bit, he can find the situation even more serious. His apathy, his indifference in doing something about it, doesn't help matters. His refusal to recognize the fact that the problem is universal on the campus is sickening. The veteran has the potentiality of organization, and can be a leader in seeking equality. But, in the vernacular of the army, he has got to have the guts to fight.

Layover

By A. E. PEDERSEN, JR.

THE FIRST thing I saw as I walked out of the garage was the sign over a small, stucco building which told the world that here was the La Paloma Bar and Sporting Goods Store; Sam Barnes, Prop. I walked across the street and went through the open doorway.

The bartender was a tall, rather thin, man with brown hair which he kept neatly combed. He was about fifty, and with a perpetually indignant look on his face, he reminded me of some character actor I've seen in the movies once or twice. The white apron he wore had the name "Sam Barnes" in red across the front.

Barnes stopped washing some beer glasses and came over to where I stood.

He nodded at me and I ordered a bottle of beer. After he brought it over to me, he unwrapped a cigar, looking at it carefully before putting it in his mouth.

"You the fellow that almost ran into Ray Darrah's truck over at the intersection?" he asked through a cloud of blue smoke.

I nodded, wondering what comment he was going to make. Already about sixteen people and some of their cousins had mentioned it to me, and it had been

hardly an hour since I piled my car into a tree to avoid hitting the old Ford truck parked almost in the middle of the road.

"You'd think there should be some kind of law to protect drivers from people like that kid," I replied.

"Do much damage?"

"I've got one hundred dollars to pay out on that car, and it looks like I'm stuck for it myself. That kid hasn't got five dollars to his name, as far as I can see."

He took the cigar out of his mouth and blinked through the haze.

"I see you had Bruce Clark take care of it for you," he said. "Bruce is a pretty good mechanic. Maybe you saw my bus over there. It's a '37 Buick, a coupe with a blue paint job. He's giving it its yearly going-over."

I said yes and remarked that I noticed it was in good shape for an eight-year-old car, which was a lie on my part, as I had barely remembered seeing the Buick. You don't notice other cars much when you're worrying about saving a couple tires. Mine had been gashed quite a bit, and it was a toss-up whether or not they could be repaired.

He was quiet for a minute, and then he changed the subject.

"What did you think of Ray Darrah?"

That was a difficult one to answer. My first impression of Ray had been that he was drunk. He couldn't seem to grasp the fact that my car was piled up in the ditch because his truck had been in the way. I almost had to draw him a picture. I could see now that if he wasn't a mental case, he was darned near the edge. Ray was one of those people with just enough sense to make his way through life, and not enough left over to do any thinking.

Barnes scratched his head. He reached in his shirt pocket and pulled out a pair of thick, bone-rimmed glasses. When he put them on he asked:

"What did Ray say about it?"

"He finally said something about paying for the damage. But he'd have quite a time getting a hundred for that old truck. Then just before the wrecker got there, he said, 'Mister Johnson, don't worry about that car.'"

Barnes shook his head.

"That's not his truck," he said. "It belongs to the family he lives with. They let him use it to run a sort of transfer business, if you could call it a business. No, he wouldn't sell the truck, even though he uses it so much that it's practically his. Ray has never been too responsible for his actions. Parking that Ford in the middle of the road while he went into the store is pretty typical of him. He's well-meaning, if you get what I mean. He tries hard to please, but a lot of his intentions don't pay off. No, he'll probably forget all about it by tomorrow."

Three Mexican boys came in,

stopped at the cigarette counter, and began talking among themselves in Mexican. Sam excused himself and moved up the counter to wait on them. He was still in a confidential mood when he came back.

"I used to know that whole Darrah family," he said. "Old Jim Darrah died about six years back. Jim's wife died about four years before he did, and the family that takes care of Ray had been neighbors for years, so Ray gets along pretty good up there. Everyone used to watch out for Ray. Up till about two years ago he'd get drunk occasionally, and then they'd stay out of his way. When he was drunk he was just as liable as not to pull off some stunt, no matter what, and he almost killed a couple boys in a bar one night. But he hasn't had a drink for almost two years, as I remember. Jim Darrah and I had been in a couple business deals years ago. We bought some oil land for speculation, but it didn't pan out. I didn't have much to do with him the last few years of his life, as he was a pretty secretive guy. Just before he died I ran for public administrator and got elected. I used to work in an insurance office years back, before my eyes went bad on me, so I was almost a cinch for the job, as there wasn't anyone else wanted it. So when he died, leaving no will of any kind, I was appointed to administrate the estate. Supposedly he had been living off oil royalties, but there wasn't anything in his papers that I could see. Ray used to come around asking if I had found his dad's papers. He said his dad had told him that they had papers which meant money in the bank. That must have been a cock-and-bull

story, for there was less than two thousand in the estate, all told. Ray hasn't been around lately, though. I guess he's forgotten about it, like he does most things."

I paid for my beer and said so-long and walked back to the garage to see how they were coming along. The news wasn't any too good. It would take at least three days to put it back in some kind of shape, and by that time the San Francisco deal would be washed up. Our company was planning to reconvert, and there was a big deal on in Frisco, if I could get there in time.

I got kind of a thrill out of thinking about that deal. It would be pretty good to get back to making and selling air conditioning equipment for civilian use.

So that was why I was worried about getting to San Francisco as soon as possible. I found that the next train didn't leave until nine o'clock the next morning, so I packed my bags up to the Brissen Springs Hotel, which was a pretty fair sized place.

There was a knock on my door about ten minutes after I checked in at the desk. When I opened the door, there stood the bell boy, with Ray Darrah standing behind him, a funny look on his big, dumb face. I motioned Ray into the room.

Darrah was a good sized guy. He had long, black, uncombed hair. There was a singleness of purpose about him, and he looked as if he'd never let go of an idea, once he had caught onto it. I knew I hated the thought of ever having him looking for me. Maybe he didn't drink any more, but I remembered what Barnes had said about the two guys Ray had taken on in a bar. All in all, I

was somewhat afraid of the possibilities of Ray.

"Mister Johnson, I wrecked your car."

I nodded, and told him that I already knew that fact well.

He blinked once or twice. "You let me pay for your car, Mister Johnson. My fault that you wreck your car. People tell me that I'm not very smart, but I pay my bills. Nobody don't say that Darrah don't pay his bills."

He paused, wrinkled up his brow as if to think, and gave it up as a bad effort.

"As far as I'm concerned, you can forget it," I told him. "I can afford it, and I know you can't. Besides, I can charge most of it up to the company I work for."

He tried to make some sense of this information. "How much will it come to, that repair bill for your car, Mister Johnson?"

"Don't worry about it, Ray," I said, a little wearily. "You won't have to pay for a thing. Could you run along now? I've got a little cleaning up to do."

For a minute he stood there; then he turned and wandered over to the door. The way he opened it showed that he was making a concession. I think he could have walked through that closed door without much effort.

He walked down the hall to the stairs, and a minute later I saw him turn the corner across the street.

After I had washed, I walked down to the lobby. I bought a pack of cigarettes, and asked the girl behind the counter where there was a good place to eat. The Ventura Cafe, she opined, was a good place. Turn right at the corner for a block-and-a-half.

At the Ventura I found an empty booth and gave my order.

The steak was pretty good, when the waitress finally got around to bringing it. I drank coffee, and ordered cherry pie for dessert. Fair pie, too. Drinking a second cup of coffee, I sat there thinking.

Years ago I used to work on a newspaper. We used to investigate something pretty big occasionally. The guys used to say that I could smell a story before it was about to break, when most of the breaks I got were pure luck.

There was something about this case that fascinated me. I couldn't get Ray Darrah out of my mind. I'd try to think of something else, but then I'd snap back to Ray Darrah. I wondered what he was going to do. Maybe I'm crazy, I thought, but I had a hunch that before the night was over, Brissen Springs would hear from Ray. But what would he do? That was what puzzled me.

I looked out the window. The store lights were beginning to shine in the half-dusk. I watched a couple of early drinkers lope out of one of those marble-fronted cocktail lounges you will find everywhere in the West.

The hotel clerk was in a talkative mood when I got back to the hotel, so I steered the conversation around to Ray Darrah. I wanted to see what others thought about him.

"I wouldn't tangle with Ray if he ever got on my trail," the clerk said. "I saw him, a couple years ago, throw a guy out of Sam Barnes' place. Ray thought this guy was going to steal his truck. The guy had been talking about the truck, probably just ridiculing it, but Ray thought this guy was talking about stealing it.

"Anyway, he threw him clear

through the door and would have killed him, I think, if about six guys hadn't jumped Ray, holding him back. While people help him along in his work, they kind of keep an eye on him. But since he's quit drinking, I don't think we'll have any trouble from him."

That was about all he knew about Ray, so I left and went up to my room to go over my papers. But I couldn't work. Time after time my thoughts would get around to that big dumb ape, and so I finally threw my papers down and went out again.

There was a good-sized crowd on the street. A line had formed at the Rialto theatre, where a Bob Hope picture was playing. Three or four drugstores were busy selling cokes and milk shakes. Sam Barnes' place was doing a pretty good business.

Barnes brought me a bottle of beer. He had three other bartenders working that night. "Local farm convention," he said after I asked him about the mob. "We get pretty good business on week-ends."

I tried to think about what I was going to ask Barnes. After all, I was just guessing, and it would sound pretty silly to him or anyone else. But at the same time I needed his help, so I wasn't going to leave until I said my piece. I decided that maybe I'd better just ask a few questions and then leave.

"How long ago was it that Ray's father died?" I asked.

"January fourteenth, 1939, if you want the exact date," he answered, after thinking a few seconds. "Why?"

"No reason at all. I'm just curious about that kid. He has a way of impressing people."

He nodded and I went on.

"How did Jim Darrah die?"

"Motor accident. He was killed while crossing a street here in town."

That was all I was going to get out of him. I guess my questions sounded funny, and the fact that I was new in town was against me. I couldn't blame him for shutting up.

I wished then that I knew the people in that town. There was a lot I would ask them. Why had Barnes said that Darrah had beaten up two men in a bar, when actually the fight had taken place in Sam's bar? What did Ray Darrah have in mind when he said he would get the money for my repair bill? Did he have any money, or was he just talking? If he had a plan in his head, what was it?

Just for something to do, I went over to the public library. It was still open, with less than half a dozen people in the place.

The librarian was marking a list of books when I walked into the reading room. She was reluctant to search through the basement for back files of the *Brissen Springs Monitor*, but I finally got her to look.

She brought the January and February, 1939, files of the paper, and I thumbed through them until I found the issue for the fifteenth of January. I read the death story of James Darrah:

"James Kirk Darrah died at Trinity hospital at 9:30 o'clock last night from injuries incurred late yesterday afternoon in a hit-and-run accident on East Denton St. Darrah, who died without giving any clue as to the driver's identity, was struck down as he was crossing Denton St. in front of the courthouse.

"Police are investigating brief

and incomplete descriptions given by several witnesses."

I read the rest of the story. There wasn't much information of value, although there was a description of the car given by several evidently hysterical witnesses. One said that she thought the car was dark, and another thought it was gray, and one thought it was blue. They couldn't even agree as to whether or not it had been a sedan or coupe, but most of them thought it was a late car, which would mean a '38 or '39 model.

I thumbed through the stack of papers, and found a few items of interest. One said that the estate of James K. Darrah was being administered by Samuel L. Barnes, public administrator, and asked that all persons having claims against said estate submit them on or before such and such a date.

I gave up and went outside.

Barnes had said something earlier in the evening that puzzled me. If I could just know how to take it, I thought, I might be able to make some sense of the riddle.

I didn't have time to think of much more. Ray Darrah ambled out from between two buildings and almost brushed me off the sidewalk.

"Hello, Mister Johnson, where you going? Can I come along?"

That he was in a friendly mood was all that I cared. I told him to come along.

"You know, Mister Johnson, I sure am glad that you didn't get killed in your car. My dad was killed by a car, Mister Johnson. Did you know that? My dad used to have some paper that he said was as good as money, Mister Johnson. I never did get that paper after my dad died. You know, if I could get that paper I could pay

for your car. I know Mister Sam Barnes. He used to take care of my dad's papers. You know, I think he has those papers. He told me he didn't but I bet he has, and didn't want to give them to me, 'cause he thought I was crazy, and wouldn't know what to do with them. I forgot all about them papers, Mister Johnson, until I wrecked your car. Then I thought I got to get some money, and then I remembered that Mister Barnes has my papers. I'm going up to see Mister Barnes. I bet he'll give me those papers now, when he sees that I have grown up and can take care of myself. Mister Barnes is a good man. My dad read what it said on the papers, Mister Johnson. It said 'Black Heart' and I can remember it, because sometimes I remember lots of things."

We were still quite a way from Sam's place, so I let him run on while I tried to think of some way of side-tracking him before we got into the main part of the town.

"You know, Mister Johnson, they never did find the car that run over my dad? I saw the car that run over him, but I couldn't catch him at all. He went too fast and I couldn't run fast enough.

I hoped to God he wouldn't stop now.

"That car was a Buick, Mister Johnson. Is a Buick a big, blue car with one seat in it, Mister Johnson?"

"Some of them are," I said, and shut up so he could go on with what he was saying.

"The guy who was driving that Buick didn't know my dad," he went on. "I betcha nobody what knew my dad would run over him. You know, Mister Johnson, I bet that man didn't live in this town

because then he would have known my dad and then he wouldn't run over him. Don't you think so, too? Mister Barnes has a Buick just like the Buick that ran over my dad. Mister Barnes didn't do it because he was my dad's friend and he wouldn't run over a friend. But some day I am going to see a Buick that looks like Mister Barnes' Buick, and then I betcha that will be the man who killed my dad. You, know, Mister Johnson, Mister Barnes drove his Buick for one time before my dad was killed. I saw him the same day that my dad was run over, and then Mister Barnes didn't drive his car for a long, long time. I peeked into his garage one day. He kept it locked up for a long time and he wouldn't let anybody see it. Say, let's us go see Mister Barnes right now. I will ask him for that paper and then he will give it to me and I will pay for your car. Mister Barnes is afraid of me, you know. I don't know why. But he is scared of me then he will give me my money right away, because he will think that I will beat up on him if he doesn't give it to me. Maybe I will shake him a little bit to make him give me the money."

We were in front of the hotel by that time.

"Look, Ray," I suggested, "let's go up to my room first. I want to tell you something."

"Sure, Mister Johnson, I'll do anything for you. You're my friend. You didn't put me in jail because I wrecked your car."

We climbed the stairs and I unlocked the door and stepped into the room. Ray followed me obediently.

"I've got some papers in this room just as valuable as the pa-

pers your dad used to have, Ray," I said. "Would you do me a favor and watch them for me for about an hour? I want to do some business in town and I can't take the papers with me. I'll be back before twelve o'clock, and then we can go over to see Sam Barnes together. What do you say, Ray?"

He nodded quickly, although I could see that he wasn't eager to postpone his visit to Sam.

"I'll wait here until you come back, Mister Johnson. Nobody is going to steal your papers. If they do I'll break their neck."

I told the desk clerk to make damned sure nobody tried to go into my room for any reason whatsoever, if they wanted to stay healthy. The mention of Ray Darrah was enough to make them obey.

I had been just as lucky as ever, coming across Darrah just when he was ready to talk. Not in a hundred years could the coincidence have been duplicated. In ten minutes Ray Darrah's uneducated ramblings had unfolded the whole story.

Barnes was sitting in a chair when I walked in through the doorway. He looked tired, and I wondered just how many hours he put in himself in the course of an average day. One bartender was waiting on the customers, while another was stacking chairs in the corner, evidently getting ready to mop the floor whenever Sam got around to closing the place.

"I've got something to tell you, Sam," I said. "Can we go into your office?"

He gave me a wondering look, and got wearily up from his chair. He didn't say anything until we were inside his office.

"What's on your mind?"

I picked a chair that was sitting behind a table. If Sam was going to get rough, I wanted a little protection.

"You got me interested in Ray Darrah this afternoon, Sam. Just for the hell of it I started looking up a few things. I noticed that without your glasses you're almost blind. That didn't make much impression on me until I read a newspaper article over in the library. The man who struck down James Darrah in broad daylight was driving a car that was thought to be a gray or blue coupe. The witnesses were all too rattled to give much of a description of that car. But the man who hit Darrah, on an almost deserted street, must have been unable to see him. Do you follow me?"

Barnes just sat there, a grin on his face. He didn't say a word, but continued puffing his cigar.

"Ray Darrah saw the accident. I guess nobody thought of asking him about it, perhaps because they thought he was too crazy to know anything about it. But he told me tonight that it was a blue Buick coupe. He didn't associate it with your car, because he couldn't conceive that the driver could be a man from town. This is the pertinent part of his story. He saw you drive into town that day in a blue Buick. He wondered why you never drove that car for what he calls a long, long time after the accident. He said that for months you kept it locked up in your garage. About two weeks after the accident, you filed a deed of ownership of a quarter-section in the Black Heart oil field down near Long Beach. Ray told me that his dad read him the title of an oil deed with the name 'Black Heart'

written on it. He remembers that name."

Barnes got up slowly.

"I'll give you just ten seconds to clear out of here. I've already taken more from you than I would from a dozen drunks."

"Ray was on his way down here tonight when I ran into him," I went on, as if I hadn't heard him. "He remembered the deed tonight for the first time in several years, and was going to get it from you. He said he might shake you a little bit if you didn't hand it over. How does that sound?"

Barnes sat down again.

"Ray Darrah is a pretty rugged individual when he gets in gear, Sam. You know that as well as anybody in town. He tore your place apart one day, I understand. I'm pretty well satisfied in my mind that you faked a bill-of-sale or some such instrument on that quarter-section of Jim Darrah's oil property. I'm not sure just how you did it. And on the face of that assumption, I see no reason to believe anything else but that you were the man who killed Jim Darrah. The question is: do I tell Ray Darrah what I know, or do you make out a transfer of that oil deed back to Ray? Whether or not you really killed Darrah is beside the point. I want Ray to have that deed back. You know, Sam, it's more than a coincidence that you and James Darrah both owned the one quarter-section of oil land that wasn't already gobbled up by a big company. There was only one quarter-section of land in that whole field, or so the statement in that paper read. The rest of the field was owned by Lincoln Petroleum, and been in their possession for about six years."

Barnes looked up from the floor

and gave me a funny grin. He didn't say anything.

"Do you want me to call Ray Darrah?" I shot at him.

"You God damn meddler! You know damn well what Ray would do!" He threw his cigar in the corner. "Sure I forged that deed transfer! Did you think I was going to let one of the best investments I ever saw slip out of my hands? If it will keep you from sickning that guy on me, you can have that deed! But for God's sake don't tell him!"

"Have you got it here now?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Get a couple of those bar flies out there to witness the transfer. Get a couple of drunks who won't know what they are witnessing."

Sam Barnes rummaged through a lower drawer in his desk. He spread several papers out on the desk, and while I watched him through the open door, he picked a couple of men out of the crowd and led them into the room.

The deed was transferred in short order.

"Did you run over Jim Darrah?" I asked.

"I may as well tell you," he said. "You can't prove that I did it anyway. Yes, I ran over him. I didn't have my glasses on that day. I was driving that new Buick in from across state where I had bought it the week before. Nobody here associated it with me. I kept it hidden after the accident."

"As far as I am concerned, that's past," I said. "I can't bring it to court now, anyway. I won't tell Ray."

Sam got up and I followed him out into the main room. The other bartender was shooing out the last of the crowd. Sam sent him

home, and while I stood out on the sidewalk, locked up the place.

Then, with a short nod to me, he went up the street. I stood for

a minute watching the few people on the sidewalks. Suddenly I was tired out. That bed at the hotel would be plenty welcome.

Popular Poet

By GEORGE I. DIXON

Poet, you have the Midas touch,
You are well-read, and you are read well.
You have a King's *Commission*,
There's *golden* glory in your lines of God,
Of holy Christian sacrifice.
You write many pages and fill many books.

Poet, you have your pocket lined.
You have fine clothes and you wear them well.
You have social position.
The public bows its head in your wake,
And grovels at your mastery.
Your rhymes are so sweet and verses so sad.

Look Before You Lose It

By FLORA SAGEN

OLD JOSH Widow wandered down the board walk, his white head bent over and his overalls bagging in the rear. "Morning, Josh," someone called.

"Morning," Josh returned, and continued on, with his head bent over and his shoes flapping on the loose boards. In front of the liquor store he stopped, and eased himself onto the shaky wooden bench, with all the care of the preoccupied.

Matson, who ran the store, came out to let down the awnings. "Morning, Josh," he said; and the iron frame of the awning creaked as he yanked at the handle. "Gonna be a stinker today," he said. "Must be ninety already."

"It's hot all right," Josh said.

"Jesus—my Scotch'll be explodin' all over the place," Matson said. He finished with the awning, and flopped onto the bench. The two sat in amiable silence for a moment. "That Christ-awful dam come in and it'll cool things down a'plenty," he said, a little bitterly.

"Yeah," Josh said. "She sure will, all right."

"Heard any more about it?" Matson asked.

"Naw," Josh replied. "I don't guess it's much more but rumors yet."

Matson kicked a beer-cap on the board walk. "It'll sure knock the hell out of this town," he said. Josh leaned his head over, looking at his hands.

Young Jack Withrow stopped in front of them. "Morning," he said. "Damn hot."

"How'rya Jackie?" Josh said.

"O. K.," the kid said.

"You're out now, huh?" Matson asked.

"Yeah . . . damn good, too."

Jackie settled comfortably on the old bench. "Heard any more about the dam?" he asked.

"You heard about it too," Josh said.

"Yeah," Jackie said. "I heard a little. I'd like to know what the devil it's about. Anything official?"

"Been wondering the same ourselves," Matson answered.

"I dunno 's it makes much difference anyways," Josh reflected. "I guess I could pitch me a cabin most anywheres."

"Why Jesus, man," Matson said. "You must be crazy. That fool dam goes through and we'll all be floatin' along on our fannies on top'a chicken coops. Won't be nothin' left here."

"I heard they were surveying around last week," Jackie said.

"Yeah," Matson said. "They

were in the store. Couldn't get much out of 'm, though. Tight-lipped as all hell."

"Well, who's behind it?" Jackie asked.

"Guv'mint, I guess," Matson replied. "The damn horse-laffin' guv'mint."

"I heard it'd knock out Dawson," Jackie said.

"Dawson's only the beginning," Matson snorted. "Way I heard it, they'd start at Pineacres and flood the whole damn valley . . . clear to Lackley or more."

"It'd get the river," Josh said.

"Railroad too," Jackie said. "What they think they'd do with the railroad?"

"Hell, that's no bother," Matson said sardonically. "Lotsa track. Lotsa room for new routes in this country, too."

"It's damn purty country," Josh said.

"Damn purty," Matson said.

"It'd get the Falls," Josh said.

"No more deer-huntin'," Matson mourned. "What the hell," he exploded suddenly. "All the damn deer and elk and caribou a body could ask for, and here they wanta flood the place over. All the damn scenery you could look at in yer cockeyed life, and somebody runs their tail off yap-pin' about tourists and resorts . . . and then it when it looks like somebody might get a little ambition, they wanta flood her over."

"What they wanta do it for?" Jackie asked.

"Hell knows," Matson said despairingly. "Some pore starved senator prob'ly smelled a coupla pesos in it for him. Either they figger they need the electric power, or else the vets need something to work at. That how I heard it."

"Us guys can find other work,"

Jackie said. "I ain't had any trouble. Seems like somebody should have the low-down on it, though."

"Hell, nobody knows nothin'," Matson said scornfully. "They'll set here like a bunch of dried-up bumps, and then wonder what the devil happened when they land on a hill-top somewheres and start rubbin' their empty bellies."

"I dunno's there's much in the town worth saving anyways," Josh said. "I dunno but it needs a good washin' over."

"I didn't ever think it was so bad," Jackie said. "There were lots of times while I was gone, I was damn anxious to see it again."

"It's all gone to seed," Josh said. "Me, and about every other damn fool in town. This old damn fool in town. This old bench we're settin' on has been here since I hit town in '87. The damn walks are the same ones I walked my wife down when I first met her. They ain't cut the weeds in the graveyard since I watched 'm shovel the dirt over her. The mines is played out, and the lumber mills got nothin' but strikes. High school kids are too damn fresh to breathe; and Front Street ain't nothing but a row of cat-houses, fulla louzy dames that've been here since they wired in the red lights . . . and their kids ain't thirteen before they know every trick of the trade. It's a dirty, louzy little no-good bitch of a town."

"You been here a long time Josh," Matson reminded him. "Four years longer than me."

"I been here since '87," Josh replied.

"How come you stayed?" Jackie asked.

"I dunno. I stopped here, and I just never seemed to get no far-

ther. But that don't mean I can't see there's other places on the earth. And better places, too."

"I don't think it's so bad," Jackie said.

"Well hell," Matson said impatiently. "I don't care if she's good or bad . . . I don't want to see her under fifty foot of water."

"Maybe they won't do it," Jackie said.

"How ya gonna know?" Matson said. "If somebody had a damn bit'a brains . . . act like they don't give a hoot. But maybe they don't do it. I hope to God they don't."

"Seems like somebody should know," Jackie said.

"Where ya gonna find out?" Matson demanded.

"What'll they do about the property?" Jackie asked. "There's some that won't want to sell out."

"They'll sell out or get washed out," Matson said. "And it'll serve'm right, if they got no more brains than anybody's showed so far. It'll sure shoot my business to hell."

"Other places you can sell in," Josh said.

"Oh, I know that," Matson said. "It ain't that I'm thinkin' of. It's just thinkin' about the whole damn works, washed out."

"Like a dirty shirt," Josh said.

"I don't see what they wanta do it for," Jackie said.

"Hell knows," Matson said.

"Jeeze . . . I wish we knew," Jackie said.

"Well, there ain't nowhere to find out," Matson shrugged helplessly. "I guess we'll just keep on settin' here till they come along and tell us to git."

"There should be somewhere to find out," Jackie said thoughtfully.

"Nobody got the brains to find out," Matson said dejectedly. "Nobody gives a damn."

Josh gave a start at the implication of the words. "I ain't the only one," he said. "Old Miz Walker come here a year after I did, and brought up all her kids here, and I heard her say just the other day that it ain't plaguin' her any. Said all she's got here is her ol' man's bones—and if they wanta flood her out, why she'll just move the ol' man back to Mis-soura with her."

"Might as well all get out," Jackie said.

"You got a whole world to choose from," Josh said. "I guess one little old town — and one that's louzy clear through any-ways—ain't much of an excuse to get anybody all het up over. Lots of other places to go to."

"Maybe they won't do it," Jackie said.

"I wish to hell I knew," Matson said. He moved his feet out of the way as a couple of customers went into the store. "I guess I better go wait on the trade," he said.

Josh got up slowly, pulling at his overalls. "Well, I ain't worrying any," he said. "The damn town ain't worth two cents, as far as I can see. It needs a good moppin' up."

"It don't need that good a moppin'," Matson said, and moved into the store.

"I hope to hell they don't do it," Jackie said. Josh started moving off slowly down the board walk. "Where you headed?" Jackie asked.

"Oh, I thought I'd mosey down to the store," Josh said. "I guess I'll get me a coupla cans 'a paint. The old shack ain't had a fixin' up in six years."

Granma and the Holy Ghost

By DONALD BUTLER

THE MERCURY had frozen at forty degrees below zero and had stayed that way for the coldest nine January days we could remember. Once in a while we'd bring the thermometer in and thaw it out, but after a couple of minutes outside again down it would drop to forty and freeze.

The blizzard cleared off the night of the fifth day. That morning instead of the wind howling and blowing snow through every conceivable crack in our high old tin-covered hotel house, there were strange, snapping noises and an occasional dull boom. The whole house cracked and squeaked as if its tin skin were hurting it. Every window was a solid coat of frost a quarter of an inch thick. But it was too cold for us to appreciate the lovely designs.

When the eight of us kids, restless with the long days of staying in the house, threw on our heavy clothes and tore outside, we found a world startlingly brilliant with the glare of a frigid sun on diamond-bright snow.

The blizzard had piled up drifts around the handful of houses and changed the picture of flatness to one of white hills. Great drifts sprawled across the highway and railroad tracks down at the end of

the street. The train hadn't come up all during the blizzard and certainly couldn't plow through fifty miles of snow drifts running athwart her tracks.

One of the kids spat experimentally and yelled excitedly when he discovered that the spittle froze before it hit the ground with an icy sound. Then as our noses and cheeks began to hurt and turn white we beat a hasty retreat back into the house. It was so intensely cold that even when we were standing by the stove we could feel the chill biting through our clothes. We soaked up all of the heat the stove threw out. Seemed as if we'd brought in all of the outside cold.

"Donald," Mom's voice from the kitchen, "Get some coal and stir that fire up!" I relayed this order on to Jack, next younger brother, who immediately passed it on down the line to five-year-old Maxie. I went out and got the coal.

Our coal pile had almost disappeared, which fact I reported to Mom. She frowned and looked worriedly at the frozen kitchen window. This began to scare me. "Gee, Mom, they can't get the train up through all of those drifts for a week!"

"I know," she said, too quietly. "Well, we'll just have to close off all of the other rooms and live in the kitchen and front room and burn one fire at a time."

Mom must have been pretty scared without showing it. These coal spells would generally last a week or ten days. And there wasn't enough loose wood around Gilman to make a respectable bonfire.

"Why don't you and Jack run over and see how Granma is?" Mom suggested.

I browbeat the lad and we bundled up and started out. Granma lived at the edge of our ghost town not so very far from our house. We met Ed Thompson strolling along in a heavy mackinaw and fur cap, his feet wrapped in gunnysacks. The smoke from his pipe clung in a frozen cloud after him.

Wasting as few words as possible, I told him about our coal being almost gone.

"So's mine," he replied, knocking the fire out of his pipe. "Wish now I'd led a worst life so's if I freeze to death I'd know I'd wake up in hell!"

Granma was busy in her kitchen when Jack and I got there.

"I don't know what your mother's scared of," she said rattling the stove lids energetically. "Nobody ever froze to death while there were buffalo chips lying around the prairie." The cow chips that she burned in the heating stove would always be buffalo chips to her. "Well, go get your sled and a big box and we'll take all my coal over to your house and I'll stay with you till it's over," she ordered.

In a couple of hours we had Granma and her coal moved over into our house. The coal made a

considerable pile altogether, augmented greatly with dried dung. Half an hour later Ed Thompson walked into the house carrying a couple of heavy quilts and dragging a broken-down oak rocking-chair behind him.

"Ran out of coal," he announced cheerfully, "so I thought I'd come over and bed down with you folks for a while. Brought this old chair along to throw in the stove. Always hated the damn thing, but never had the ambition to chop it up and burn it."

The younger kids made kindling out of that chair in short order.

"Where are Glasgow and Scobey?" Granma asked Ed sharply, referring to his two boys and not the towns where the Thompson kids were born.

"They'll come over when the fire goes out," Ed replied, settling himself by the fire.

"It's a pity you wouldn't take better care of your own kids, since they haven't got a mother to do it," Granma said. Ed's brand of easygoing philosophy irked her motherly Scotch soul. "Don't you care whether they eat or not?" She could never help letting her tongue sharpen against him.

"Oh sure," said Ed, "I'd even steal for my kids if I had to." He paused a moment and reflected, "But they're old enough to do their own stealing now."

Granma retreated angrily into the kitchen and we all laughed behind our hands. Ed's presence had lessened the growing tension so that it seemed like the room had become a lot warmer. It was always a treat to have Ed and Granma on the same scene.

Glasgow and Scobey came over in a couple of hours, and we had

lunch and all afternoon played cards. After supper the Randall boys, Squint-Eye and Marvin, came over. Then Herbie Calabaugh. Their coal piles were getting low too, and they were kind of scared.

"Oh pshaw!" said Granma. "Folks has sure gotten easy to scare since we pioneered this country. You should've seen the winter of '98."

"I was a young 'un then," Ed remembered. "We were holed-up in the Tetons. Remember gettin' so hungry we thought our big guts were eating the little ones."

Everybody laughed; even Granma chuckled into her bosom.

We played some more cards and then Mom announced the sleeping arrangements. Mom, Granma and the girls all slept in the front room and Ed and we boys piled into the three beds we'd pulled out into the adjoining lobby.

Next day passed without a break in the brilliant, crackling cold. The Randall family, Squint-Eye and Marvin, and their parents brought their coal and food and moved in with us. Mom opened another room which adjoined the lobby. The next day Shine Mayer and his wife came over, so we now had our hotel almost filled up. I slept upstairs in a frozen room and was able to stand it only because I slept between two mattresses. Then Herbie Calabaugh joined me and each night Ed would tie us in sandwiched as we were. By now only two families were left in the town who were not living with us.

But tension heightened with so much crowding and no sign of break in the weather. The big community pile of coal dwindled rapidly. All of our walks became well-cindered over from all the

coal we'd burned. Granma and Ed were the only ones who didn't seem nervous. Fights broke out frequently among the kids, and the grown-ups' patience began to show marked shortening. Only Ed with his long and funny stories—exaggerated more than ever now—and Granma's complacency and managerial ability kept most of us from each other's throats.

But Squint-Eye and Jack really snapped the growing tension when they got into a big scrap over the lead in Squint-Eye's play. It almost precipitated a family feud but Ed mediated. The two husky lads were really going at it and before anyone even moved to interfere they'd bumped, locked in savage combat, into Mom's china cupboard. I never saw a person move so fast in my life as Ed did. One moment he was getting people to shake hands and the next he leaped across the room catching the cupboard just as it had started falling. No damage was done; but Mom was in tears.

Then Granma did something, too. She got all of us kids together and bundled us up, and outside we went, cold weather or not. She led the mob of us down to the woods along the river and we started scouting for squaw wood. Muffled to our eyebrows and fighting through drifts, we didn't find an awful lot of wood, but what we did manage to carry back to the house had a fine effect on everybody's morale. The second trip everybody went along down to the woods an eighth of a mile away.

"It's like Granma says," we told Mom, "There's plenty of fuel out there if you'll go work for it. Nobody should freeze."

Ed came in a few minutes later, a rueful expression on his face.

"The only chance I'll have to poach through the ice now without worrying about the game warden," he said, "and find the river frozen clean to the bottom. Have to fish with an ice pick!"

"The weather's gonna break tomorrow," Granma announced suddenly.

We were all startled at this. She sounded so sure of herself.

"Shouldn't wonder if you're

right, Granma," said Ed. "This pain in my shoulder either means change in weather—or that I do have rheumatiz."

Granma told Mom later that she didn't sleep much that night but really prayed. Next morning the weather did break—it was the best chinook for a long time. Granma, Mom told me, had commanded rather than plead with God for a chinook. And who will ignore Granma?

The Wind Goes Into Quietness

By SERGEANT DAVID PERKINS

The wind goes into quietness—or rises,
Ecstasy fades out and lets in pain.
In a maze of things which go and come again,
The world has lost its brilliant old surprises,
But refuses to accept defeat—devises
Costumes for the old things that remain.
There is no skill in it; the ruse is plain:
How shabby love looks in her new disguises!
We are not the first men on this earth to taste
Her passions, not the first to note their mould
Upon our tongues, their flavor of decay.
Nor is there terror now in being chased
By death and his dark shadows; he is old,
We know, weary of taking us away.

Poems

By HELEN BRUTSCH

THE BACK ROOM

Behind the hedges are curs.
Within a brightly-lit room
stands evil surprising
you so trusting.

Loud talk, shaking arms,
all in blue smoke,
going up,
disintegrating,
no oppression too
great but ceases.

Stationary
the hedges, but not behind.
Bright the room, but
dagger-like.

THE KISS

lips,
close
soft
gentle
hard
grim
passionate,
I look for all
but one can not have all
for it combined
is
mother
father
sister
brother
and he
who is not.

NIGHT

with one eye
You watch
the clouds gather
but behind
the wind stands
a green moon.

pink dots
arranged in
vertical lines
sprinkle effervescent
bubbles
of eyes watching,
watching.

Let Nothing You Dismay

By AGNES REGAN

DR. CLINTON was already a little tight, but everyone was a little tight, because the tom-and-jerries were strong and it was Christmas Eve at the club, and at the club on Christmas Eve everyone gets a little tight. His daughter had wandered off somewhere into the smoke and chatter and music and he leaned alone against the wall by the slot machines and watched the line of expressionless women balancing a drink in one hand and feeding in the coins, pulling the handles, pausing, feeding, jerking, pausing.

Like a line of robots, silk-covered robots, all geared to the same rhythm, he thought. With only a minute break in the machinery when one of them hits the jackpot.

He smiled at the idea and some woman across the room caught his smile and waved at him. He waved and moved off toward the bar, wondering who she was. Then he smiled again, because it didn't matter and he was already a little tight, but no one had a better reason to get tight than he had.

No one, he thought, has a better right to get tight than a man with something on his mind.

He took the tom-and-jerry the

negro behind the bar handed him. "No one has a better right to drink than a man who has a chance to do a hard thing or a disgraceful thing, Jimmy," he said. "Either way a man has a reason to get tight at Christmas time."

"Yes, Doctor," Jimmy said.

"Celebrating or forgetting, Jimmy," Dr. Clinton said.

"That's right, Doctor," Jimmy said.

"Which are you doing, Doc?" Someone clapped him on the shoulder and chuckled in his ear.

Dr. Clinton turned and looked at the younger man who had spoken to him. "I'm preparing for decision, Mason," he said. "That's a third time a man should get tight—when he has a problem on his mind."

Mason took the cup Jimmy handed him and grinned at the doctor. "And are you preparing for a wake or a renewal of contract?" he asked.

Dr. Clinton raised his eyebrows. Which am I doing? he wondered. It would be nice to shine up my armour to go out attacking windmills for once, instead of shutting my eyes and darning up another little hole in my corruptible conscience. Just for once I could

make a beautiful gesture to truth and integrity—

He looked at the bar man. "Jimmy, never commit yourself before a newspaper man," he said.

"That's right, doctor," Jimmy said.

"Oh, don't worry about a bound and gagged newspaperman like me," Mason said. He stopped to shake hands with a middle-aged man who reeled tipsily past them, then followed Dr. Clinton away from the bar. "Know him?" he asked. "Federal man. Now that guy has something to celebrate. Victory after three years of patient toil."

"Yes," Dr. Clinton said. "The patience of the federal investigator is undying."

Mason lowered his voice. "Imagine checking that canned stuff going into the next state every day for three years!" He shook his head. "Did you read the charges?" he asked.

"Yes," Dr. Clinton said. Not, he thought, that you have to read the charges to know about the filth in the cannery. Eyes and nose will tell you that on the first trip through. But the federal man is patient, the federal man is accurate—the federal man is not the state board of health.

"All the feds could do is stop the shipments out of the state, isn't it?"

Dr. Clinton nodded. Three years of careful checking, he thought, just to protect a little piece of Wyoming. The undying patience of the federal man, all to stop a little shipment into Wyoming. So Wyoming can be clean and pure, and this state can go on eating filth, and the federals can't touch a thing. And no one will know a thing about it. Let the masses eat rotten stuff—

Bennett's purse won't feel the pinch of reform. We'll all play the same old hush-hush game, and the state will never know.

"God, I haven't eaten any thing out of a can since I read those charges," Mason said. "I knew it was dirty, but is all that true?"

Dr. Clinton shrugged. "The state board of health hasn't protested yet," he said. "Or renewed it's approval." Although, he thought, I might add that it has been requested to renew approval this afternoon. And the form is in my pocket and I stand here and drink and toy with the idea of protesting. It would be a beautiful gesture—not that it would do any good. A temporary clean-up maybe, but not enough to cut into the purse. Only a fool would do it when it means going out on your ear—But it would be a magnificent gesture—

"I might predict what the state board will do," Mason said, "but will you let me know if you get courageous?"

Dr. Clinton set his drink on the edge of the table and fished in his pocket for a cigarette. "Why?" he asked. "You wouldn't print."

Mason offered him a light. "No," he agreed, "Bennett's got it fixed. Cans are verboten." He grinned. "But someday I may get out of here and want to expose you. I'm itching for a new start." He laughed and lounged against the edge of the table, watching the crowd mill around the dimly lighted room.

What I wouldn't give to be young again, Dr. Clinton thought, watching him. To be young and to think that I might get a new start. What a grand gesture I could make—toss the unsigned approval back in Bennett's face and

pack my bags for someplace new. If I were a kid again, young and free—" He watched the younger man sprawl against the table and then looked away and finished his drink quickly.

Someone in fuchsia velvet caught sight of Mason from across the room and waved frantically. "Emily is home," she called.

Mason waved. "Merry Christmas to Emily," he called.

"Who's Emily?" Dr. Clinton asked.

"Damned if I know," Mason said. He shrugged his shoulders as Dr. Clinton moved off again toward the bar. "Let me know if you decide, Doc," he said.

Dr. Clinton nodded. Unless I decide, he thought, watching the men and women drifting around the room in front of him, none of them will know one way or the other. Not more than a few vague rumors, anyway. They might hear that the case was in Federal Court, but no one ever goes to Federal Court. And it will never get in the papers, nothing against Bennett. Unless I second the federal statement, no one will hear. Unless I forget that Bennett swings the governor, and the governor swings me, and I swing with them, or get snapped off the end of the crack-the-whip. But the mob will never know—" He watched the couples dancing in the side room, swinging, swaying together through the smoke.

He refilled his cup and wandered among the groups, stopping to speak to his daughter and then moving on and joining in the high-pitched confusion of sound and laughter. "Merry Christmas," people said to him. "Merry Christmas, Doc."

One of the women broke away from the line at the slot machines

and came over toward him. "Well, Doctor," she called in a high-pitched voice to carry over the music and clang of the machines and the talk and laughter. "How is the state board getting along?"

"It's only greyed a bit since you worked at the Capitol, Florence," he said. "Greyed much more than you have, I might add."

She laughed hilariously. "Well, I said to Harry the other day, Harry, I said, it seems more like two years than twenty since we got married at Christmas time, and Harry said, yes, I don't see enough of you any more to get tired of you, Floss." She laughed again and craned her neck to see around the room. "I don't see Harry here yet, do you, doctor? He said he'd meet me here if I wasn't too terribly rushed to make it."

"What is this pressing business of yours, Florence?" Dr. Clinton asked, offering her a cigarette.

She bent to his light and blew a thread of smoke. "The charity baskets, doctor," she said. "You have no idea the amount of work involved! We are the central office for the entire state and we packed all the county baskets right here. You have no idea how much time I put in." She gestured helplessly with her cigarette. "And the younger women with children simply wouldn't cooperate. None of them had an ounce of Christmas spirit. I called and called—" She pointed an accusing finger at the doctor. "I called your daughter a dozen times and she didn't answer."

"She just got home yesterday," he said dryly.

"Of course, how stupid of me. She's been visiting her husband's family, hasn't she? And have you

ever had any word about him, doctor?"

"No," Dr. Clinton said. His glance skipped over the room trying to catch a sight of his daughter's slim figure in the crowd.

"How nice she can spend Christmas with you," Florence went on. "She is a lovely girl. When she was married I said to Harry, Harry, I said, what a lovely girl—"

Dr. Clinton's gaze caught his daughter across the room and paused. Yes, a lovely girl, he thought. A surprizingly lovely girl. His eyes clouded over and he crowded back the sentimentality he always felt about his daughter after he had had a few drinks. It would be nice, he thought, to make the gesture for her. Foolish, without a doubt, but a fine gesture. It would be nice to do something, one thing, she could point to and say, "That was a fine thing my father did."

"Such generous contributions," Florence was saying. "I don't know how we would have filled the baskets without such generous contributions. The businessmen were truly filled with Christmas spirit." She waved at someone standing by the door. "There's Harry now. I was afraid he wouldn't get here. I'd hate to have him miss this. It's so gay, so full of Christmas spirit, isn't it?"

Dr. Clinton nodded. "Harry always did show up at the wrong times for me," he said.

Florence giggled. "Oh, Doctor, you were such a gay young blade!"

Dr. Clinton watched her push her way through the crowd. No, he thought, I was never a gay young blade. Not too faithful to my wife perhaps, but never a gay

young blade. Not even when Florence was thirty pounds lighter and naturally pink cheeked. I was lazy—easy going, perhaps but never really gay. Just too lazy to learn anything in medical school, too lazy to keep up a private practice. Lazy enough to take a state job and easy going enough to close my eyes when it seemed the smartest thing to do. It won't be anything new if I close my eyes now—nothing new and so easy—

He drained his cup quickly and the room began to weave into a kaleidoscope of colors and for a minute he let himself sink into the pleasant soothing mixture of smoke and music and laughter, speaking to people, shaking hands, laughing himself, wishing everyone a merry Christmas. It's Christmas that bothers a man, he thought. If it weren't for Christmas I wouldn't think twice about all this. Christmas makes a man want to be a fool just for the hell of it. What a hell of a lot of fun to throw the paper back in Bennett's face just because it's Christmas.

He saw a man sidling through the group of people who were milling and drifting around the floor and he shook his head abruptly to clear it.

He held out his hand. "Hello, Bennett," he said. A stranger would never peg him as a powerful man, he thought. A stranger could never point him out as the wealthiest man in the room. Half the people who know him think he's just another lawyer. Half of his good friends don't know he owns the canneries, or the mine interests—Not half a dozen people here will ever know that what he does can affect me—

Bennett shook his hand warmly. "A fine party, isn't it, Doc-

tor?" he said. "Looks like a white Christmas."

"Yes," Dr. Clinton said. "Lots of people home for the holidays." His gaze sought out his daughter across the room. She looked up, caught his eye and smiled.

"I hear you checked the canneries the other day, Doctor," Bennett said casually.

"Yes," Dr. Clinton said. He took a long drag on his cigarette, his eyes still on his daughter. Now is the time I could do it, he thought. Now I could simply say, 'I agree with the federal report. The conditions are indescribably filthy.' And nothing more would be said about it here. But in a couple of weeks—a month maybe—I would resign because of poor health and I could say to myself, 'I'm a martyr to a cause. It was a beautiful gesture.' And I could go home and take off my shining armour and let my daughter support me.

He took his eyes away from his daughter and felt suddenly tired. "Yes," he said to Bennett, "I have the routine approval with me. I might as well give it to you now." He took a bunch of papers from his pocket and leafed through them, pulled one out and glanced over it. He held his fountain pen and paused for just a second, then scribbled his signature across the bottom of the paper and handed it back to Bennett. "Tough luck in federal court," he said. "Your out of state sales will be cut off?"

Bennett took a letter folder from his inside coat pocket and carefully tucked the folded paper inside. "Yes," he said, "but we

didn't ship much but seasonal products. Just a few Christmas puddings to Wyoming. Caught us with a bit of surplus, though. Little excess canned plum puddings for the holidays."

"Well, it's going to be a fine holiday," Dr. Clinton said. "Lots of snow."

"Yes, lots of snow," Bennett said. "Fine holiday." He turned to talk to Florence, who had come up again. Dr. Clinton watched them for a minute, unable to hear the conversation over the music and chatter.

She turned to Dr. Clinton as Bennett moved off. "You have no idea how he helped us," she said. "Our little charity wouldn't have gone half so far without such generous contributions." She placed her hand on his arm and spoke in a confidential tone. "He donated his canned puddings for the whole state and asked us not to mention it. Certainly there is the true Christmas spirit."

Dr. Clinton raised his eyebrows and nodded, starting to move back toward the bar.

"Merry Christmas to you, doctor," Florence said.

"Oh, I say, Merry Christmas, doctor," Bennett turned from a group of people and called after him.

Dr. Clinton raised his hand in a tired salute and then grinned. Celebrating or forgetting, he thought. No one has a better right to get tight. No one has a better reason than a man who's just shrugged off a problem.

He took the cup the bar man handed him and raised it. "Merry Christmas, Jimmy," he said.

Invasion Incident

By ROBERT DELANEY

THE HEAVY thud of the explosions and the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns seemed far enough away so we continued to view the spectacle with uninhibited attention. We were looking at Guam, our new home which we were to accept for better or for worse. For more than an hour we had been standing off shore in our landing craft waiting for transportation over the coral reef by amphibious tractor into an inferno of killing. Though we knew we would soon be a part of the holocaust which was before our eyes, our thoughts were not so much on the future as might be expected, so totally did this new thing hold our interest. It was, in reality, a beautiful sight, yet to begin to appreciate it esthetically would only bring on a feeling of utter dread.

Imagine, if you can, an island near enough to the observer to allow him to pick out such changes of terrain as roads and cultivated fields, yet far enough away to seem shrouded in infinity. The mountains present a dark purple outline against a cloudless blue sky. Hiding the shore line from view is a haze through which red flashes penetrate at intervals. Overhead, planes hover in preparation for the descent. Like sea-

gulls they circle in endless chain; then each takes his turn, diving to rain destruction on the tiny objects below. Gracefully, they display their tricks as if to hide their real purpose. By watching closely we can follow the bomb with our eyes as it leaves the plane to scream down and blast itself to nothingness. We watch the destroyers wheeling in close to shore to disgorge a mass of smoke and flame from their snouts as they send their steel into the immovable mountains along the shoreline. The mother-like battleships slowly part the unwilling water as they make their runs back and forth in front of the target. It seems as though they wait for the psychological moment to cough up flash and black smoke as if to prove that after all they are the ones capable of the most destruction.

In the myriad of small boats busily dashing for some rendezvous landing craft are seen heading out to their mother ships. Although their main job is to transport men into the fight, each carries his share of the wounded back to the waiting instruments in the operating room.

Our attention is never centered on one event for long. Now we see the blinker lights aboard the

larger ships frantically winking at each other, sending out their orders or tales of woe. From the signal bridges, in ever-changing array, wave multicolored flags, giving their messages to all who can understand them.

Though well we knew we were soon to be part of this scene, we somehow felt detached like spectators. But even as these events held our interest contemplation of our own fate was ever with us. We had yet to make use of the training we had had that was intended not only to give us confidence but to help us perform our job more efficiently. That it made us confident is doubtful. Each of us had his own misgivings about what confronted us and tried to give the others moral support by appearing unmoved. Toward this end the conversation was directed to the humorous but with deadening unsuccess. Idle talk was later cut to a minimum till at best it was nothing more than a brief boggle of unmeditated and unremembered words. A million thoughts went unsaid as our minds labored with mixed emotion.

Our boat rose and fell with each oncoming wave and though we had long since acquired our sea legs, we seemed to notice our rolling stomachs a little more than usual. As time wore on we began to look at each other through half-closed eyes and maybe manage a weak sort of grin. By this time we had all sunk down to a more comfortable position in the bottom of the boat, waiting for something to happen.

Our ears pricked up as we heard a rumbling, grating sound mixed with unintelligible shouting about "starb'rd" and "port." As in a body we resignedly rose to assume

our former position of hanging on the gun'nels by our armpits. That indescribable sinking feeling came over us as we caught first sight of the amphib that was to take us bouncing over the coral reef. For the ten-thousandth time we turned to the task of struggling into our haversack straps and cartridge belts. After distributing the heavy radio equipment we again turned our attention to the amphib "Sea Duck" which was churning up the salt spray in an attempt to come alongside our tossing Higgins boat. The earsplitting racket came to a choking halt as the "alligator's" motors were cut. Gently it nudged up against us and sat patiently waiting to take us aboard. Anxiously we all scrambled over the side and into the gaping hold. After untangling our extremities from our rifle slings, we squeezed down into the bottom of the amphib, supposedly to make a proper target for a mortar shell!

Everything was in readiness now; the lines were cast off and the navy cox'n aboard the Higgins boat heaved a sigh of relief and gave us an inspiring "V" for victory sign as he headed his boat back to the waiting transport. We returned the salutation with expressionless faces, probably hiding a sneer or two. The amphib driver stuck his worried face out of the cab and gave us a stern word of warning. "Now when we get to the beach, you'll have to clear out of this crate. It's plenty hot in there so as soon as we stop, you'll have to jump for it and stand clear because I'm shoving off." Leaving us to mull over this new bit of encouragement he returned to his maze of levers and switches with such determination that the machine, roaring its protest, dug viciously through the

choppy waves. Unable to make any comments because of the noise, we resorted to apprehensive facial expressions which basically were all the same. As all conversation died out once more our thoughts were left to soar in unchecked whims of imagination. Utter seriousness now enclosed us like a blanket till the deafening noise was nothing more than a muffled rumble to our unhearing ears.

We were suddenly jolted to sensibility. The grinding tracks bit into the edge of the reef and we realized that in a bare five minutes we would debark on solid ground. The tenseness of the situation gripped us. We all thought—well, this is it. Last minute instructions flashed through our minds. We would have to jump for it as soon as we stopped. Got to get out fast. We checked gear, gathering all the loose ends for the big plunge. This had to be better than all the landings we'd made in practice. I said to myself, "I'll be the first over the side—they won't have to wait for me."

The tractor jerked to a screeching halt and at once I was scrambling over the side. Weighted down with nearly a hundred pounds of gear I quickly surveyed the six-foot drop to the ground.

Should I use the small steps provided for the purpose? Hell, no. I jumped. My feet struck the soft muck and held fast but the rest of me kept coming. The momentum buckled me at the knees and pushed me down to a very unglamorous position in the mud. The now quieted but still panting amphib issued forth a stream of bodies and gear and deposited them in a heap at the water's edge of their new home.

As her work was done the "Sea Duck" whirled and fled happily out of range of the whistling mortar shells.

Seconds later the muddy men struggled to their feet cursing. It was an unpleasant sensation, but it broke the spell. One by one the grins spread over the mud-smearred faces as we realized we were still all in one piece and, more important, on dry land.

Though that day was to end tragically for some in our little group, that one incident, I believe, served to bring us back to our normal senses. It was a relief, an anti-climax to a situation that had grown ponderous in our worried minds. With that brief interlude acting as our second wind we were better able to meet the oncoming problems that were to initiate us into this new strange land of the dead.

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Gibbonsville

By JANIS HENDRICKSON

KEVIN fell forward with a lurch as the train stopped. He rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand, and peered out the window. The country was just like Joe said. The place looked desolate enough to compete with a desert. He wished he hadn't come. After all, Joe had spent his last breath asking him not to come. But back in Kevin's mind the curiosity dug at him. He had to find out about Joe.

Kevin got up and reached for his bag. A woman passenger poked him in the back as she was going out. He looked after her as she fled down the aisle, and was amazed at the way she wore her tight, ill-fitting dress. He began to concentrate on the poke, and he realized that his back was aching from sitting so long in one position. He groaned, and started down the aisle. The sound of the engine as it belched great clouds of steam made him think about Joe. This must be the same engine that Joe used to ride on when he was a kid. Joe thought it was great. Hell, Joe thought everything was great. Even this God-forsaken spot in the middle of Montana. Kevin wished again that he were back in Detroit.

He deposited his lanky frame in

front of the little depot, and stretched. A Ford pick-up was parked near the platform and a fellow in blue denim was loading cream cans. Kevin sauntered over to the pick-up and stood there watching. He wanted to ask about Joe, but he didn't know what to ask. He groped for a word, and then cleared his throat. The man looked up, and squinted at the sun; then he looked over at Kevin.

"Howdy! Somethin' I can do for ya?"

Kevin fingered the knot in his tie.

"I wonder if you could tell me where Joe Strabowski lived?"

The man grunted and went back to loading his cans. He picked up a can and then set it down again. He stood with his hands on his hips, and faced Kevin.

"You a friend of his?" Kevin's eyebrows raised at the guarded tone in the man's voice, but he answered evenly enough.

"I knew him, yes."

The man looked thoughtful for a moment, and then pointed to a big yellow frame house about a street and an empty lot away.

"He usta have a room there with Mrs. Hebness. Then the army got hold of him and he was moved all over."

Kevin nodded.

"Thanks."

"You won't find him around, though. He was killed in the Pacific not long ago."

"I know. I was with him."

Kevin started off across the empty lot behind the depot. He was almost self-conscious in his tweeds. He still couldn't get used to the feel of them. He stooped to brush off a blade of grass, and as he bent down he noticed the cream-can loader thoughtfully staring after him.

"Hell, what of it?" Kevin grunted, and went on.

He was beginning to believe every word that Joe had told him. Even after Kevin got home, and started thinking about the Gibbonsville of Joe Strabowski's, he knew he couldn't rest until he had seen it. Joe had been his friend through Tarawa. Before that, they went through basic training together. At first, Joe got on Kevin's nerves. He never stopped talking. All he talked about was this place called Gibbonsville. It was usually some fantastic story about the Western town. Once in a while, he mentioned a girl, a girl named Lucy, with clear blue eyes and flaxen hair. The time he told about the goats that wandered up and down main street, Kevin called him on it.

"Listen, kid. You're crazy as all get out."

"You don't believe it, do you? Well, here's proof of it. I'm the proof. I came from Gibbonsville, and it means something to me. Besides that, I got a couple friends there." And Joe looked at him and grinned. Kevin grinned, too, and patted Joe on the back. Joe was certainly a funny chap.

And so they became friends. Maybe it was the vast difference

in their backgrounds that attracted them to each other. Joe, a little guy from a little town in Montana, and Kevin, a journalist from Detroit.

After Tarawa, Kevin knew just as much about Gibbonsville as Joe did. He began to shape a story about the place. It was all outlined in his mind. Human interest stuff. Make a good feature, too. Kevin often talked about his column or how he wrote before the war, and Joe talked about the fire-bell or Ma Hebness or the I. O. O. F. Hall. When the two were together that last time, Kevin had mentioned his plan to write a feature about Gibbonsville. He could sense that the idea didn't take so well with Joe. He couldn't understand why, since Joe seemed so fond of the place.

Then the strafing got his pal, and Kevin dragged him back behind a truck. He bent over him, full of emotion and words unsaid. Joe looked up and managed a twisted grin.

"Don't write the story, Kevin. Don't even go there. You don't want to see the place, anyway. Haven't I told you enough? Don't write it, please." But Kevin was determined, and Joe's neck stiffened. The grin left his face, and life left his body.

Kevin's great curiosity about the town was overwhelming. Or was it getting to be an obsession? Kevin wondered why under heaven Joe didn't want him to see it. What was the reason? There was evidently something Joe hadn't mentioned. What was it? Kevin wanted the story, so he had to know. He had to go there and was firmly resolute, though at times a bit uneasy in his conscience remembering Joe's last imploring words.

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Kevin leaned against an old wagon and gazed up the street. He saw every business place in town, and knew everything in its history from the time the town moved up to meet the Great Northern Railroad, to the day Joe went off to war.

The street lay facing a stubble field on one end, and a large white frame house on the other. On the stubble-field end, a brownstone building reared its battered front and welcomed Kevin to spend a night at the Anderson Hotel. Two window baskets hung on either side of the front door and yellow pansies nodded at the passers-by. Kevin imagined Joe walking down this street, and the thought came to him that Joe was like this battered hotel. Tough and weather-beaten. And yet, Joe was kind, and his heart was gentle. Sort of like the pansies.

Kevin passed in front of the Variety Store. It must have been painted since Joe went away. Its clean white coat gleamed brazenly in the sun. Maggie, who was a combined staff of owner, manager, clerk, and errand boy, and cousin to the Andersons, stood with folded arms and glared through a spotless window at the stranger outside. Kevin opened the door and went in.

"Good afternoon," and he managed a weak smile.

Maggie's glare did not alter. Kevin floundered on.

"Could you tell me a little about Joe Strabowski? I'm a newspaper man, and I met him during the war. Would like to write a story about some of the things he told me. Thought it might be worth while. He liked this place, you know."

Her answer surprised him.

"Humph! That good-for-noth-

ng? Irresponsible as they come. Let a whole garage burn and didn't turn a finger."

Kevin controlled his rising fury, and muttered a polite good-day. Joe, a good-for-nothing? He knew that Joe was a fine fellow. What was that about a garage burning down?

Joe had said that the Eats Cafe was a friendly little eating place, and Kevin noticed that it leaned, somewhat, in the direction of Maggie's. Edgar, the proprietor, believed in arousing public interest by scribbling, with chalk on the dirty pavement, such gems as "Eat here and die elsewhere," and was busy doing so when Kevin approached. Kevin watched a minute.

"Excuse me, but did you know a fellow by the name of Joe Strawowski?"

The old proprietor glanced at his stranger, then he musingly observed, "Who didn't? Mighty lot of folks went broke because of that young fellow. Good thing the war got him. Never woulda amounted to a hilla beans."

"I knew him once. I had quite a different opinion of him. I knew him well, too."

Kevin couldn't stand there idiotically and try to trace the meaning of the words he had heard from these towns-people, so he maneuvered on down the street. He didn't care to bandy impressions with anybody, least of all those who were not, apparently, friends of Joe's.

There was a long alley that separated Akre's Store from the Post Office. An ordinary alley, except for the goats. The Post Office was a muddy colored stucco building, and it appeared drab and unexciting. One would never guess that it held within its walls the

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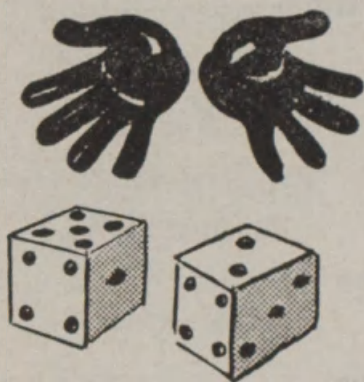


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newsiest part of every life in the community. Kevin didn't care to enter. He was just about getting his fill of this place.

Puzzled, Kevin leaned back against a sign post and thought. He heard every conversation, saw every character, and knew everything about Gibbonsville, or did he? His glimpses of the town had been through Joe's eyes. Some of these things he was now hearing showed him that Joe had not seen all there was to see. His eye traveled to the Mint Bar, which loomed expansively above an empty lot. A fading barber pole stood forlornly in front. The cement sidewalk ended in front of the Mint, and an elevated board walk took its place. Kevin climbed the three uneven steps onto the walk, and looked down between the cracks. Bits of rusty spurs, cigar bands and broken beer bottles greeted his eye. Exactly like Joe said. Funny how Joe remembered so many little things like that. A picture of a large bucking horse covered the big window in front of the place. Kevin guessed many a harrassed wife had had to take the step inside when hunting for Jake, because it was evident that she wouldn't be able to see in, and Jake certainly couldn't see out. Buckshot, an old cowboy and handy-man about the bar, slung the contents of a heavily taxed spittoon into the street directly below the bucking horse. Kevin ducked to keep from getting hit. Buckshot grinned a tobacco stained grin.

"Almost got you that time, mister."

"You sure did." Kevin smiled. Here was an old fellow who would probably know about Joe. Kevin decided to ask him.

"Sure, I know that kid. He had a kind of dogged persistence about everything he did. He stuck at it till he got it done, and then he went right after something else in the very same way. He had a pretty good job as head mechanic at the Grizzly Garage here. Misfortunate accident. The building burned clear to the ground one night. Joe was there, but he couldn't stop it. Lot of people lost all they had in that fire. The community always resented the kid after that, and he enlisted right away. Musta did it to get away from here. Course I don't know if it was his fault or not—but Joe was a pretty good kid. Don't see how it coulda been his fault. Ma Hebness, she usta board him, stuck right by him, though. She's always mothered all the waifs that drifted in and out of here. Sorta took a liking to Joe, I guess. And he liked her girl, Lucy. No nicer girl in the country. Woulda made a nice pair, them two. Course I been here too long, I git so I see a guy come in and stick it or git booted out, and one way or the other, it don't make no difference to me. So many come and go. Never git to know 'em really."

Kevin looked at this weather-beaten old man with his stained crooked teeth, and was reminded of Joe. In a way, a vague lost way, they were very alike. Both of them waifs. And there now was Joe's story. That was what had been eating him. Strange. . . talking all the time about a place where most of the people did not like him . . . curious compensation.

Kevin left the saloon and wandered on down the street. Before him was the skeleton of the garage. Joe had never mentioned it.

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Kevin saw the ugly black scar that was the mark of a fire, and he stared at the wreckage that had never been cleared away. Joe died with an ugly black scar on his mind, Kevin thought. But he liked a girl, and Ma Hebness meant kindness and a home to him. Thus lost in thought, Kevin failed to notice a blonde girl wearing an apron come out of the Eats Cafe and cross the street. She startled him as she tripped. Kevin reached for her, but she had gained her balance and was up before he could assist her.

"Hurt yourself?" Kevin was as embarrassed as the girl.

"No, I don't think so. I should have been watching where I was going, I guess." The girl smiled, and Kevin thanked the Gods for this amazing coincidence. Lucy, and none other. Joe's description fitted perfectly.

"I'm a stranger here. Some fire you had. Recent?"

"No, it happened quite some time ago."

"Oh. Looks like it was a corker."

"It was, but not in the way you think. It involved more than flames and things burning. These people still don't care . . ." her voice trailed off into nothing, and she turned her face away.

Kevin wanted desperately to say something to this girl. His tongue failed to respond. It would just make her feel worse if he mentioned Joe, so he could only watch her as she suddenly broke into a run and streaked across the empty lot and into Ma Hebness' house.

The yell of a train broke into Kevin's reverie, and he glanced at his watch. Seven past six. Startled, he realized that his train was getting ready to leave, and he

was fully a block from the station. He grabbed his hat and dashed madly toward the depot. The air was cool on his neck, and his feet flew lightly across the sod. The train was barely moving as he grabbed the rail of the creeping caboose and hoisted himself onto the observation platform. He cast a solitary look at the receding Gibbonsville, and seeing it made him tired. He sat down and leaned far back in the chair cushion. No story to write, nothing to do but rest all the way back to Detroit. Kevin closed his eyes.

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C'est La Guerre

By VIC REINEMER

DOMINIQUE wasn't really a bad sort. Like most of us, he was an opportunist. So when the Germans invaded the privacy of his city on the Loire, at first he was indignant, and talked and wondered with Armand and the rest of his friends in Orleans. Armand was all for resisting the Boche, and pleaded eloquently for Dominique to join him.

"Think of it, Dominique," Armand shouted, "Our France is being run over by these damn Boche. Are we going to let them swagger around like they own the place? You know, Dominique, they have moved M. Serreau and his whole family out of his chateau and a bunch of cocky little *sous-lieutenants* are living there. And Dominique, Mlle. Annette is living with one of the dogs. The same petite Annette you used to play with. They are no good, these Germans."

Dominique shrugged. "*C'est egal*. She and the Boche are nothing to me. Let's think it over. Come on, quit your ranting. Let's go over to the Royale and have some *vin rouge*—there's no Boche there and we can talk with more of the fellows."

Dominique remained undecided, until one day a German corporal,

Wilhelm, came in and bought a complete fishing outfit from him. He spoke beautiful French, this corporal. He told Armand how good the trout-fishing was in Bavaria, and how he hoped to be back in time for deer hunting around Salzburg.

Dominique pondered — "What the hell—these fellows are like me and Armand. They'll move out soon. And besides, if I go with Armand, what will happen to the store? Say—business should be good with lots of soldiers wanting to go fishing. I'll show Wilhelm that good place on the Loiret, so he doesn't waste all his time sitting under the bridge here on the Loire. Then he'll take his buddies and they'll need bait and hooks for *la pecher* and I'll make *beaucoup de francs!*"

So Dominique didn't see Armand for a few days and pretty soon he heard Armand had left. But he didn't pay too much attention to it—business was good—he had shown Wilhelm the good spots to fish, and many of the Germans came to trade and try their French on him.

Dominique soon had more German customers than Frenchmen. He wondered why M. Serreau never came around any more. One

day he met M. Serreau on the Rue de la Martinique.

"*Bon jour, bon jour, comment allez vous, M. Serreau?*"

M. Serreau looked the other way. Then he spat.

Dominique shrugged. "What the hell, one has to make a living, doesn't one? Might as well make it off these Boche. No use to live out in the woods and wear the Cross of Lorraine and sing *La Marseillaise* when there's money to be made. No, it is much more pleasant spending one's evenings on the Rue d'Orquay. Ah, the Rue d'Orquay. If I had found Francois before she went to work for Mme. Rocheau I would have married her. *Oui, Oui.*"

One day the bombers hit the Orleans railyards — American bombers. Sure, they had been to Bricy before, and had ruined the airport. And Dominique's house was far from the railroad tracks that the bombers hit. Soon, though, there was a difference at the store. Wilhelm and his friends had gone, and the new Germans were not nice. And very few Frenchmen came to his store. Then one day the Germans were all gone. A funny little car drove by, carrying soldiers in a different uniform. The Americans were there.

Dominique was an opportunist. He bought a *Francais-Anglais dictionnaire* and learned American words. He took down the German signs and smiled at the Americans. Soon they came into his shop, with laughing mademoiselles on their arms, and bought fishing poles and worms. He smiled and laughed with them.

"Ahah," he thought, "there are not many so smooth and sharp as Dominique."

One day two Frenchmen came

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into his shop. He recognized one as his old friend, Armand.

"Armand, Armand, *mon ami!*"

Armand did not speak. He and his companion took Dominique to the Hotel de Ville. Dominique protested, and asked why they acted so with Dominique, their friend. But they did not answer.

Dominique knew most of the people in the Hotel de Ville. They were people who had come to him to buy their fishing tackle before the war, but not since the Germans had been in Orleans. There was M. Serreau, sitting in a big chair in the center of the room. And there was Mlle. Colbert, the pretty little girl who had been born in America and was waiting for her passport to return. With her was an American soldier, whom Dominique had talked to in his shop. Dominique smiled at him, but the soldier just stared.

The trial was short. The charge against Dominique was collaboration. A lawyer pleaded his case most eloquently. But Dominique was found guilty and sentenced to die. The men took him to the square and tied him to a post, already scarred and splintered. Then they shot him.

The *Etoile-du Soir* did not carry any news of Dominique. His store was opened again by a young widow whose husband had not returned from a Maquis meeting.

Dominique was not really a bad sort. Like most of us, he was an opportunist.

Not Sporting—But Fast

By ROBERT CONN

IN THE ROUGH, jungle-covered volcanic ridges of west central Bougainville, the Laruma River is born. The gray Laruma is a normal mountain brook in its lighter moments and a hell-cat in flood. Twisted, tangled stacks of huge mahogany and teak trees along its banks give mute evidence of the destructive power this seemingly peaceful stream can exert when it wills. During its more or less peaceful slumber there is no main channel, but a net-work of small creeks around gravel bars and sand pits, some of which are covered with kunai grass and cane. Interesting places, these jungles in miniature. Snakes, rodent, centipedes, and occasionally the remains of one of the sons of the Rising Sun can be found there with ease.

The problem of catching the finny denizens of this river was a tough one. The conventional method was out completely. Apparently the fish were not of the biting kind, or perhaps the fishermen were not good enough. Under such conditions, G. I. Joe put the brains of Alfred Nobel and his own ingenuity to work to satisfy his craving for food. A couple dozen half-pound blocks of TNT, a yard or two of fuse, and a

box of detonators was all the fishing tackle he needed. Of course the complete absence of any game wardens or other conservation officials added immeasurably to his peace of mind.

The procedure was simple: he placed a detonator on a four-inch piece of fuse, inserted the primed fuse in a TNT block, taped the fuse securely in place, lit it, and threw into any likely-looking spot. Some two hundred yards below the so-called powder monkey, the rest of the "fishermen" would stand, ready to pick the fish out of the water as they floated by. The force of the explosion stunned or killed the fish in the immediate area, and retrieving them as they floated belly-up was a simple matter. In the beginning, four or five "baits" were usually sufficient to provide the main dish for a fish fry. As more and more Joes used Nobel's bait, the basic ingredient for the party diminished until as many as thirty casts were needed to complete the menu. The time spent in making additional casts finally resulted in more and more badly sunburnt posteriors, and the fish fries were discontinued.

While these fries were in operation they constituted one of the

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major recreational activities on the island. All of the necessary equipment and transportation were furnished by the unit throwing the undertaking. The mess-sergeant could be prevailed upon to furnish the cooking utensils and side dishes to make up the rest of the bill-of-fare. It was a relief to him to have that many less mouths to feed, and a sample of campfire cooking usually convinced most of the men that army chow was not so bad after all. Then too, anything in the line of fresh food was a relief from the inevitable Spam, stew, and corned willy, regardless of the lack of cooking skill.

Such were the fishing trips of Bougainville, not sporting but fast, providing relaxation from the bone-weariness, by affording a good time and a forgetting, for a moment, of the curse of civilization.

MOUNTAINEERS

A. E. PEDERSEN, JR., whose mystery *Layover* unravels its plotted way to justice, came to the U as a freshman this quarter from Kalispell, via three years as a marine. A Jay school major, he write this, his first short story, with journalistic style and fluency.

Another journalism student, VIC REINEMER, appears for the first time with a short-short about collaborationism in France, where he was stationed for about a year with the army air corps. Vic is from Circle, also a first-quarter freshman.

BOB DELANEY'S *Invasion Incident* also reveals his recent occupation as a marine in the South Pacific. His description of the landing on Guam is one of the best of many such sketches written in

freshmen comp classes about personal war experiences. Bob, who is from Missoula, is taking his beginning work as an art major.

Closer to home is the scene of *Gibbonsville* by JANIS HENDRICKSON, the only female first-timer in this issue, who writes with realism of the fictitious but typical eastern Montana town. Janis, who is from Turner and taught high school last year in Dixon, knows her small-town subject. Although her major field is music, she has written both poetry and short stories.

Another story of the Montana scene is DONALD BUTLER'S tale of the blizzard when his family became involuntary hosts to the community and Granma intervened with God to bring a chinook. Donald attended the University for a short time several years ago before his service in the army. His winter of the big snow was in his home, Gilman.

GEORGE DIXON'S name appears for the first time over *The Problem*, his plea for veteran organization on the campus. Dixon, who recently returned to the University from long service overseas, argues one side of the current campus problem from his viewpoint as a married veteran and a sociology student.

Familiar to Mountaineer readers are the stories and fables of FLORA SAGEN, who writes with equal ease in the difficult medium of the fable and the scorching realism of her sketches of her home town, Troy.

HELEN BRUTSCH, known on the campus for her Kaimin column, *Beating the Brush*, returns after her initial appearance in the Mountaineer fall quarter, this time with her first poetry. Modernistic, realistic, or a case for her already Padded Cell—here it is.

In the Name of the Father is MARGE KARLIN'S second Mountaineer appearance. A story of a child's sudden realization of her place in a race-conscious society, it is written with feeling but a lack of sentimentality unusual in children stories. Marge came to the University last fall after two years at Black Mountain, a progressive college in North Carolina. Her home is in Long Island, N. Y.

Editor AGNES REGAN, a former contributor, brings out-of-season her Christmas story, *Let Nothing You Dismay*.

ROBERT CONN, a member of the School of Forestry, doubles in his woodsman role and an interest in writing. His sketch of fishing in Bougainville is his first to appear on the campus.

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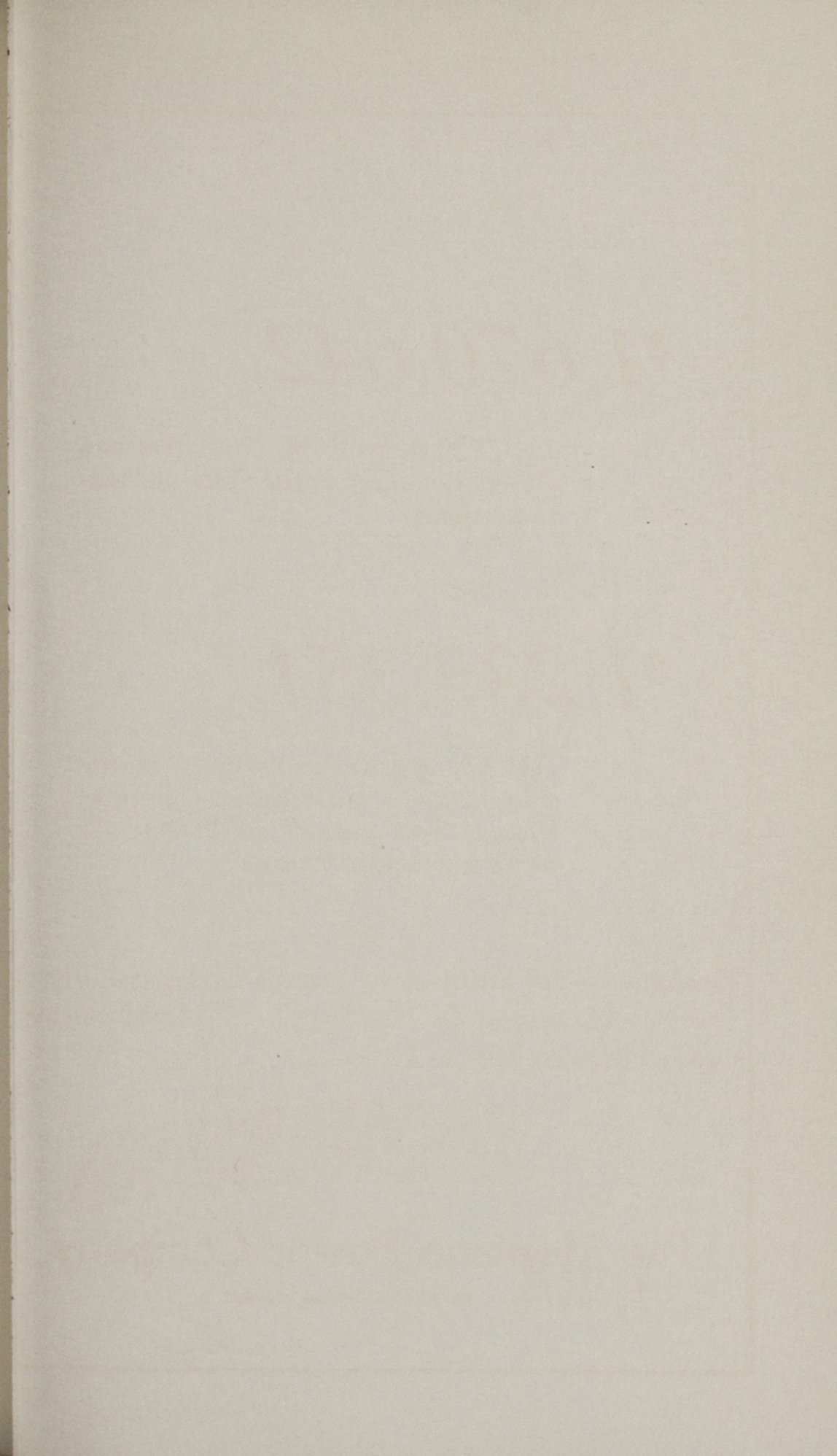
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