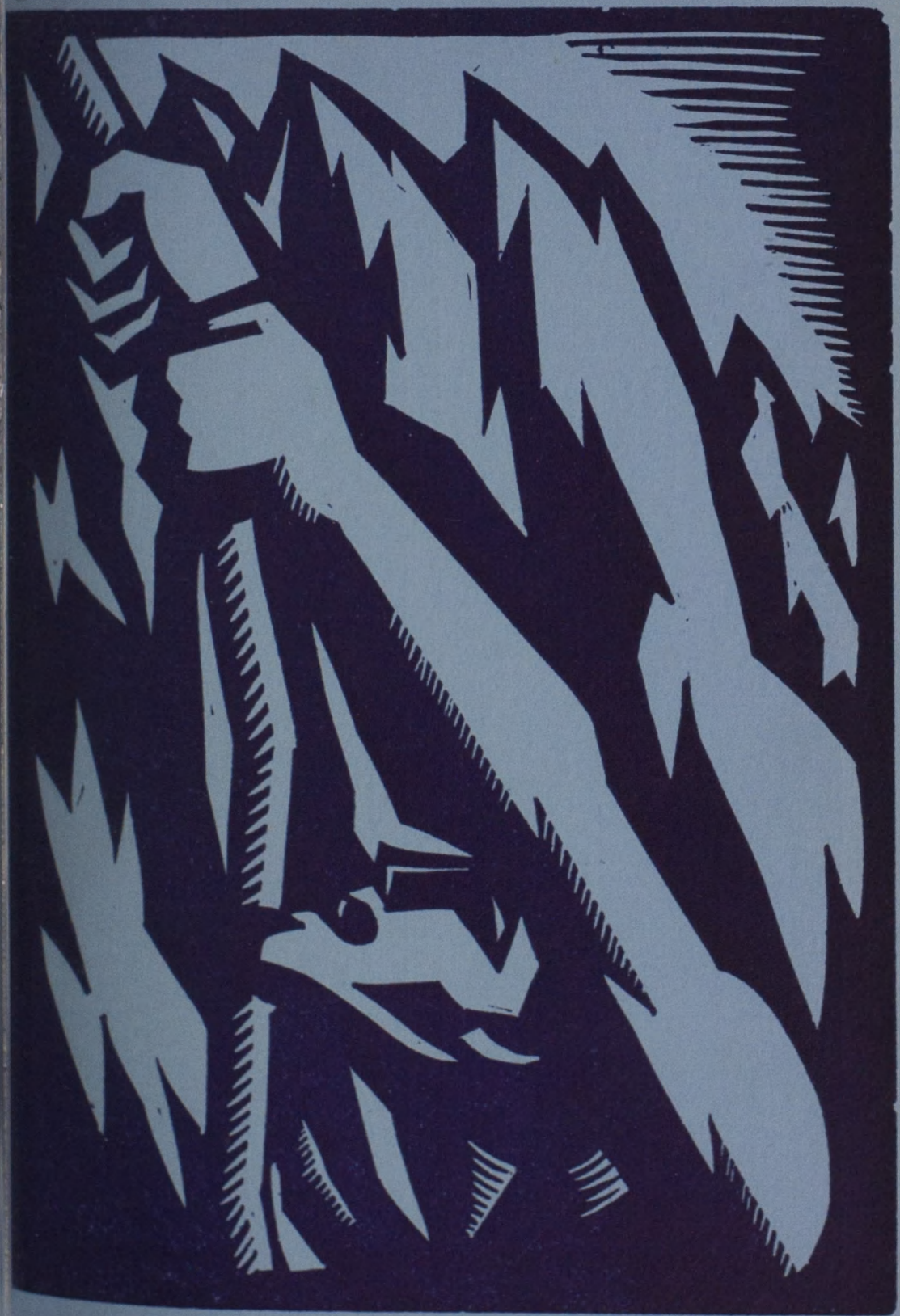
MOUNTAINEER



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MISSOULIAN

The Shelter of the Night

By DICK DARLIN(

THE SUN was almost down before I got to the last trap. It was just around the next bend in the coulee, under the overhanging cliff, where the creek decided to hide under the earth, but turned back, sneaking silently away over its smooth sandstone bed. In the dusk the cliffs and water and trees faded into each other. Only sounds were distinct, the trickle of water in the stream and the distant roar of the river at the mouth of the coulee. The river and sandstone cliffs. Cliffs with writing no one had ever been able to read. Indian signs so ancient that none of the modern Indians could understand. Primitive, ancient writing, so old that it seemed as old as the coulee and the river and a part of them.

The trap was far back under the cliff, so far back that I had to stoop low as I followed the ledges back to it. From the sand-gray shadows came a moaning sound, unearthly in the void of darkness. The weeping of a baby. Baby lost in the coulee. No baby was ever in Police Coulee. Only baby cats, baby wolves, baby deer. Maybe sometime there were baby Indians, only they were all gone now. They were gone before we came here.

I stopped and listened. The moaning had stopped. Only th sound of the trap chain hittin the sandstone; then a snarl, lo at first, mounting into a wail pain and hate. Then the sobbin again. I looked back over th path and unslung my rifle, slippe a shell into the chamber an moved slowly on.

The big cat snarled in fur when I rounded the last rock an came in sight of the trap. Sh was a big lynx, the biggest I eve saw in the coulee, tall as a colli but not so long. Her fur wa gray, gray with tan tips on he ears and tail. Twenty-five dollar on the spring fur market. aimed carefully with the gu That fur was too beautiful to ruin

The shot rang out loud, deafen ing in the shelter of the overhang ing cliff. Then it echoed as th other side of the coulee reflecte it. The side canyons picked it u and echoed and re-echoed it unti it disappeared somewhere by th river below or drifted into th prairie land above.

The cat writhed for a few mo ments and then lay still. I un sheathed my skinning knife an edged slowly toward her. Sud denly she was back on her fee with a snarl and leaping towar me. The chain held her, but leaped back, my heart pounding She fell backward, snarling in im

potent fury. Reaching carefully behind me I found a large flat sandstone, heaved it with all my strength and crushed her head.

I picked up the knife from where I had dropped it when she leaped. The skinning went slow. It was almost dark and twice I cut through the skin. There were other sounds now, sounds out in the coulee, sounds I couldn't hear but could only feel. Sounds of deer and wolves and owls creeping and flying silently among the trees and through the brush. The skin on my scalp was tight and drawn when I started back with the bloody pelt. By now it was so dark that even the big trees, the big cottonwoods, were only shadows.

The old-timers said that they had hanged three rustlers on these cottonwoods. Three rustlers, one on each tree. That was a long time ago. Forty years, fifty years, nobody remembered any more. Nobody had seen it. They were all dead. All the ones who had seen it.

Rustlers and Indians. They were the ones who used the coulee. They must have known the coulee like I know it. Maybe better. They and the bootleggers. There was an old whiskey-still in one of the side canyons. They were caught there. Right by the still with bottles filled with their poison, and the still running. I found lead pellets in the cliff. Lead pellets in the cliff which only told half the story. The rest of the story was told in three heaps of stones. Three heaps that sink a little deeper into the coulee floor every year.

It was funny I never found that side canyon again. There are so many, and they all look alike. A hundred years down here and you'd never know them all. That's why I never hunt down here. You can trap, but if you try to hunt you have to go through every one of them.

The trees were shapeless in the dark. Matter without form. Primordial and evil in the darkness, breathing their history and the history of the coulee. The history of nights in the coulee. Nights and Indians, and rustlers and bootleggers and wolves and lynx and hawks, all wrapped up in the history of the coulee.

I took a deer path that went around the trees, clear around them. The trees were too formless, too filled with the sobbing of the lynx, and too alive with formless forms. A rock slipped under my foot and fell into the creek. Each side canyon picked up the sound and filled the night with the splash. A splash and God only knew what else. God only knew what was in the coulee. God and what else to follow me two miles up the coulee before I could get out. Two miles of unbroken sandstone cliffs. No place where I could get out, no place until I reached the open cellar where old Johnson's house used to be. Old Johnson, who was crazy and lived alone in the coulee. When they sold his place after he was dead they cut the house in four pieces and winched it up the coulee bank. They winched it up the coulee bank in the only place in twelve miles that they could move anything out. Twelve miles from the mouth to the dirt road and bridges through the coulee.

The cliffs were black, black and empty. I swallowed the lump in my throat. Swallowed it and refused to look back, refused to look back at the trees and the overhanging ledge. Ahead was the

buffalo-chute, the graveyard of buffalo bones where the Indians had driven them over the cliff to mass slaughter. Buffalo bones, skulls and arrow heads, lay there together, remnants of a people who were gone, a people who lived and hunted and fought and murdered. And they were gone. Or were they. Maybe they weren't. If they were once here they may still be. Just as much here as they ever were. Maybe they were still here, along with the rustlers and the bootleggers and the lynx that was just dead and the ancient race who left the message on the stone by the river. And the people the message was for, maybe they were here too, here in the history of the coulee, the history that was older than the cottonwoods, as old as the cliffs themselves. They were here and had always been here. They were here tonight and they were with me.

The lynx fur caught in the thorns of a bush. The thorns grabbed the fur and fastened themselves to it. I tugged till they let go. It was my fur. I trapped it and the game warden didn't know. He didn't know I set my traps here. It was my fur and they weren't going to get it from me. None of them could get it from me, not the Indians nor the rustlers nor the cottonwoods, nor the bootleggers, nor the writing on the stone. It was mine and they couldn't take it away from me. I trapped it.

When I got around the buffalo-chute I went back to the regular path. It follows the lowest part of the coulee, crossing and recrossing the stream. I knew the path, but I wasn't sure. It was so dark that I couldn't see anything and I couldn't hear anything. Nothing but my heart and my footbeats. But I could fee the sounds. I could feel then louder than I ever heard them. could feel the Indians and th rustlers and all the rest of them The whole pack were there. Th whole history of the coulee wa there. It was there and alive.

I knew the path, but here in th dark it was different. The rock were bigger, bigger and in dif ferent places than they were i the daylight. My foot slipped an the water was over my boot an the rifle dropped in the creek. I the dark I couldn't find it an the unseens were laughing an the canyons laughed and tosse their laughs back and forth an up and down and louder and loud er till my ears were poundin from the noise.

My face was wet and my hand were wet and streams of water cold, icy cold, ran down my sides but only my foot was in the wa ter. My foot and my rifle an they were laughing. The cliff were laughing and the trees an the Indians.

The wind through the coule was hot, hot from the southwest Hot with the breath of Indian and rustlers and bootleggers. I was hotter when I was back on th path. Back on the path withou my rifle and I was icy cold. Th only sound was the water rollin in my boot. Rolling over an under and then over again as lifted my foot and set it down i the path.

Then I heard the sounds. didn't feel them. I heard them The sounds of bootleggers, an rustlers and Indians and old John son, crazy and dead, dead an crazy. The cliffs and the tree and the coulee and the writing o the stone.

The great cliffs leaned out ove

he trees, over the trees and the tream and the path and closed ogether ahead. Closed together head and behind and on both ides, and pressed down from bove. It was pressing in on me nd they were all crowding near- r and I couldn't breathe and I ouldn't shout and I couldn't run. I had to keep walking up the oulee until I got to old John- on's. Old Johnson who was razy. Old Johnson who had lived by himself in the coulee and had died alone here and was here to- night.

Then I threw away the fur and I threw away my knife and I could run, and I ran. I ran past the sounds that I couldn't hear and I ran past the echoes and I ran past old Johnson's, and I ran until I was out of the coulee and it was far behind me.

Then I knew what the writing on the stone said. What the message on the stone said for the man who could read it. It wasn't the language that they didn't know, those Indians who said they couldn't read it. It wasn't written in any language, not in any language anyone has ever spoken. It was written in the language of the coulee, in the language of the night and the cliffs and the trees, and only the man who knew the night and the cliffs and the trees and the coulee could ever read the message on the stone.

Active Vigil

By MARJORIE BOESEN

The dawn peers tentatively
    Into the dull wire basket
And faintly luminates
    Grey ashes of smoked cigarettes
Dropped on the torn revision sheets
    With careless hasty motion.
Old perforated ribbon lies
    Like years-past player piano rolls
Unwinding wild Wagnerian strain
    Of triumph, of defeat.
And grease-soaked paper napkins hold
    Small crumbs of sandwiches consumed.
All symbols of the hope, despair,
    Which circled alternately here.

Beginnings . . .

By ROBERT M. COOPER

THIS essay is concerned primarily with travail and birth. How far any offspring may grow therefrom, and what the specific nature of its future development may be, only the passage of time can answer. At this point, there is comfort enough in the knowledge that it was born in a viable human image. Herein is contained no attempt to prognosticate a maturity for this child of pain. However, I think that if it should ever reach such a state, its disposition might be more serene than hectic; more hopeful than pessimistic. But, beyond these two very general qualities, no prediction is made here as to the final character, if any, of its ultimate form and stature. It may be hoped, nevertheless, that its future attitudes will seek a positive expression on the higher levels of life, and that this expression will be worthy of being called a *Philosophy of Life* in the best and purest sense of that much-abused term.

When I state that this paper concerns the genesis of a life philosophy, it should not be construed as meaning simply my own. I am fairly convinced that in this manner are brought forth the philosophies of other like-minded men and women, not necessarily in a minority. My objective has been to explore from its deepest source what I have come to believe, at this stage of my life, is the psychological motivation of most genuine philosophies of life. When do they begin? How do they begin? Are they indispensable to the full and fruitful life, or, for that matter, to any life at all? When a person mentions his "philosophy of life" what does he mean? Is this phrase just so much sophistical cant, or does it have a real bearing on the lives of most men and women?

I have always suspected that the origins of any philosophy of life lie closer to the flame of an immediate and intensely affective personal experience, than to any perusal, no matter how zealous, of such formal tomes as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea*. Indeed, I feel that anyone, given the emotional need for so doing, might trace his "philosophic" attitude toward life *in toto*, back to the single, immediate, and wholly individual psychic experience mentioned above. Or, more precisely, back to a summary culmination of many smaller, subconscious, and, hence, forgotten, personal experiences. I believe that probably all philosophies of life, from the most empiric, objective varieties to the most ideal and subjective types, have their birth in the more or less sudden awareness that the familiar world of men and things in which we all endure is only the image

or mental reflection, imperfectly descried, of something more potent, more impersonal, and, thus, more terrifying, than anything conceivable through watching the surface by-play of daily phenomena without questioning whether or not this superficial outlook be the true reality or plan of "things-as-they-are."

I have often conceived this apparently instant vision of things-as-they-are as being exemplified in a dream of my own wherein I find myself comfortably seated in a warm and luminous living room, or parlor, surrounded by my friends. There is a general atmosphere of congeniality and friendship. We are taking refreshment while discussing everyday happenings. Suddenly, in this dream, I happen to look beyond the company through a shadowy doorway into the darkness of a farther room. There is enough light entering through a window to allow of my seeing what I now realize I should sooner or later have seen in any event. Filling the door frame is the silhouetted mass of something or someone that is faceless and formless. It stands motionless in the doorway simply regarding me. And its whole regard, I sense, is for me alone. Its simple "gaze" is so full of menace, so awesome, so terrifying that I spring from my chair and point frantically toward what I see. But, as the others, laughing, slowly turn their heads to see . . . I awake.

I awake. But for days the dream haunts me. I can not forget. I can not forget that watcher in the doorway. What could it mean? Why had it come? Had others seen it too? I question to discover that many others had seen something very much like it. Always it appeared in a dream. This dream seems elemental in its capacity to make the hair bristle and the blood freeze. It sets the mind to thinking upon other matters than traffic streams, lunch hours, class rooms, theatres, dances, concerts, or love affairs. Actually, one feels, there is much more in this than a dream. One feels it to be an objective truth cloaked in a threatening symbol.

But it need not always take the guise of a dream in the night. It may come while one is strolling in the streets, or be sensed on the brightest of spring or summer days while one is walking through a meadow with the sun at noon and God in his heaven. Suddenly there will come the feeling of a presence, of something gazing from a dark ravine or hedgerow, a something not quite canny. Then it is not wholly a dream, after all. The "thing" is real. It is something beyond life as one has known it. Or, perhaps, it is just an objectified anxiety, that final culmination in understanding of the myriad little, subconscious, personal experiences of which I spoke earlier. But whatever it is, the fact remains that I am now fully cognizant of something never realized before. There is now a real danger, an immediate peril, lurking at the heart of human existence as I see it. The bed-of-roses philosophy begins to wither. I begin to take notice of some of the effects of the preternatural being behind the "real" world as I now see it. I think I see its work in all pain and in all disaster: in family tragedies, in malformed bodies, in twisted minds, in murder, in war, in stupidity, in senseless cruelty, and in everything that goes to make of life something considerably less than perfection. I begin to see that this metaphorical vision of

mine is not all a fantasy, but instead something on the order of truth made manifest in the only way I could ever have understood it.

All of the above, then, might be the first pangs in the birth of a life philosophy. For I have thus been brought face to face with a truth, however indirectly, that exists in this world whether or not I have consciously quested for it. I now discern that this truth has a personal bearing beyond my first imaginings. I take notice of myself, and of what ravages, physical and mental, the "dark regarder" has accomplished upon my own substance. It takes no more than half an eye to see that there have, indeed, been certain effects. Probably these effects have been recognized for a long time by a keener eye within my inmost being. But now I am conscious of them. I find myself no longer a happy child in the forest. I am, instead, an unhappy man in the wilderness. For this reason, the faces of those who yesterday appeared friendly and familiar are seen today in a more penetrating light. They are the same faces, but at this point on my road, exteriors have begun to dissolve and hence are either meaningless or frightening. These faces can be remembered only from yesterday's frame of mind. Actually, what I now see before me in the material world is nearly as inscrutable and terrifying as the dark gazer of my dream. This land and these people are unexplored. They are strange and unknown. But, perhaps, they too have seen "it," and are feeling as I am feeling when we talk of cabbages and kings. I do not know. And even if our feelings are alike, could we lay bare between us what we know and still continue to live as civilized men? I doubt it. So we continue our pretense. The only sane course is ignorance, the holding to cherished beliefs and panaceas. We must not reveal any further to ourselves or to anyone what we know to be the facts. We must have a drink and a dance and a kiss, and forget about the dark regarder at the door. Come to think of it, he doesn't exist after all. He was all a dream, a moment of nerves. He'll be gone in the morning, and we can go back to work or school or play with the same old zest. All this deception, of course, comes in the usual period inevitably following any discovery of a painful truth. This is the Take the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse phase in the first pains of most philosophic births.

Naturally, the attempt to flee truth is about as successful as running from time. That moment arrives when all human modes of escape, from the most primitive to the most exalted, will no longer suffice to hold away the truth that human living is at bottom a deadly serious and most dangerous game. Once this truth is clearly seen, it can never be forgotten. It becomes as a hound of hell on one's traces from morning until morning. And no amount of money grubbing, artistic effort, sheer debauchery, or any other escape mechanism will bring it to heel. Finally, somehow, this may be realized, and then follows a period of despair, a total loss of hope and courage. During this time there may be a tentative fingering of triggers; visions of notes left on river banks or top floor hotel rooms. This is a time of nocturnal horrors, diurnal terrors, and the general feeling that death or a mental hospital is just around the bend.

But all this, somehow, passes too; and there may come the realization that countless others are enduring the same torture through their knowledge of things-as-they-are. Everyone is burning a candle to propitiate the dark gazer. And when this last is recognized, it may be seen that what at first appeared to be a vision of disaster, and, thus, a doorway to morbid anxiety, has now become a broad, uncharted field for constructive, philosophic thought. An entrance has been made to an understanding of life in general that would never have been found without that experimential understanding of things as being infinitely deeper and more tragically dangerous than a well.

This whole complex might mark the beginning of a life philosophy worthy to be called a philosophy. Because of one's knowledge of pain and love of knowledge, one's chances of comprehending the absolute are immeasurably increased. And in this process of total comprehension may be erected the only possible defense against the final darkness of hopeless failure and despair, which could only lead, through death or madness, to a last flight from any reality whatsoever.

The dark gazer still regards. But there is a feeling now that his purposes are not, necessarily, inimical to man. Rather, they may be impersonal, and, in some respects, even regardful of his best interests. Indeed, it may be, that in some mysterious way, this dark regarder, through his influence on individual men, may work through them toward some inconceivable cosmic good beyond the best vision of man.

Self Pity

By DONNA COSTER

Self pity is an old woman,
Seeking alms from passers by.
Golden sympathy she'll ask,
But silver tears she'll cry.

Poems

By JEAN ANN POCT/

Rue for Remembrance

What child dances there
With such quiet feet
And bright tears in her hair?
That is my own
Chasing moon shadows all alone.

What child is singing there
With a small voice and sweet
Such a melancholy air?
That is my daughter
Gathering spent waves by the dark water.

What child comes walking with feet of snow
Following softly wherever you go?
That is my daughter
(Not even sleep steps quieter)
She is my own child
And I have none but her.

Her feet are dream-quiet,
But her eyes are wild.

Dialogue of Regret

The light falls
Through years of space
Into this room,
This sterile, silent room
Where nothing troubles the calm
Of empty mirrors.

—Except perhaps this upturned book upon the floor.
The hollowed pillow is still warm.

That tree, alone and strong.
That lonely tree, straight in the sun.
Did the branches lean toward chattering orchards?
No crows stopped to learn.

That tree, safe on the hillside,
And the orchards flickering in gay, treacherous flame.

Oh happy prince amid October gold,
How shall you endure the shabby cold?
Since faith is no longer fire, returning spring
May find of you nothing save a frozen song.

The tin soldier really loved the doll,
Yet he could not aspire
(A room away)
To save her from the fire.
Casual hands soon cast
Him after her. The flames mocked his desire.

Yet they could not destroy
His heart,
Her imperishable rose.

In the maze of grey icicles,
Scorched air, and blackened wood,
The silver-perfect ash also remains.

Camden Bridge

By CARROLL O'CONNOR

THE TROLLEY from Broad Street shook suddenly as it crossed the switchbed at Spruce. Rush-hour riders standing in a close pack, reading evening newspapers, caught off guard, were abruptly thrown against each other.

In the rear of the car Leonard Giles came awake. The trolley's loud rattling had signalled him as it did nearly every night. He rubbed his eyes, buttoned his raincoat to the collar and pulled his hat brim down firmly. The man alongside him still slept soundly and open-mouthed, head slumped on chest, knees spread wide apart, hands in pockets. Giles nudged the man, and failing to wake him nudged again. Then Giles put his index finger against the man's cheek and jabbed lightly several times. When the man's eyes opened Giles leaned close to him and spoke into his ear: "C'mon. Next square is ours. We just passed Spruce."

The man yawned and nodded, glanced out of the car window. "Still drizzlin' eh?" he said, tonelessly. He wore a soiled, button-down cap and a leather jacket which he zipped closed and fastened tightly at the throat. The two men got up and pushed carefully through the crowd to the door. The car halted and they stepped down to the street into a thin, persistent rain that a sea breeze was blowing lazily up the Delaware River into downtown Philadelphia.

When the old trolley had tottered off, they crossed the tracks and walked south, side by side. Ahead of them a few street lamps glowed orange dully through the veil of rain, and only one or two vague-looking houses showed light. Darkness was the prevailing condition. The paved walks had few unbroken stretches, and side streets were deeply gored by the heavy commercial traffic that shuttled through them during daylight hours. Warehouse loading platforms jutted out several feet over the sidewalk in places, and anyone unfamiliar with the neighborhood would almost certainly have walked into them. But Leonard Giles and his companion knew the neighborhood well. They walked easily and silently, shifting occasionally into single file to pass some obstacle or rough spot along the way. The rain was falling faster now but the men did not hurry.

Once Leonard Giles stopped in a doorway to light a cigarette. His companion said, "Rain'll put it out on you."

Giles did not answer.

The other man said, "I hope

you're coming over to the social tonight."

Giles drew on his cigarette. He did not answer immediately. Then he said, "No, Bill, I'm not coming over."

Again they walked in silence until, several squares further on, they stopped under a street lamp. Its dim light partially revealed a narrow, two-story house that had once been joined to a row of similar, connected houses. Now it stood alone in an otherwise vacant lot. On one side it showed a raw wound where its neighbor had been roughly torn away by wrecking machines, and around it lay sundry rubbish, remnants of the other houses that once occupied the site, and the cast-off junk of the neighborhood. The upper floors of this house were obviously not in use. The front door had been removed some time before and the windows were forlorn, paneless voids. The only sign of life was a lively little beam of light escaping from a chink in the boards covering a basement window.

Leonard Giles jerked his thumb in the direction of the light and said, pleasantly, "Somebody home and dinner all waiting, eh Bill?"

Bill nodded. "Just like always," he replied. The two men fixed their attention on the light for several moments, neither speaking. Giles drew deeply on his cigarette and threw it into the street. At length Bill spoke again, regarding Giles seriously, quizzically. "What's the matter with you, boy?" he said. "How come no see for the last couple of months?"

"You see me every night," Giles said.

"You know what I mean," Bill said, shortly. "Lotta guys been asking for you around to the club. Wives been asking for Shirley. They say, 'Where's ol' Giles lately?' and I tell 'em you been working nights. I tell 'em you gotta bring home insurance stuff to work on."

Giles laughed softly. "Do they believe that?"

"No, they don't believe that," Bill said. "And one of these days they'll quit asking about you."

"I hope it's soon."

Bill shook his head. "You don't mean that, son, 'cause you got more sense than that. And there's Shirley, you know. Shirley's got to have. . . ."

Giles snapped, "Leave Shirley to hell out of this, will you? She's not complaining. She doesn't get any more kick out of that social club than I do, or ever did." He lowered his voice, which had become loud and agitated. He said, "I'm sorry, Bill. I don't mean to get sore, but I've been over this thing an awful lot of times with you, and you should know how I feel about it."

"Yeah, I know," said Bill, suppressed anger in his voice. "I sure do know that."

Giles sighed, heavily. "Well, okay then. No sense hashing it over again, 'specially out here in the rain."

Bill nodded in agreement. But all at once, as if his voice had rebelled against its owner somehow, words poured out of him in a hoarse stream. "Giles, you're just a wise guy, a real wise guy," he rasped. "But one of these days you're going to get one damn big surprise when you wake up and find you ain't got no friends at all, and I mean at all, strictly. Just 'cause you been to college ain't no sign the Whites are gonna mess with you, 'cause they ain't gonna mess with you no matter what you do. Your only

friends are your own people and pretty soon they ain't gonna mess with you neither." Bill had to shout the last sentence after Giles, for the latter had whirled in anger and begun to trot quickly away. Bill spat. He watched the retreating figure for a few seconds, then, shaking his head in mingled sadness and disgust, he made his way to the little beam of light and dinner.

Far down the street, Giles was walking swiftly. His anger had subsided somewhat because he was used to arguing that particular point with Bill Brown. Often their arguments were much more heated, and once they had locked in fury outside of Bill's house, beating each other until the screams of Bill's wife and a neighbor woman had frightened them into calling a halt. The next night they had met after work at the Broad Street trolley stop and ridden home together, just as they had every other night. But each of these small conflicts left Leonard Giles in a state of depression. It was not, he knew, the monotonously carping theme of Brown's position that created this effect, nor was it Brown himself. Probably the melancholy was brought on by Giles' own realization, whenever Brown broached the matter, that he was faced with a problem that defied satisfactory solution. Not that it was a difficult problem, because it was not, really. It was simple when one looked at it straightaway. Brown had solved it and so had the members of the club, and so, no doubt, had ninety-nine percent of all the Negroes in the world. Even children, Negro children, seemed to have the thing fairly well settled in their minds. Often he would sit on the front steps of his house on Sunday and watch them playing ball in the street, and invariably there would be four or five Italian kids from over on Spruce Street in the game. He would watch closely to see if the problem would manifest itself in some form, but it never did. They got along easily.

And, in fact, he had always gotten along easily as a kid, and at the university, and in the office. But that, actually, was not the problem, *the* problem, *his* problem. Anyone who wanted to could get along, but was getting along, as such, the desired end? Brown got along, and the club got along, and the kids got along, and the people on this street got along. But that kind of "getting along" did not seem to Leonard Giles the final solution. It struck him that somewhere in the figuring those people had become indifferent to the problem, that they had grown tired of working on it. They seemed to have reached a point and then, without reason, stopped. It was as if they had said, "We've worked it out this far, and we're content, we concede there is a better answer, but this one satisfies us." Giles thought of it in terms of a quotient carried to one decimal place instead of three, or five. It made for a reasonable answer, but not a completely accurate one. Brown and the others had solved the problem, apparently, but they had conceded things. That was not *his* problem. *His* problem was arriving at a solution without conceding things.

For example, how could you believe that the problem was solved while conceding that it was possible to live on this street or in certain streets in Camden or in Germantown, but not in Dar-

)y? Or had you really solved anything while conceding that Shirley's mother, when visiting here from Louisville, could stay at the Troy hotel in the Sugar Hill section, but not ever, even had she the price, at the Bellevue? Could you lay your figuring aside and be satisfied while conceding that an office manager's position with the Quaker State Surety Corporation was the very pinnacle of achievement, that no Negro had ever before reached that dizzy eminence, and that no Negro would ever scale that high or higher in future, including Leonard Giles, B.S., University of Pennsylvania, Class of '31.

Brown could stop there and call the job done. He could concede that much, he could concede far more than that, and he had done so. So had the club. Leonard Giles had not, and knew he could not. Moreover, Giles felt that attending the club socials while the problem had not been resolved to his own satisfaction, would be fouling a principle, for it would be accepting the little niche in life his own race had scooped out for itself, the niche that represented all the concessions simultaneously. He smiled without amusement as he remembered once trying to explain that idea to Brown.

Some fibre of Brown's sluggish imagination had been electrified, seemingly, and he had nodded energetically. "I see, Len. I see," he had assured Giles. "I get your idea now."

Mildly surprised, but definitely encouraged, Giles had proceeded to expound the idea at greater length. But Brown, displaying a wiliness Giles had not hitherto suspected in him, interrupted with the solemn inquiry: "What about Shirley, Len? How does she feel about things? Maybe she don't look at things that way. Maybe you're doing the wrong thing keeping her away from the club. Ever think of that, Len?"

Annoyed, Giles had tried to wave aside the suggestion, but Brown had pressed for an answer and Giles presently saw that the crafty fellow was not seeing the point at all, but simply trying to have his own way. Giles had decided to abandon that line, or any other line, of reasoning with Brown thereafter. He had dismissed Brown's proposition by stating that Shirley felt precisely the same way he did.

What struck Giles as humorous, though, when afterward he thought of that conversation, was Shirley's real feeling about the club. It was far more antagonistic than his own. Shirley was as undeniably white as any White woman. She felt superior, for that reason, to the club, almost despised it, and stayed away of her own volition. She concealed the feeling admirably well, however, and Giles often amused himself trying to picture the effect its discovery would have on the large, placid face of Bill Brown.

Sometimes he imagined too how it would impress the club and the neighborhood people, but those visions he drew in his mind were consistently unpleasant. He saw everyone withdrawing from him in horror because of Shirley's attitude, blaming him for it as much as Shirley. Then he would see them reacting to the idea of a veritable Judas in their midst, he would visualize their expressions changing slowly from horror to fury as they became aware of what he, Giles, had done to them. He would try to imagine the vengeance they might attempt against him and Shirley, and then

he would curse himself for thinking such stuff and put the entire train of thought out of his mind. Still, he could never at those times escape a penetrating twinge of uneasiness, and a fear of loneliness that were unsettling to encounter. Brown's warning that one day he might not be welcome either within or without the racial orbit that presently confined him was enough to paralyze Giles. He would not dream of admitting this to a living soul, and yet he knew he must admit it to himself.

He noticed that the rain had stopped. Fog was beginning to inch cityward from the river, and as it settled lower and lower Giles found that he could no longer make out the roofs of the neighborhood. Constant rain that day and his brush with Bill Brown had made Giles depressed. And now, oddly enough, not being able to see the familiar light of Shirley's kitchen window seemed to exaggerate his mood. It was as if he had been depending on that light up ahead to revive his spirit, and that Fate, his relentless adversary, had blown a fog between him and his last chance. Then, suddenly, he laughed, thinking of the curious directions one's mind sometimes followed, the weird little plots it concocted, and the strange willingness of one to let one's mind travel illogically, God, he thought, but one ought to have control of that. And if one did not have control of that, well. . . . Giles hesitated. Well, what? What did that mean? What kind of an individual had no control over his . . . of what he was thinking?

Another distressing thought, that. Giles forced it from him.

He had nearly arrived at his corner, but still he could not see the kitchen light. Odd, h thought, that it should be out, an it must be out because he woul certainly see it from here. The something Giles could not immed ately understand compelled hi to run the last few yards to th steps of the wooden, three-stor tenement that was his home an Shirley's. What had happene to the light? he thought, wor riedly. Why wasn't it on? Shir ley should be home now. She al ways was. Always. She wouldn' have gone out for anything be cause it had been raining and th stores were too far to walk to Maybe the lights had gone out i the house, blown fuse or some thing. They were always goin out. He glanced up, anxiously at the three ball windows facin the street. Each glowed feebly and Giles knew there was nothin wrong with the lights. Then what . . . ?

He ran up to the door and cursed quietly because he could not immediately find the latch key. A terrifying notion was creeping into Giles' consciousness, which, in a matter of seconds had become unmanageable. What, he thought, if she had gone. There was actually nothing to keep her with him except sheer fidelity, and for some inexplicable reason Giles had never looked for that in Shirley. This sort of living, without having in view an attainable goal, without particular direction, was, he knew, even less palatable to Shirley than to himself. And she was white. Shirley was born of a people, his people, with whom she now appeared to have no earthly connection, a people in whose number Giles was everlastingly included. Oh God, he moaned inwardly, if after

verything else, this thing were ruly facing him. . . .

Giles fumbled hurriedly with his key, opened the house door, nd without bothering to close it fter him, ran inside. Somewhere n back of his mind small ques- ions were pricking him, wanting o know why he was becoming rantic, why he had begun to per- spire, why he was rushing, what e was being afraid of. Shirley night have laid down to rest, urned off the light. Wasn't that ikely, after all? But Giles gnored the questions, fearful that nother part of his mind might suggest ominous answers. He was panting now, and fear had a firm hold on him. He bounded to the second floor and wheeled down the narrow little hall to- ward another door. On reaching this he did not stop to search for a key, nor even to try the knob, but threw himself at it bodily. The weak lock snapped with a sharp noise and Giles crashed onto the floor of the apartment. He lay there for several minutes, breath- ing heavily and irregularly, feel- ing quick-throbbing pain in his knees and his right arm. He tried to collect his thoughts into an or- derly pattern but found that too difficult. He tried to rise but the effort hurt him, so he gave it up. He laid back on the floor, care- fully stretching out his arms and legs, and waited for his eyes to master the gloom. When he had rested a few minutes, when his head had cleared, he would get up and look about the rooms. It wasn't necessary, of course. He knew that. But he would look anyway. There would be no note, he was sure. Shirley would not have left a note. It was not her temperament, and then too, she wrote so poorly. Her closet would be empty. Giles' breathing was becoming normal again, but his heart was beating quickly and loudly.

Some thirty minutes later Leonard Giles stood midway on the big steel bridge that wedded Camden to Philadelphia. He remembered watching them build it as a kid, and how every year he came in the spring to watch them paint it, until he grew too old to be interested. Funny, though, he had never been on the bridge before. On the New Jersey side he could see colored lights blinking on and off on roadside nightclubs along the river shore. Camden was brightly alive, and to his right the Philadelphia skyline gleamed like a chest of jewels. He wondered, as he had wondered countless times in the last half-hour, if Shirley might be walking somewhere in that city of lights. The bridge lights, strung high on cables and runners, threw a faint yellow glow downward against shimmering black water, causing Giles, as he looked below sudden- ly, to imagine millions of tiny golden worms squirming on a patch of black velvet.

Louisville? he asked himself, had she gone to Louisville? No. Not there. Her mother was in Louisville, and her mother was black like he was, and knew only black people like the people of the club. And Shirley was white. She would seek her own among Whites.

A great ball seemed to be growing in his stomach, threaten- ing to force its way to his throat, to break screaming from his lips. He tried not to think of Shirley. He searched the sky over Phil- adelphia for the beacon high atop the Quaker State Surety Building. He found it and followed the cir-

cular path of its beam. Now he thought of Benson, head of personnel, and he heard Benson say again: "Good man, Giles . . . credit to company . . . essential employee . . . can't have you in contact work, however . . . you see why . . . don't have to draw pictures . . . I'm liberal that way . . . directors can't see it . . . my hands tied . . . can't send you along . . . sorry."

He thought of a woman, a white woman he had seen somewhere. She had spied him coming toward her in a fog. She had halted, petrified, then hurried across the street away from him. Who was she, anyway? Where was that, now? Where in the hell . . . ? Why sure. It was tonight. It was tonight as he had stumbled aimlessly along cobbled Delaware Avenue. It was after he had left the empty apartment.

The woman? Who knows. Any woman, he guessed. It had happened before. She hadn't even been pretty. Why did they all think you wanted to drag them into some alley, or cellar?

Suddenly the great ball in him got out of control. It burst from him, shaking his body violently, leaving him sagging lifelessly against the bridge guard rail. He began to cry, and he did not t to prevent his thoughts from r turning to the apartment and Shirley. They had been his refu from oppression, from the lif sapping moods that had so oft gripped him pitilessly. There could fly from disappointmer There was his link with love, a by that token his link with a things good and fine. There had experienced a phase of livi that he knew must exist in t outer world of streets and buil ings and White people and Bla people, even though that wor cynically denied it each day to h face. There at home each nigh with his white wife who was n White, were the wonderful gif of life that during the day ha not been offered to his Bla hands. But the link with goo ness, with love, had been broke and he knew, he knew, he coul never reconstruct it.

He straightened himself an swung out over the guard rai and the world of lights pi wheeled crazily and gaily befor his eyes. So gaily, in fact, tha in the last second before h plunged among the tiny, squirm ing, golden worms, his oppressio vanished and Leonard Giles wa almost gay himself.

Hooper

By REID COLLINS

THERE isn't a whole lot to be said about the position of program director in a small, Midwest radio station. I do my job and get paid for it—not much, but enough to keep the variety of wolves away.

Life runs pretty smooth and dull—or at least it *did* run smooth and dull until the day I looked up from my work and peered at a young man in a blue suit who promptly perched on my desk and pored over my personal mail.

"Who are you and what do you want?" I asked.

"Hooper's the name — Jerry Hooper. And I'm going to work for you." He revealed an expanse of teeth and clutched my hand.

I tried to think if we were firing any announcers or writers, concluded that we weren't, and curtly informed him, "Sorry—uh, Hooper, we aren't hiring anybody just now. If you'll leave your name at the reception desk, we'll call if—"

"Oh, but you are," he countered. "You've got to have someone on the morning shift."

Morning shift? Hummm . . . "Hey, what do you mean? We've got Morris on the morning shift and he's doing fine. Now, do I have to be rude, or will you leave quietly—the same way you came in, whatever that was." I gave him my toughest executive stare and waited.

He leaned farther over my desk, almost into my lap. "Morris isn't with us anymore," he crooned into my face. "He's gone," he added funereally, "gone to the far beyond."

I found myself following his pointing finger to the patch of blue outside my window. I recovered and snapped, "Now see here. I'm a busy man and have no time to fool with crackpots! If you're serious about a job, just mention your name to the receptionist. . . ."

He straightened up and gazed at me patronizingly. "Perhaps you didn't hear Jerry," he said. "Morris has departed, flew the coop, as it were, and you need help."

I struggled away from his emphatic finger. "What are you driving at? Morris? Gone?"

"Morris. Gone."

"Where?" I asked simply.

"Chicago."

"Why?"

"Got a better job—there are such things to be had, you know."

"How do you . . . ?"

"Met him in the bar downstairs. He was bragging about leaving poor old KFBZ in a hole.

I put two and two together and got—well, you know."

I sat there for a while in abject silence. There was no reason for this idiot to lie. If he wanted work—even if he got it and had lied about it, Morris would be back. I looked up at Hooper's nodding countenance. "You're absolutely . . . ?"

"Positive."

"How much experience have you—"

"Five months with the Voice of Burma—My own illegal oscillator, but what a following! Fan mail galore! Sultans, dancing gals, G. I's, gooks—"

"Do you really think you could—"

"Could I?" he screamed. "The world's at our collective feet!" I looked at my shoes. "You've got the newest find this side of heaven!"

Lest my 'find' throw himself off the desk, I got up and walked to the window. "Suicide," I muttered. "Out and out suicide. If he's anything on the air like he is now—suicide." I turned to find him absorbed with my mail.

"Not an application in the bunch," he observed. "Man, you're lucky I came along. Do you happen to reach Chicago?"

"Yes," I said expansively. "On a good day we—why?"

"Just wondering. Got a poor old mother there." He winked. "Just checking to make sure she could hear me."

"You're fired!" I exclaimed.

"Hired," he corrected.

I sat down. "Hired," I sighed, thinking of an offer out West I had had ten years before.

"I'll start tomorrow," he said, and clambered down from my desk.

I eyed his effervescent figure and wondered what the boss would say, but then, realizing hi intention of leaving, I said, "Wai a minute. What about the detail —you know, pay, etc.?"

"Obviously I'll be worth te cents more than Morris, and I'l work the same shift."

"But, your character; do yo drink? Chase around? Are yo a drifter? Married or single—"

His blue eyes carressed me sym pathetically. "Now, Dad," h cooed, "you have your fun an I'll have mine, huh?" He wa gone.

A slight ripple of laughter fol lowed him through the continuity department as he exchanged pleasantries with the writing staff. A cascade of giggles issued from the receptionist's desk out front, and I eyed the "Station Policy Rules" on the wall of my office. "No horseplay, No fraternizing with members of the opposite sex in the station, No—" I gave up and checked through my correspondence to make certain that there were no applications in the mail. There were none.

That night I turned our radio dial to KFBZ's frequency and pulled the covers over my head, hoping against hope that someone would declare war on the United States during the night and atom bomb us. We had been off the air for an hour, and my wife, Marge, turned over and nudged me. "What's the matter, dear? Aren't you going to turn off the radio? There's nothing on now."

"I want it to wake me early in the morning," I explained, and fell into a fitful slumber.

The next thing I knew, I was struggling with the jangling phone and batting at the radio beside the bed. Finally securing the phone, I jammed it to my ear and

heard a string of invectives that would make a sailor blush. It was Mr. Walkins, owner and manager of KFBZ.

"Are you crazy? Call the FCC! Get the mayor! Dynamite the transmitter!" he spouted.

I began to focus. "What's wrong, chief?" I sputtered. In the next moment I knew it was a foolish question, for my attention was forced to the blatting radio which was playing Stan Kenton's "Bank Night In an Opium Palace," or something.

"We're sunk!" my employer screeched. "Some damn fool is playing neurotic music over our—*my* station—at this time in the morning! He's dispensed with the Star-Spangled Banner and the standard opening. Listen!"

The boss had become unintelligible, so I held the phone in my lap and heard Jerry Hooper say, "With the playing of our new theme, station KFBZ, featuring Jerry Hooper, begins another day of gum flapping. The temperature at our transmitter would frost you, so I won't bother. The time in five seconds will be later than you think and you won't get up anyway. I hope you're all late for work, because I don't know you and you don't know me."

I wished at that moment that Hooper's comment included me; unfortunately, I *did* know him! I turned to where Marge should have been: "Marge, will you pack my—" She was gone. "Left me," I mused, but then, heard something clattering about in the kitchen. Dragging the radio with me, I wandered out to the kitchen where Marge had breakfast waiting.

"Marge," I begged weakly, "listen." The radio was off, of course, and its wire dragged despondently behind me.

"I've heard. It woke me right away. Better eat and get down town," she said.

"Eat?"

"Eat."

I walked past her and out the door, the radio nestled in my pajamaed arms. When I regained consciousness, I was driving into the parking lot next to KFBZ. The grey dawn was anything but kind to a figure clothed only in pajamas, but I was insensible to cold.

"Downs! Downs!" I turned to greet Mr. Walkins.

"What a lovely shade of blue!" I commented on his night wear. "You're—uh — up early, aren't you?"

"Of course I'm up early!" he screamed. "Who could sleep with the knowledge that imbeciles have infiltrated into his employ?"

We walked up the five stories in stoic silence; I could not think of a logical excuse; Mr. Walkins could not think. As we entered the studios, our attention was attracted to a blazing bow tie hovering over the turn tables in the control room. Upon closer examination, we discovered that the new 'find' of KFBZ was attached. He was changing records with one hand and answering the telephone with the other. But, the strange thing about it was—he was smiling!

Mr. Walkins opened the control room door and stood looking at the maneuvering figure of Jerry Hooper. "Do you see that window?" inquired my boss. "JUMP!"

The phone rang before Hooper could reply. "Excuse me," he said, picking up the receiver. "Hello — adorable? Oh, thank you, madame. Well, it's nothing any enterprising young man couldn't think of. Well, thank you! I'm sure Mr. Walkins would

appreciate a letter. Good-by." He turned to us and, cueing in a record, he asked, "Now, what was it you wanted?"

"My name is Walkins," began my boss, "and I just thought I'd drop down and see how you were getting along." He moved forward menacingly. Although I was behind him, I could see his murderous features reflected in the glass panel.

Jerry neatly side-stepped and, grasping Mr. Walkins' hand, he exclaimed, "As a matter-of-fact, there is something you can do. I've been getting so many phone calls I can hardly find time to follow the program schedule. It would help if you'd answer the phone for a while. See? There it goes again."

Mr. Walkins snatched up the ringing phone. "I know and I'm terribly sorry," he started. "What?" A long pause. "Unique, eh? I'm to be congratulated? I mean, I am, indeed. Ah, thank you. Of course—good-by." He turned and shuffled slowly from the room.

I waited until his office door clicked shut. "My boy," I choked and sat down. "My own . . . my little boy . . ." I stayed there until 9 o'clock, listening to Jerry Hooper insult Congressmen, sponsors, network programs, and anything else that popped into his twisted mind. Mr. Walkins was answering the phone from his office.

Finally I turned and faced the owner of a fatherly hand upon my shoulder. "Come, Downs," said my boss. "We'd better go. We need rest."

Marge had hot coffee waiting for us and we sat quietly in the living room. The sun streamed through the window and gleamed on the perspiring face of Mr Walkins. "Where did you ge nim?" he asked finally. "How much did he cost?"

I started to relate the entir story, but thought better of it "Some other time, chief. It's a long affair."

"Okay, my boy. But I won't forget it—I'll never forget you." He clung to my bathrobe like a water spaniel for a few seconds and then I drove him home.

The next morning there was a night letter on the front desk. It was addressed to Hooper. Since I knew that he must have seen it long before I got to the office, I went back and questioned him.

"Nope. Haven't had time to open it yet. Probably an offer from some bigwig in Chicago."

And he was right. It was an offer from a bigwig in Chicago—but not just *any* bigwig. It was from the *biggest* wig in the town!

"Now, what would I do in Chicago?" he asked, pasting the night letter on the continuity wall. "I've seen Chicago, and I like it here." He nodded slyly in the direction of the front office where the receptionist was hammering on her typewriter.

I said, "Oh," and walked out to Millicent Smith's desk. I surveyed her from all angles, even slinking around behind her desk to see what she looked like from the back. "Dark brown hair," I noted. "Green eyes, nice complexion, nice clothes." I hadn't noticed such things for a number of years, but added "nice figure" to my evaluation of Millicent.

As I was making my third trip around her desk, she looked up. "Something?" she asked.

"No, nothing, Millicent—er, Miss Smith. I was just looking."

She stopped typing. "At what?" she asked.

"At your legs," I replied absently. Catching myself, I babbled, "I mean, your form—that is, your typing form. Very good."

She looked at me from the corner of her eye, smiled and continued typing.

"Ah, Miss Smith," I interrupted. "Are you acquainted with our new announcer?"

"You mean Mr. Hooper? I work here, don't I?"

"Yes," I chuckled uneasily, "I guess anyone working here would *have* to be acquainted with Mr. Hooper. Ah, Miss Smith, have you ever been out with him? I mean on a date or anything with him?"

"It's against the rules, Mr. Downs," she replied. "You know I wouldn't disobey station policy." She appeared shocked at the mention of such a thing.

Sitting down in what I considered to be a fatherly manner, I looked her in the eye: "Miss Smith, you're not telling me the truth, are you?"

She averted her gaze for a moment and replied, "No, Mr. Downs, I haven't been telling you the truth. I . . . I'm sorry . . ."

"Good!" I chortled. "I knew you were lying from the start!" I sat down again, relieved.

Millicent sat with her fingers poised uncertainly above her machine, staring at my gleeful person. "I . . . I'm fired, I s'pose. But Jerry—Mr. Hooper, that is—is awfully hard to discourage, and—"

I held her hand. "Miss Smith, there are some rules that were made to be broken. You have had the insight to single out one of those rules and break it." I kissed her hand, which she promptly withdrew.

"You aren't angry? It's all right?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," I replied grandly. "It's all right." I sauntered back to my office.

The next few days saw mail piling up on all available desks and horizontal spaces in KFBZ's offices. Life smiled on KFBZ; sponsors begged for time; network bosses toyed with the idea of a Jerry Hooper program originating in our own little studios; my boss was in heaven. Our only worry centered about Miss Smith; if she could interest our 'discovery' indefinitely, our fortune was in the bag. Obviously the erratic new announcer could never be enticed by the many offers from larger stations as long as Miss Smith held his attention.

However, when I came back from lunch one noon, Mr. Walkins beckoned me into his office. I closed the door and he came to the point: "Downs, what do you think about Miss Smith?"

"She's our one-way ticket to retirement," I stated.

"That's not what I meant. Do you think she's working too hard? I noticed she looked a trifle peaked this morning." He leaned forward and whispered gravely, "That's bad, you know."

Of course we both observed Miss Smith carefully for the rest of the afternoon. Mr. Walkins was right—she did look different. But the climax came when our astounded eyes saw Mr. Hooper stalk past her desk without so much as making a pass at her!

My boss called a council of war at six o'clock and we sat in his office for five minutes without speaking. Finally he looked

squarely at me: "The breath of disaster is whistling down our necks, Downs. Something has got to be done! Now, what?"

"I'm stuck," I admitted. "I've been happily married for twenty-seven years, so I'm completely out of touch with cupid—well, you know what I mean."

"Yes, but she seems to sort of confide in you and—" At that moment the phone rang. "Hello," said my boss. "I'm Walkins. Who? Now, wait a second—you don't really—But, we'll retract anything—sue! You're crazy as hell. Even Hooper would never say a thing like that. How much? Now wait. . ." I heard the other receiver click and Mr. Walkins sat staring into space, still holding the phone in his hand.

"Who was it?" I ventured.

"J. C. Bell, the executive," he said hoarsely.

"Not of the Hoveral Steel outfit?"

"The same." He threw down the receiver. "Downs," he said, "we're sunk. Hooper has just involved us in the most horrible thing since the Dreyfus Affair in France." He paused for emphasis. "Mr. Hooper has just called the emminent J. C. Bell an overstuffed frog! On my station! We're as good as sued for $500,000!"

I gulped and said, "Now, chief, keep calm. Maybe Hooper didn't mean exactly—"

"What difference does it make what he meant?" exploded my boss. "We're sued! Sued! Get Hooper in here!"

In a few minutes Jerry Hooper shuffled in and sat down before Mr. Walkins' desk. He was subdued, not at all his usual self. Without even bothering to plunder the cigar box, he asked, "What do you want?"

"Hooper," squeaked the chief, "you've scuttled us! You've crucified the hand that bit you! You've taken the bread from our children's mouths! Why? Why did you have to pick on the Hoveral Steel bunch? Why did you call Mr. J. C. Bell an overstuffed frog? Why?" He bit a pencil in half and collapsed in his chair.

Hooper said simply, "Mr. J. C. Bell looks like an overstuffed frog. I believe in being honest."

"My God, you don't have to be *that* honest!" I said. "There is such a thing as diplomacy." I, too, bit a pencil.

"Mr. Bell looks and acts like an overstuffed frog and I'd be only too happy to tell him so," stated Hooper glumly.

I buzzed for Miss Smith. (For fifteen years I have buzzed for someone when an emergency arises.) Miss Smith opened the door.

"Come in," I said for Mr. Walkins, who evidently could not speak.

Mr. Hooper sat looking out the window as Miss Smith seated herself. Neither of them so much as glanced at the other.

"Now, Miss Smith," I began. "We are going to be sued for $500,000 and we would like you to call Jackson, our lawyer. There will undoubtedly be other little tasks which will fall your way, and we . . . Miss Smith, are you listening?"

She looked up and I saw that she was crying. "Your loyalty is appreciated," I said. "But don't let your concern run away with you. There's work to be done and—"

"Do you need me?" interrupted Hooper.

"As a matter-of-fact, NO!" screamed Mr. Walkins, who had come to life. "We have never needed you! We have never needed a Judas in our midst!"

"Please, Mr. Walkins—sit down and we shall try to salvage our shattered lives," I begged. "This is no time for emotional display. Miss Smith, you are soaking the phone book. Snap out of it!"

"I'm sorry," she sniffled. "I hate you."

"Me?" I exclaimed.

"No—him." She pointed at Hooper.

"May I be excused?" he asked.

"Sit down!" thundered my boss.

"Yes, Mr. Hooper. Please sit down." I had an idea. Turning to Miss Smith, I used the father technique: "Millicent, I fear that you are at the bottom of all our troubles. Are you, Millicent?"

"No, of course not," she blubbered.

"Why are you and Mr. Hooper on the outs?" I inquired gently.

"Who cares?" bawled my boss. "$500,000 and you play Mr. Anthony!"

"Please shut up," I interrupted. "You are clouding the issue. Now, Miss Smith . . ."

"Leave her alone," commanded Hooper.

I was encouraged and addressed them both, "At last, we have gotten to the crux of the matter. Mr. Hooper, do you admit that you are feeling truculent because of your tiff with Millicent—and that this explains your insulting the Hoveral Steel Company?"

"No," he said.

"And you, Millicent—you do not give a particular damn about our being sued, do you?"

"No," she said. "I mean . . ."

"Sued!" screamed Mr. Walkins, and he settled back in his chair.

"Hooper," I asked bluntly, "do you care for Miss Smith?"

"None of your damn business," he snapped. "I'm deserting the ship anyway."

"Coward," alleged Miss Smith through her tears.

"I'm an old man," I sighed. "I have seen much of life. I have lived too long to be blind to the sight of two in love. You are in love!" I stood up. "You can't deny it!"

Mr. Hooper and Miss Smith were hopelessly entangled in each other's arms and my boss was sobbing into his hands, so I made a hurried exit — only to collide with the person of J. C. Bell, who was entering the boss's door.

"I'm Bell," he said.

"I'm leaving," I explained.

"What's that?" He pointed to the figure of my distraught employer. "And those?" he added, indicating Mr. Hooper and Miss Smith.

"Those," I answered, "are the results of your suit."

"Where's Walkins?"

I pointed to my boss. "There."

As Mr. Bell walked into the office, I leaned against the door frame, trying to recall that offer of ten years past.

Mr. Bell shook Mr. Walkins. "I'm sueing you," he said. "I'm Bell."

Mr. Walkins sat up. "Go away," he said. "I'll see you in court—and if you think you can get $500,000 out of me, you're crazy as hell. There isn't that much money on earth."

Miss Smith and Mr. Hooper stopped necking and Hooper ordered, "Shove off, Bell. You're

disturbing something beautiful."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Bell. He wheeled and stared at KFBZ's 'find.' "What are you doing here?" he gasped.

"I work here," said Hooper. "I'm the one who called you an overstuffed frog. Now, shove off."

Mr. Walkins resumed crying and mumbled, "Hooper's crazy—we're all crazy."

Mr. Bell sat down and looked at Mr. Hooper. "So you're Hooper. I should have guessed. Does your father know where you are?"

I edged farther into the room as Hooper smiled and replied, "Nope. Pop thinks I'm vacationing in Bermuda."

"Bermuda's too good for you," bubbled my chief. "You belong on a wave-washed rock in mid-Atlantic."

Mr. Bell was talking, so I sat down beside Miss Smith, who was just as confused as I was.

"Perhaps I was a bit hasty, Walkins. I . . . I assume you'd be willing to forget the whole thing?" We all looked at my boss who stirred and sat up.

"You mean you . . . ?"

"I mean I'll drop the entire matter, if we agree to forget it," said Mr. Bell.

I glanced at Hooper standing with folded arms in the center of the office. He was looking intently at Mr. Bell.

Mr. Walkins came around to the front of his desk and knelt before Mr. Bell. "You aren't going to . . .?"

For want of something better to do, Mr. Bell placed his hand upon my boss's pate. "No, Walkins," he said. "I'm not going to sue." He glared at Hooper. "Mr. Hoveral, Jr., would have me hamstrung."

It takes a while to settle down and get used to a normal life; Mr. Walkins still twitches a trifle in the late afternoon, but KFBZ is slowly rehabilitating itself, trying to forget the thing fate visited upon us.

We do have our setbacks, however. Just the other day the boss swept into my office. "Downs," he said, "come in here and see what that fiend has done!" He led me into his office and pointed to his desk, where a copious amount of paper and cardboard lay.

"Observe the latest," he proclaimed. I got an unmistakable whiff of ancient fish.

Holding my nose, I advanced and met the baleful stare of a decidedly deceased mackerel. "Hoveral?"

My boss nodded helplessly. "Read the card," he suggested.

I crept closer and saw a garish gift card attached to the mackerel's tail. "Having a Wonderful Time in Bermuda—Glad You're Not Here," it read. It was signed, "Millie and Jerry Hoveral."

Gutter Song

By BOB DAVIS

I.

SLOVENLY sprawled on a bed —puffy satin, floating clouds, the dew of morning and the heat of noon, time on endless time, lost, drifting, floundering in darkness, sagging jaw, the ticking clock, vermouth in Naples, warm bodies flesh to flesh, and floating, floating clouds.

The earth, clanging machines, streams of numbers, fast rides past nature into the seething masses, great curds of blood on a palette for paint, Portrait of Woman Weeping, salt and slime, the caustic, the perverse, the beat of hearts in dead souls, murky water, the quick and the dead, God so hated the world.

Tiny puffs of smoke against brilliant blue, yellow is the color of spring, mankind gloriously high on a mountain, green fields of peace, the laughing of little children, adults with tolerance and understanding, expression without limitation, faces seen and remembered through love, matchless simplicity, symmetry, Brahms, weeping only for joy, and floating high, alone.

II.

Awake, holding his head, he sat on the edge of the bed. My robe? he questioned. A puddle of slippery wine satin was on the floor. He stepped over it as he lurched toward the bathroom. Lotion and a smooth face, juice and coffee, the bustle of shoppers, the musty afternoon air; reality again. Walking in the heat he thought: *Again, another day among the pushing, the climbing, the running drive. The pace too fast for the dignity of man. Only in my own way do I find peace and beauty.* The sooner all is over, the better. But he had not the fortitude for violent death.

As keenly as possible he strolled down the white street, smiling at children, tipping his hat to elderly women, feeling all the while ridiculous in the actions. The words of a comic song threaded aimlessly in his mind, . . . *and I'll be a dirty name, but I think the girl's a SOT!*

The Gutter Song, and he looked down at the curbing. A dollar bill rippled in the wash of passing cars. Picking up the green paper, he felt of it, and studied George Washington looking benignly at nothing. What to do with it? Unclaimed money should be given to charity. But he had claimed it. Give it to some kid on the street? She would only buy candy and make herself sick. A dollar is too great a fortune for a child. The immediate question, then: how would he use it?

If the truth were known, he had the shakes badly. His eyeballs ached and he had snakes in his

stomach. A tall glass of tomato juice? Toast and eggs? The thought of food made the snakes writhe in protest. He would put everything off, starve a while, and maybe feel better. Should have put a shot in that coffee, he thought, sliding the dollar into his pants pocket.

Past small bar-and-grill joints, past the smells of delicatessens, through stoop-fronted neighborhoods full of crying, dirty children, he walked. A small green park and a wide street marked the line where drinkeries changed their names from *Joe's* and *The Silver Slipper* to *The Coral Room* and *The Club Noir*. Beyond that street, the buildings were taller, the crowds thicker, and the women . . . more expensive. He turned into the entrance of a modern office building. A castanet clicked; he was caged, and rocketed to the fourteenth floor. People behind shoved him out of the elevator and into the reception room of a large office. He sought out a door, and entered without knocking.

—You are also not knocking these days?

—Not here.

—And you are no longer with us.

—Thought I'd say hello. I was in the neighborhood.

—Hello.

—You're not very pleasant this afternoon.

—You are not a very pleasant sight. Did you come in for a slight touch?

—No. I sold my car and watch.

—For booze?

—For booze.

—Listen. . . . Why don't you. . . .

—Skip it! . . . I see this joint is still the same old mechanical grind. . . . Jamming people, publishers screaming for cover designs, dictaphones buzzing, squawk-boxes dictating memoranda to the slaves. I couldn't be more right.

—Why don't you write it?

—Ha! Well, maybe I will. So long.

Plummeted downward, he was spewed out into the arcade, and then pushed on to the sidewalk. The afternoon sun slanted giant shadows at acute angles.

There were still a few places he could go; the park in the center of town, or the lobby of the great hotel. He could sit for hours in that cool spaciousness, watching and laughing. Young girls, their hair hardly out of pigtails, trying desperately to be sophisticates, and more desperately not to know their parents . . . aged men, parked, as if waiting to die, yet did nothing pleasant for themselves or anyone else in the interim . . . (they could drink) . . . an old dowager pestering the life out of a sixteen-year-old bellhop because she thinks he has a cute nose . . . old maid schoolteachers yapping at the desk clerk about a mislaid excursion ticket.

He had seen it all before. That useless burning of energy, seemingly the prime force of life, withered any thought of going to the hotel. And the park would be full of screaming brats, or the fairies would be coming out from under the rocks for their promenade in the late afternoon sun.

Actually there was nowhere else to go. He thought of time and space and eternity; of a haven where other places, other people did not exist. A place of infinite quiet. A place of peace. A place of . . .

He stopped his slouching jog abruptly. A woman, laden with parcels, bumped him, and muttered under her breath. He did not notice, but looked with hunger and love, across the street. The Place.

Deliriously, as though floating on a cloud of joy, he jaywalked the street. He was amused at the force of habit leading him there. After all, had he not been walking aimlessly, without apparent intent or purpose? And here he was. He skirted the two garbage cans in the gutter, hopped up on the curb, paused a happy moment at the door, and then entered.

Quiet, dark, sensual. A few couples sat in secluded nooks, talking in low tones. . . . *I'll be a dirty name, but I think the girl's a SOT!* A drink waited in front of him when he reached the bar. The starter: a double, dry martini.

Musing over the day, brief though it had been, he considered it a flop. The curt conversation at the office, the aimless walking, the crushing, mauling people, his aching eyes, his curdling stomach —all fed the desperation mounting in him. Small lights, green, yellow and red, began to glow and dance in his head. Luxuriously his hand slid into his pants pocket, reappearing with two green bills; a ten, and a dirty one. After all, this was but the ante-chamber to The Place . . . the *real* Place.

Another martini, double . . . a shot, double . . . get it down fast; the faster the better. . . . They can't keep me chained, I'll not stay with them, their cursing, tiny minds . . . that little slut with breasts like pincushions, that fat man and his ticker-tape, the office force and its robot efficiency . . . this crawling world . . . you're ants and spiders and leeches and cockroaches . . . you're all doomed and dead Dead DEAD because you can't see expression without limitation; you can't see hate passing for love, and graft passing for charity, and power passing for politics . . . but I have a place, a place to go . . . a place where I don't have to sing *The Gutter Song*. . . .

He lunged out the door into the dark, quiet night. A curse against God on his lips, he slowly staggered to his knees. A low moan started in his throat, gained pitch and volume, and ceased abruptly. He fell forward, his head and one arm in the gutter. His hair dangled limply in muck. A senseless hand rested on a rotted grapefruit. He was smiling.

Poems

By H. J. DANIEL

Birdwatcher, Apartment 86

There is nothing to do but walk.
I miss those walks we used to take.
Those walks we took in evening sun.
Remember that robin down by the bridge.
By the bridge he watched us till snow fell.

Since you left, sweet,
I've moved back to the City.
It isn't the same as you made it.
It isn't the symphony, warm and yet cooling.
It isn't pianos heard in the starlight.
It isn't the birds that you put on the ledges.
I guess you knew that they were never there.

There is nothing to do but walk.
My place, three rooms,
Offers solitude
And I walk and I walk and walk
And today I walked.

I saw the papers blowing schooner-like down chasmy streets,
The neons spitting and jolting themselves
Into thin lines of ordered light,
The blackness chasing the dusk upward
Only to be destroyed by unrhythmed squares of yellow,
The dampness envelops the dryness,
The discordant trolley making its clumsy way
Down same street to same place
Only to return and repeat
More distasteful with each repetition.

I saw the faces shaped differently, yet in each the same strain,
The moods of the feet in journey,
Dejected, goalless, barely lifting to let the earth
Move past underneath,
Gay, quick, mockingly defiant of earth's unalterable movements
I saw the emptiness in this mass of fullness,
The loneliness in this mass of faces.

I looked for the birds on the ledges,
But the ledges were too far above me.
I looked for a robin,
But the bridge was too big.
I looked for you,
But the dust blew into my eyes.

I Watch An Artist

He is young, tall and intent.
He knows his heart.
He knows for what his hands were meant.

His hands, his hands, his hands, his hands.
They are his light.
They are the earth on which he stands.

They work with passionate caress.
They are deft.
They move as God's when he points to bless.

His eyes have taken inner glow.
They burn
With love that only he can know.

The scene moves me.
I am weak, content to sit and watch.
I am depressed, envious of his assuredness.
I am jealous, uttering nothing,
Afraid to intervene in such conjugal tenderness.
When he is finished, an hour more,
It will be back to me and reality.

There is a place in Dante's hell for one like me
Who does nothing well.

In the City of Destruction

By JIM McRANDL

IN THE east a little tip of light appeared in the blackness. It enlarged itself, creeping and crawling across the sky as though it were afraid of its life. The light was gray under a lowcast sky. It fingered out and caught hold of the earth's objects. The roofs of the small town's buildings glimmered dully in the light, as it furtively picked its way westward across the small field patchy with grey snow spots, to the woods. Black firs with tiny contrasts of white on their bows stood like a massive border to the field. Some of the trees showed yellow slashes where they have been splintered and broken. A greyish fog hung close to the ground veiling the exact features of the earth, dimming and smothering the sounds.

Within the forest men were moving toward the field, bleak men, soaked, cold. Their eyes were red and bleary and their faces were greyish-black from dirt, fatigue and tension. The company of infantry was spread out in thin lines moving forward at a steady pace. Sergeant Osborne, walking a little behind his squad, was afraid. It was not the tense, excited fear that he had known in previous battles. This fear was something new since his return from the hospital. Perhaps, he thought, being wounded had shown him that he could b killed. Perhaps it was the fear o what followed death. He shoo himself; the thoughts left h mind. The morning air knife through his jacket. He glanced the four men who were left in h squad. At that moment th platoon leader held up his han and the men stopped. Ahead o them, at the edge of the fores they saw the helmets of the men o "B" company. "A" company wa coming up from the reserve t move through them and continu the attack. The platoon leade squatted down and talked to on of the helmeted heads; then h stood up and called his sergeant over. Osborne moved spiritlessly His feet were cold and the K ration he had eaten that morning was a lump in his stomach. The lieutenant pointed out the build ings on the edge of the town a which they were to assemble afte crossing the field. Osborne looked at the other sergeants, their faces patches of grey in the early dawn He adjusted his helmet, checked his sub-machinegun and walked back towards his squad.

"We've got a few minutes yet so make sure you're all set. Bur ton," he said to the first scout "you lead off. The rest of you spread out."

He looked at the faces to see if there were any signs of fear, but

he saw only a dead sullenness about them. Now as he waited for the jump-off signal he could feel the dead, stony weight of his fear.

Suddenly he looked to his right and could see the other platoons moving. Then Burton stood up and walked forward. Nick Rocco and Harrison, the B-A-R man, let Burton get to the edge of the woods and they got up and moved out. Now it was Osborne's turn. He stood up and told McGinnis, the last man, to give him about twelve yards. As he passed one of the foxholes, a "B" company man whom he knew slightly looked up and said, "She's all yours."

"Thanks, Santy Claus," Osborne muttered. He gripped the sub-machinegun tightly under his arm as he reached the field. The snow crunched beneath his feet and the fog needled in through his jacket and numbed him. Ahead, the figures of Burton, Nick and Harrison were dim and wraithlike in the fog. It was easy, however, to distinguish one from the other, Burton, on the left, with his alert tense crouch, Nick in the center walking tiredly but confidently, his equipment clinging to him as though it had worn niches on his body, and Harrison, on the right, short and stocky with powerful, stubby legs. They made a good team. Burton had a nervous efficiency, Harrison, the youngest, seemed to be able to go for ever, and Nick—Nick was a soldier. Osborne thought that he must have born on a battlefield.

God, but it's silent, he thought. The creak and the clink of his own equipment were the only sounds he could hear. The cold was working its way up from the snowy ground through his legs. His teeth chattered a little, and he clamped his jaws tight.

The roar of a shell ended the silence. Osborne threw himself down in a little hollow in the ground. Then came another and another. The earth rocked slightly. He lay still, shivering, his cheek and chin were pressed into the snow. The low ground fog closed in around him like a cubicle, leaving him alone away from the rest of the company. Now a pair of boots came up beside his face. Little chunks of ice were lodged in the laces. He looked up from the laces to the face of the wearer. The assistant squad leader, McGinnis, stood above him for a moment and then kicked him lightly with his foot.

"Come on, Osborne, let's move forward and get out from under this stuff."

McGinnis ran on. Osborne realized that he had to catch up with the rest of the squad. He sprang forward, running. He felt heavy and clumsy, and pains ran through his cold feet as they struck the earth. There had been a lull in the firing but now it began again with increased vigor. He could see the others, some running, some pressed to the ground. Suddenly the world turned half around. He saw the field and the men at crazy angles and he could feel small clouts of dirt hitting him in the face. He slammed into the ground behind a small fold of earth and crawled over a few feet. McGinnis was lying close to him.

"Are you hurt?" McGinnis called over. "That one was damn close."

Osborne couldn't feel any pain and shook his head. The shells crashed around and behind them now and the sound beat against

his ears like a terrible, giant drum. He heard a scream followed by the cry, "Medic!" He buried his face in the soft snow. A dead clump of grass lay close by one eye and covered his field of vision. The thought of the pieces of dirt hitting him came back now. What if they had been shrapnel? In his imagination he could feel the terrible steel shards ripping and tearing his face, breaking through the cheek wall. Or what if he had been hit in the leg? He had often joked about getting a nice clean leg wound, but what of those horrible chunks of metal splintering his shin bone or laying open his stomach? His face was white and sweaty in spite of the cold, and a sensation of nausea seized him. Still the shells thundered and he wanted to grip onto the earth, cling to it. His whole body trembled. Through the din he could hear some one hollering and he looked up. Off to the right the third platoon was moving and now he could see that the rest of his squad was up and going forward. McGinnis was turning around and yelling at him. Now he realized that the artillery was falling in the woods, on "B" company. He stood up slowly, cradled the sub-machine-gun under his arm, opened his fist and let fall a small knot of frozen earth. He forced himself forward. McGinnis looked at him carefully as he passed.

"Sure you're okay?" he asked.

"Yeh," Osborne said in a dead voice, from which his fright had removed any semblance of power. He tried to make his face as expressionless as possible in the hope that he could mask his fear, but a little muscle in his cheek kept jumping. Through his mind ran a crazy sequence of wounds, his face being smashed, his arm or a foot being blown off, and with each of these thoughts he experienced an accompanying imaginary but somehow very real pain; behind these thoughts, in a formless half-conscious way, lay the thoughts of death and Beyond lurking just past his mind's reach.

Some heavy shells rustled over and he sagged at the knees, getting ready to hit the ground.

"Those are ours," said Nick Rocco.

Osborne straightened; then another came over and he flinched again. This time he caught himself quickly and glanced at Rocco, but Nick had moved away from him.

At the small house on the edge of the field the platoon assembled and began to work its way down the street. Osborne's squad took the next house. Burton approached it slowly, kicked in the door, and jumped inside. It was deserted. The rest of the squad went in and began searching the upper floor. Osborne felt dazed. He went into the house but stayed on the ground floor. His mind was hazy, as though a blue smoke were swirling around inside of his head. He sat down on a chair in the kitchen and held his head with his hand. He didn't know what was wrong but he felt as though he were turning to stone. He was walled off from everything, like a being alone in a grey universe. There was a sadness about him and he had to grit his teeth to keep the thoughts of being wounded from his mind.

The sound of fighting buzzed through the brain-fog that had enveloped him. The door burst open. It was Burton.

"Hey, Osborne! We need you down the street. We must have moved off and left you." Burton turned and was gone. Osborne

got up and ran out the door. He ran heavily, lurchily. Following Burton, he went in through the back door of a house and on into the front room. McGinnis was waiting near the window.

"The lieutenant told us to take the next house so's we could get a better firing position. We can't get at it from the back so we'll have to go down the street."

Osborne nodded. They walked to the front vestibule. He peered around the corner into the street, drew back his head, and took a deep breath. More than anything he wanted to stay right in the vestibule. He had to have time to reorganize himself. The strange feeling of detachment enfolded him again. His heart was beating loudly and he pressed his head against the wall. Shapes and thoughts and fears turned round inside his brain. Time moved slowly.

"Well, are we going or aren't we?" It was Burton.

"Just a minute. Let's get our breath," Osborne said. The muscles in his face slackened.

"Aw, to hell with it!" said Burton. He slipped around the corner into the street. Then Rocco left. Osborne hesitated an instant and followed. He ran madly. The city whirled about him like a bad newsreel. Grey houses, some blasted by shells, grey streets showered with rubble, grey pools of water reflecting the low, overhanging clouds. He reeled into the next doorway just as the fast burst of a burp-gun shot past him. A moment later McGinnis ran into the house.

"They got Harrison," he said, his breath coming in low sobs. "Looks like he's dead."

"God," said Burton, and then he asked. "Did you get the B-A-R?"

"I had all I could do to get here myself."

"Well, we've got to have it," said Burton. "Osborne, you cover me from the doorway and I'll get it."

Osborne wanted to tell him that he didn't know where the burst had come from. Instead he went to the doorway and leaned a little way around it pointing the submachinegun down the street. "Okay," he said to Burton. He could hear the scrape of Burton's feet as he ran off. He wondered if the German could see him in the doorway, and thought of what a burp-gun could do to a man. The bullets came so fast that they could carve a straight line in a wall without leaving any spaces between hits. He shuddered and drew back and hid his face against the brick wall. The sound of Burton's feet stirred him and he leaned out again.

"Harrison's dead all right," Burton said in a low voice. "Here's the B-A-R. Thanks for covering me."

Osborne wondered if he were being sarcastic. He thought of Harrison and that it could have just as easily been himself. He wondered how it would be lying cold and bloody and dead on the pavement.

They stood in the center of the living room. The fighting seemed to have bogged down. Osborne knew that the men were waiting for him to give an order of some kind. He could feel the squad breaking down, the leadership slipping from his grasp. Finally he motioned Burton over to a window and told Nick to go upstairs and find a firing position.

"We'll eat and relieve you when we're done," he told them as they left. Sitting down in the corner he pulled out a K-ration

and stripped off the cover. He opened up the tinned meat and began to eat. The meat was cold and distasteful but he forced it down and washed out his mouth with gulps of water from his canteen. McGinnis sat down beside him.

"Whatever's eating you, Osborne, you'd better get over it," he said.

"What do you mean?" flared Osborne.

"Hell, the way you been acting this morning."

"Lookit here! I've been leading this squad all the way through and I'm still in command." Osborne's cheeks burned and his tone was belligerent, but inside he felt the numb pain of fear. And now they knew it!

The mist was clearing from his brain. He could see the other men clearly. It was quiet, with only an occasional shot being fired. A new determination flooded him. Now he didn't care if he did get hurt. It wouldn't be so bad. Things were quiet anyway; probably nothing at all would happen. He finished his ration and lit a cigarette. Now he knew that he could stand up and assert himself. He could walk over to the window with a positive air and show Burton that he was still the leader.

He placed his hand on the floor to push himself up. As he pushed, one palm came down over the meat- tin cover. The edge cut deep into his hand. The sharp pain leaped through his arm and he jumped up and looked at his palm. The blood welled up slowly from the cut, flowed across his hand and dripped between his fingers. Putting his hand to his mouth, he licked the blood away and placed his handkerchief on the cut. The blood left a thick, salty taste in his mouth. H pressed the handkerchief into hi palm till the cut seemed to burn then pulled it away and looked a the thin, curved, white line, slowly reddening as the blood cam back to the surface. It flowed ou slowly, ran to the center of hi palm and formed a pool there. H watched, fascinated, as it edge toward the side of his palm an dribbled over. His hand throbbed It was a steady pulsating pai that seemed to shut out the sound around him. His face was pal and he felt as though he wer sweating. Thoughts and fear gripped him. He felt the imagi nary pains from the imaginary wounds and involuntarily clappe his hand to his face. Now h swabbed his hand with the hand kerchief, balled it up, pressed i into his palm and gripped the sub machinegun against it. He walke over to the window, told Burto to eat and took up his position He didn't look down the street to ward he enemy houses; instead he stared back at Harrison lying crookedly on the cobblestones.

He studied the body, one arm outstretched, the other folde oddly beneath the body, the leg in unnatural positions. His hand throbbed. Pockets of sweat formed beneath his eyes. It could as well be he as Harrison lying there. Lying there, blood draining from his head in an thick widening pool. It could have been himself lying there at the boundary between the known and the unknown. He could have crossed the line dividing known fear from unknown fear. In imagination he was bridging the gap from the fury of blood and bullets, cement and pain, to the greater fury of strife and soul torment and unreckoned wandering. He saw the

ıever ending chasm of space, the ternal wasteland, the boundless, grey and depthless sea of time vith second piled on second and on upon eon. The words which ıad been mere symbols pounded n on him. God, Time, Eternity nd Nothingness, words of fear nd a hopeless lostness. A thunlering, pulverizing storm, a whirlvind, or a war, were but visions, iews or omens of that world be'ond. It was a vastness which ground his inner being and rushed it to nothingness. He ould touch the wall and feel the oom, but these outward signs of rder were eggshell thin and rittle, infirm shields against the oiling sea of war and eternity.

Without, through the window, ay chaos, and beyond the hell of ıan-made chaos, the higher plane, he greater chaos of a God-made astness, a never-ending void.

In his mind he saw the depthess plunge from order to war to ternity, the blurring, reeling fall vithout an end, and he knew that or all its commonality he must ling to order and the symbols of rder; for chaos, like molten mag-na struggling to break through he crust of earth, awaited to engulf and destroy him.

He was cold and hot, fiery and ıumb with the sensations of relation, fear and nausea. He had o cling to the signs of order, spinıing out his existence till the last econd was used and gone.

The back door opened and the platoon messenger ran in and told them to start trying to take the next house. Osborne nodded. It had come, the time to leave the room. The men gathered in the doorway again. Now Rocco dodged around the corner and was gone. Ten seconds. Now McGinnis. Ten more seconds and Burton was gone. He stood there, weakness grew on him, enveloped him and shrouded his soul. He was unable to move. He could only tremble. Now he could hear the firing up the street, short stabs of violence and hate, punctuations in the long sentence of war. Now he heard sounds of running feet and suddenly Burton was standing before him.

"Hell, what are you goin' to do?" the scout asked bluntly.

"I—I was covering you from this doorway," answered Osborne weakly.

"You aren't going into this next building then?"

"No," the answer was flat, dull and lifeless.

"Give me the sub-machinegun then, so we can have it where it'll do some good."

Osborne let him take the gun out of his hand. Then Burton was gone. The sergeant stared out of the doorway, trembling. His face was sweat-covered and dead. His eyes were dilated with fear. A light snow had begun to fall and he watched it silt over Harrison's body.

The Coming of the Sheep

By LARRY KADLE

IT WAS always a warm spring day when we first heard the cry that the sheep were coming. You see, after shearing in the spring, some of the sheep were always driven off the Reservation to shipping points where they were sold. I don't know whether we always heard the cry that the sheep were coming; maybe it was instinct although I doubt that very much, or perhaps it was the strange sound of bleating in the air and the cloud of dust where the Reservation ends and the big flat begins.

Anyway we would realize they were coming and Howard and I would run through old Tiger Jensen's potato field, past the section house, over the tracks by the stockyard, and down the deep rutted road by the big red grain elevator. Other fellows would be coming too, down main street, or through the withered ragweed to the north of the ford. The ragweed was interesting. In the summer it gave me hayfever, but in the fall and winter and spring it was good cover for the Indians or scouts to crawl through when stalking the enemy. Now in the latter part of the spring it stood as an old guard, proud, brown, and haughty as the green uniformed young crept up around it.

The river was a very necessary part of the coming of the sheep for they had to cross it at a shallow, gravel-bottomed ford. half-mile down from the for stood the bridge that led onto th flat, beyond that were the willow where in the hot and mosquit filled days of the summer th African explorers fought the wi low-spear armed natives. B tween the bridge and the ford th river split like a forked twig, or part of which was a marsh. Her on the marsh in later years, often shot ducks in the fall. Nov the water of the marsh was hig for the spring floods were not fa past.

Finally there was the for where we always waited. Th ford was a pleasant sort of soci gathering place. People woul drive their cars into the rive there and wash them. On ho summer mornings we would g there and lying on our bellies b the water, we would reach in an scoop tadpoles out until we ha big cans full. We played a sor of wordless game; all would sta scooping at the same time an the first one to get a good-size canful would win. No one sai anything but still there wa rivalry lurking below the surface It was a real thrill when I wo I could see the little lines o jealousy on the other kids' face Then with the cruelty of th young we would build fires an boil our catches in the cans. O course we didn't eat them but

/as fun pretending we were go-ng to.

And it was here at the ford that got the greatest thrill out of /atching the sheep come. The heep had first been seen, as I said efore, where the flat joins the teservation. Then they disap-eared until suddenly they came ut from behind some trees per-aps two hundred yards from the ord. They moved toward the iver, slowly being kneaded into a ifferent shape, like dough, by the erders and dogs. They were dirty now-colored with somewhat of a inkish tinge from their recent hearing, and all the time, from ehind them rose a huge cloud of ellow suffocating dust. The oise of the moving herd was remendous, the sheep bleating nd baaing, the herders shouting nd swearing, and finally the ogs barking. Suddenly the lead-rs would catch the smell of the /ater and break into a fast walk, hen by instinct the others would ense the water and rush toward t with their heads up and their odies rocking. The ground would oar as they moved at a run to-/ard the water.

The leaders of the herd would top at the water's edge to drink ut the others coming from be-ind pushed them in and soon the ord was full of naked, shivering heep, bleating and piteously turning and twisting in the cold water trying to fight their separate ways to shore. After the milling confusion was over and the herders and dogs had them moving again they turned them up the road past the big red grain elevator and towards the stockyards.

Right beside the sheep and perhaps a little ahead of them ran Howard and I. For some reason I felt vastly important while doing this although the sheep probably didn't care for it. Then in a final sprint we would get ahead of the herd and climb the tall gray splintery fence of the yards and prepare to direct the operation of getting the sheep inside. With the necessary amount of cussing on the part of the herders and the necessary amount of barking on the part of the dogs the sheep would eventually be forced inside. When this was over the tension would leave the air somewhat and the crowd would begin to disperse. However, we would wait until the sheep had been bedded down and then we would swagger uptown behind the herders, stopping short only of entering the saloons with them. And thus it would end, the dusty emotion over for another year, and, with a completely content feeling, Howard and I would treat ourselves to ice cream cones.

Kangaroo Court

By JOHN de JUNG

IN ANY jail or prison, in any penal institution where men are serving time, paying society her due debt behind thick walls and steel bars, in any institution where prisoners are crowded together, their action so limited, their personal liberties hobbled, there necessarily develops among the prisoners themselves a very exacting social code and system of controls; and an internal government, a legislative, executive, and more especially a judicial department is set up. This miniature replica of the very legal machinery so hated and feared by most inmates becomes their champion, their weapon, an organized defense against further encroachments and an all powerful voice in their affairs. Its strength and size will vary with that of the particular prison and with the attitude of its warden. In many sections of the country where this self-governing system is outlawed and prisoners organizing or assembling are threatened with severe punishment, movement is undercover and subversive. In other states this social order is accepted and is referred to as the Kangaroo Court. We have such a court in Nashville.

It was six o'clock and the clerk announced in a self-important voice that the First District Court of the Kangaroo Circuit, city o Nashville, state of Tennessee, yea of our Lord 1943, sixth month fifth day was in session and w all stood respectfully silent. Jesse our sheriff, marched in the ner vously grinning prisoner and th judge ordered him seated. Ther he began assembling the jury reading from a list of our thirty odd names, gently referring to ou present address by cell numbe and omitting all reference to oc cupation. The two opposing at torneys occasionally questione the prospective jurors, exposing prejudices and possible connec tions with the accused. When my name was called, the state's attorney was most emphatic.

Was it not true that I had known the prisoner for several years, had been to school with him, knew his family and he mine. had traveled with him, and that we both were here under similar circumstances? Was it possible that any such history could leave me unbiased?

I argued with him. I said I was only interested in fairness, was on neither side, only wanted to further justice.

I didn't tell him that I thought this whole thing was a frame, that Jesse and Bill (the plaintiff in this business) were just using Fran. scaring the kid, maybe squaring

for some peeve, more probably just for the fun, some twisted humor in the situation.

I don't know why it is a guy in trouble needs a scapegoat, someone smaller to hit, like the hunter kicking his dog out of pure meanness. It's the kind of a deal that makes me mad. Here were Jesse and Bill both in for life, ninety-nine years for stabbing a Law. They had entered a plea of self-defense and were waiting retrial. They both, with plenty to worry them, were picking on a kid who wasn't bothering anyone. Maybe Fran had unconsciously said something out of place, some crack that had rubbed them wrong. More likely it was just his easy joking way, the sound of his laughing that they didn't like. So some of Bill's smokes were found in Fran's mattress. Does that prove that Fran took them—Fran, who didn't even care about smoking?

Now don't misunderstand me on this point. I'm not defending or blaming the boys about that trouble with the deputy that brought them here. That's their private business. What I don't like is their taking it out on the kid. Even if Fran and I hadn't been pretty good friends, even if we haven't been hiking all over together these past several months, I'd have been mad. If Fran had been a stranger I believe I'd have been just as sore, just as angry at the rottenness.

But I was keeping this to myself. I wanted to get on that jury. I wanted to foul this deal. I told Doc, a white haired, quiet fellow we had elected judge, that I was impartial, that I'd be governed by evidence, nothing more.

The D. A. raised a howl that squelched my plans. I don't think he really thought Fran guilty. He possibly hadn't considered it. I don't believe he was in with Jesse and Bill though he couldn't have made more noise if he had. These boys might be playing "court" but it was no game with them. It was relaxation, yes, but no game. That D. A. would have gone all out against his own brother. I suspect it gave him a feeling of power, throwing his weight about in that way. Probably it made up for some treatment he himself had once received.

He was a good spieler and was out for a conviction. He would gain support of our cell block. Stealing from a cell-mate is a pretty tough count and smokes are something we can all understand. They are our most closely rationed luxury.

The court had a fund. It is supported by regular assessments on all who can affort it, a kind of higher bracket income tax. This money guarantees a supply of cigarettes, razor blades, a daily newspaper, and on occasion a magazine. All of us in here are either waiting trial, retrial, pardon, or transfer. We are temporary guests of the county and do not have to work. We just have to wait. But have you ever waited twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, thirty days a month? Most of us have been here this long, some longer. And what were we waiting for? I can say it in one word: hope. Yes, hope, a hope that is so many things, a word, a letter, a nod that tells us things are squared away, that someone is fixing it, that it won't be so long, and then we wait some more. We live in the shadows of that hope, a living nothingness that paces up and down with us in our narrow cor-

ridor, that shares our bunk and whispers to us all night, that rattles the keys on the jailer's chain and then is silent.

Cigarettes are a sedative and in a way a sperm for elusive promise, a nutritious food, strengthening that which is so vital, so needed, and yet so dying. Yes, smokes are pretty important in here. As for the boys who can't afford the court assessment, and I am one of them, we work it out keeping all the cells clean. As for those who could pay and didn't, those who reneged; well, they paid, too. They paid heavily. They don't try it twice. You don't cross your neighbor in here. Your neighbor is easily riled about crossing and he is never alone. There is a spirit, a hard, fast, brutal spirit binding these fellows. It is one viewpoint, one decision, one course of action. It is mob punishment and in an isolated cell block there is no interference, no way out.

That was what Fran was up against, if guilty. He had been here just about long enough to know the score and his thin smile couldn't hide that knowledge. I wanted to say something to him. I wanted to openly take his side, but I didn't. I couldn't after insisting that I was impartial. I sat down as the last two jurors were chosen and looked over at Burke.

Burke was a jovial pinochle player, likable and heavy with song. He used to get regular exercise after supper, walking up and down, singing in fine hillbilly strains all our old favorites. He's not with us any more but I will remember him each time I hear "In old Caroline," "Way Down in the Hills," and "Wabash Cannonball." Songs with feeling and with meaning, poor ma songs like "Blues in the Night" were his best. He didn't need an accompaniment. It is wasted o a good singer. Fran really like these songs, too, and he and Burk became good friends. Burke sai he would be Fran's defense an the court agreed. Burke accepte the last juror.

I guess all trials have a lot i common, but when they are per sonal there is a special feeling i the air. It is hard to describe It is part tension and trouble. Some of it is process of law, clerk reading, lawyers questioning, witnesses answering and everyone listening, grave faces watching, trying to understand, determining, judging. And all the time there is that drone, a hum of language. It builds up—dry buzzing noise. You wonder what it is? The buzzing is louder now but no one moves. They are all looking, staring at the Law, hypnotized by a black ghost moving forward like the crest of a night tide, sweeping ahead, spreading a grey cape, leveling the room in drabness till only justice and noise are left. And Justice looks old and cracked and alone. A rhythm, a rumbling beat crescending, then waning mistily, rises and blankets the air. You breathe in and you feel your stomach tense and raw. The trouble has become part of you and you don't understand. It's unreal. Why, why am I here? What is happening? Whom are they talking about? "No, I didn't." "It's not so." "They're lies, all lies." Why doesn't someone stop this?

Burke got up, flashed Fran an encouraging smile and turned to the jurors. Fran was sweating. Jesse and Bill had been telling

heir story. They must have vorked hard on it, for it was ubstantially plausible. They had uried the truth under a twisted nonument of lies and suspicions. hey had made Fran into some- hing cheating and stealing and ad branded him a thief.

Now Burke was talking to the even jurors, seven stolid expres- ions which were deciding the id's fate, which were condemn- ng him to an unjustified con- empt and hatred. Burke was alking quietly and he was telling bout insufficient evidence. He vas telling about a guy a long vay from home naturally being uspected. He built a picture of alse conviction and the picture vas brutal and vivid. He fortified loubt and warned against injus- ice. His words were as real as egular court trials, just as un- ending, just as cruel.

The jurors rose and filed into corner cell to deliberate. From here we sat, their muffled mur- ner, occasionally distinct, then ading, seemed like the roaring nd rushing of a greedy breaker n a dark, rocky cave, producing vacuum, and echoed in a horror f emptiness. Still solemness ressed on us all for almost thirty inutes and we waited. For Fran t was thirty minutes of scared anic, minutes which fought gainst lies and accusations, gainst the treachery of deceit nd the fear of warped justice; inutes which fought the rights f decency, respect, and equality, or his code of fairness, for social cceptance. They weren't fast inutes either. They were each ixty long seconds, each tick iercing and shattering, each threatening to explode his uni- verse.

Then suddenly there was move- ment and the judge was reading the verdict. Two words—"not guilty"—leaped out and crashed the quiet. Fran was absolved of all suspicion and was acquitted. Garbled talk and congratulations spewed out of nowhere and the case was finished.

The court has long since ad- journed, but the trial is still with Fran. You can hear it harden his tongue when he talks or laughs. He is still a kid of eighteen, but a distorted roughness is now rooted in his spirit and the im- perious code which is Kangaroo Court remains with him. It shall always be there.
