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# TOUCHSTONE

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# A Harvest of Wheat

LARRY PATTERSON



August Nieland slapped his work gloves on the leg of his overalls and quickened his pace across the hard bare ground that lay before the farmhouse.

"Hey Eric, you're home!" he shouted, stuffing the gloves into a hip pocket and swinging up onto the porch. He shifted a wad of tobacco into his cheek and jerked open the screen door. The kitchen smelled of frying chicken, an aroma that mingled with and overcame the musty odors that seemed to linger always in the cracked faded linoleum and wallpaper blotched with grease.

"Ah-ha!" He stretched out his arms to a young man standing at the heavy iron stove. "I knew it was you that was frying the chicken. John there is as good a man as you can find around, but he can't cook." August looked at his oldest, slouched in a chair by the big oak table, and made a mock gesture of defense. "Now John, you know it's true."

Eric put his hand on August's arm and leaned forward to kiss his leathery cheek. "I'm glad to be home again, Papa," he said quietly.

Stepping back, August crossed his arms. "Hey John, don't you think our Eric looks like a doctor already, him wearing his white shirt and glasses?"

John leaned back in his seat and put his foot against the edge of the table. On the front of his denim shirt were streaks of grease. His hair was matted to his scalp with dirt and perspiration which had left stains on his cheeks where it had run down and dried. "Could be," he said flatly.

"Yah, he looks very fine. 'Doctor Nieland;' that will sound fine, too," August said with a grin. "What'll you think of that, John . . . Mr. Eric Franz Nieland, M.D.?"

"It's okay, I suppose."

"Okay, you suppose!" August waved his finger at the ceiling. "If you was to have a hernia or something, you would do a lot better than 'Okay, I suppose,' about somebody being a doctor."

"I don't know. I always thought it took more than looks or names to make a doctor," John said.

"That's all right, Papa. John doesn't think I'll make it." Eric turned a piece of chicken with his fork. "Just because he never considered me much of a hand when I was at home, he thinks I'd be a dangerous man with a pill."

"Here now!" August said, bringing his hands together with a muffled pop. "You've both been working too hard, and the heat is making your tongues sharp." He smiled uneasily and looked from one son to the other. "Hah! We're all together for the first time in half a year. I think we should celebrate . . . have a little drink and talk, maybe!"

He walked briskly to a wall cabinet, hesitating only to drop a ball of

juice and tobacco leaves into a dirty, stained jar that sat against the wall under one of the curtainless windows. From the wall cabinet, he produced a half-empty bottle of dark wine. "Yah, you're both men now," he said, slapping the bottle with the palm of his hand. "Of course we'll have a drink! First we'll have our drink, and then we'll eat the chicken. How's that?"

"I'll get some glasses," John said. He put his hand on the table as though he meant to drag himself to his feet.

"No, John, you sit still. I have some of your mother's good glasses right here; we'll use those." August turned to the cabinet again and took out three goblets of light green tint. Each one had a leafy design etched into it. "I gave these to your mother when she was young, you know, even before I married her. And she would always say, 'August, we keep those glasses special for when company comes.'" He stopped and looked momentarily at them. "She was kinda fussy like that, I guess. But I think if she knew that Eric was coming home for the first time in so long, she would say, 'August, you go ahead now and use them.'" He walked back and set the goblets on the table. "Pull you up a chair, Eric!"

Eric laid down his fork and wiped his hands on a ragged towel that hung on a nail over the washstand.

"Come on," August said. "Sit down and tell me and John about the medical school." He uncorked the bottle and poured wine into each of the goblets, splashing it over the rims and down onto the oak table.

"Well, there isn't a whole lot to tell," Eric said, dragging a straight chair from against the wall. "We were taking a lot of courses like anatomy, and I've been working in the labs since classes let out."

"Tell me, have they learned you how to use the knife yet?" August swung his hand through the air as though he had a razor. "You know!"

"You mean surgery, Papa?"

"Yah, that's it."

"No, we're still working on small animals."

August chuckled. "At least they can't cuss you when you slip. Hey, I ever tell you about the butcher that cut the French bullet out of my leg at Verdun? I told him he must be using a dull spoon, and how I pitied the poor Frenchmen that lived and had to be cut up by him." He slapped his leg and laughed loudly. Eric smiled mechanically, and his face turned a faint pink.

"Why don't you and Eric go ahead and talk?" John said, finishing the wine that sat before him. "I'll go finish putting the sieves on the combine before it gets dark." He started to get up, but August put a hand on his sleeve and pulled him back down.

"Wait till I tell Eric about the wheat; then you go finish," August said, relaxing his grip and turning again to Eric. "You know, Eric, I said I might not be able to help you through school next year."

Eric nodded.

"Well, we had some days of cool weather about two weeks ago that



let the heads fill out real good. I think that it will make forty bushel or maybe more. We got thirty acres—thirteen here and seventeen on the eighty. And John figured it up: If we have forty bushel wheat, and that loan price is two-ten, we'll have . . . uh . . ." He stopped and scratched the brown stubble on his chin. "How much you say that would be, John?"

"About twenty-five hundred dollars."

"You see, Eric," August said, "twenty-five hundred dollars! That means I can help you besides that little scholarship they give you." He sat back and smiled. Then suddenly he raised one finger to his cheek. "Oh hey, I got one other thing for you to hear. You know what? Go ahead and tell your brother," he said, nodding to John.

"I'm getting married," John said.

Eric lifted his goblet to his lips. "That's nice."

"Nice? Nice?" August said excitedly. "That's wonderful! It means I will maybe be a grandpapa someday; and you, Eric, you would be an uncle. How do you like that?" He put his hands on his knees and laughed. When he had stopped, he leaned toward his youngest son and shook his finger knowingly. "You should look for a girl someday like that, Eric. Your brother will have a good wife when he marries her. Yah, a very good wife."

"I hope they'll be happy together," Eric said.

"Well," August said hurriedly as he picked up the bottle and began filling each glass again. "Tomorrow while I am cultivating, you boys will cut the wheat. If the weather is right and with Luther's combine, you'll be finished almost by night. And when it is sold, I can help you both—a little something for John to start out on for his house, and another year for Eric so that he will become a great . . . a great doctor with the knife." August raised his goblet.

"Papa," Eric said without looking up, "why don't you drive the truck for John while he's combining and let me cultivate?"

August set his goblet down without drinking. "What for?" he said.

Eric darted a glance at him, and then stared down at the table, running his fingers through the wine that had spilled around the base of his glass. "Well," he said slowly, "I haven't done any manual work for a year, and I don't know anything about that new grain auger you've got to put the grain in the bin."

"You'd let your old father, with his bad back and all, scoop off the truck?"

"No, it isn't that . . ."

"Then what is it?" August had pursed his lips and thin lines radiated from his mouth like stitch marks in leather.

"Well . . . it would just work better," Eric said.

"Is it because maybe you wouldn't get along in the field? Maybe you'd argue and shout at each other? Could that be it?"

Eric didn't answer.

"Let him go cultivate, Papa," John said, setting down an empty glass.

"He'd just get in the way if he tried to keep up with me. Maybe he won't tear up too much corn if he's careful."

"You see!" Eric said, leaning back in his chair. "He gets a big kick out of riding me. He always has. I don't want to work around him. Let me go out and cultivate."

"No!" August looked down. "You are brothers; you should work together like brothers."

"But Papa, you know we always fight," Eric said.

"Let him go," John said, producing a wrinkled pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket. "He'd just slow things down if he was out there. He might—he just might—be a doctor someday, but he's just in the way out here. You know, if he stacks bales, you can figure the whole stack will fall over if a flock of starlings lights on it; and if he lists, the rows are so crooked a snake couldn't follow them."

Eric looked sharply across the table. "I don't have any trouble when I don't have to look over my shoulder all the time to see if you're breathing down my neck."

"Maybe you need it sometimes!"

"Boys, please." August was sitting rigidly in his chair.

"Need it, hell," Eric said, raising his voice. "I've proved in school I don't need someone sticking me in the back."

John pulled a rust-stained lighter out of his pocket without taking his eyes off Eric. "You've never shown us. Remember knocking the wheel off the hay-loader last summer or backing over the plow and bending the beam?"

"What do you mean, 'us'? I never heard Papa say anything. You're the one that always makes the place sound like Judgment Day when something happens. So I'm not perfect on machinery! So I try hard! So what!" Eric was standing up and had knocked over his glass, sending the wine splashing across the table. He was leaning on his hands glaring at John.

"Stop it!" shouted August, jumping to his feet. He hesitated and flushed suddenly at his own outburst. "I won't listen to this."

Eric quietly sat down. In the hush that followed, the faint crackling of the chicken on the stove could be heard, and there was a tinkle as August reached over to set Eric's glass on its base again.

"Now you hear me—you, Eric, and you, John," August said. The muscles in his face had drawn tight. "You been home only a little while, Eric, and already you two argue. I don't know which one of you is right, if one of you is right. But I think that when you fight, you are both wrong." He paused, glancing from one son to the other. "If you was little, I could get the belt, but you are big men now. What would you have me say if your mother was to come and ask, 'August, why do the boys fight? Why don't you stop them?' What would you have me say, huh? Answer me, one of you!"

"You don't understand, Papa," Eric said.

"I don't want to understand!" August said. "I want you two to get



along is all. John, sometimes I think maybe you are jealous of Eric going to school. And you, Eric, are you afraid to get your hands dirty? A little dirt won't hurt your fingers."

He put his hands on the table and rested his weight on them. "I tell you this now," he said. "Tomorrow I am taking the Ford and cultivate. If you want to go to school, or if you want a start on a house when you get married, you both know where the two fields are. I don't have to show you."

They sat at the big oak table without speaking. The sun cast its evening colors through a smudgy window, outlining against the wall-paper the silhouette of a jar sitting on the sill.

Eric was leaning forward looking at the table, and John had his hand shoved into his pants pockets. Smoke from his cigarette curled up before his face.

Finally, August got up, went to the stove, and turned out the fire under the chicken. He wrapped his handkerchief around the handle of the frying pan and brought it back, setting it down in the middle of the table. From the wall cabinet, he took a loaf of bread and set it beside the pan, ripping the red and white waxed paper with his fingernails.

"We'll eat the chicken that hasn't burned up," he said, taking a wing and dropping into his chair again. He inspected it and tore off a slab of meat with his teeth. "Well now, eat up! If you are going to cut tomorrow, you don't want to sleep on empty stomachs." August laughed self-consciously and waited for his sons to choose pieces from the pan.

"Say, Eric," he said, wiping his fingers on his shirt and laying his hand on his son's sleeve, "tell us a joke. Surely you hear some good jokes at the medical school."

Eric looked up. "I don't know; I can't think of . . ."

"That's all right," August said, pulling his chair up close and sticking his elbows on the table. "Luther told me this one yesterday. Listen, John! There was this Frenchman, you see, and he had this horse that drank . . ."

## II

The tops of the corn plants nodded as they passed under the axles of the Ford and stood upright again. Every few moments, August would glance behind him and watch the cultivator shovels slide through the light dry crust of clay. They moved like knives, slicing beneath the surface and rolling moist soil over against the stalks of corn.

The air was dry—good weather for combining. There had been no dew. The boys would have about eight or so acres behind them now. He looked at the shadow of his umbrella on the ground, and it lay only a few degrees west of north.

At the end of the row, he turned along the fence, lifting the cultivator out of the earth. The tractor bounced along the edge of the clover that covered the slope between the road and the corn field. A light breeze carried the scent of green clover to him as he moved over the gently roll-

ing terraces that girdled the hill every forty yards. At the road, he shifted gears and headed the Ford toward home.

The sky was clear and pale, blemished only by a few small waferlike clouds, crumbled at the edges. They seemed to be sliding northward along the western horizon. It was a good day for cutting! August steered the tractor leisurely up the winding lane to the house and rolled past the old grainbin into the yard.

Squinting his eyes, he looked out into the wheat field beyond the potato patch. Suddenly, he stopped the Ford and stood up. Around the edge of the field there was a small strip where the grain had been cut. The combine had made two, maybe three rounds; August could see it sitting along the fence. And near it was parked the truck.

Turning off the ignition, he jumped to the ground and took long strides toward the house. He stepped inside, closing the screen door behind him.

"You don't move very fast this morning," he said, taking off his cloth cap and tossing it on the table. Eric sat in a rocking chair near the heavy iron heating stove, thumbing through a magazine. He glanced up when August spoke, then turned his attention back again.

At one side of the table stood John, making a sandwich from bologna. There was an empty bread wrapper, some dirty coffee cups, and the frying pan, crusted with grease, sitting on the table top.

"You broke down?" August said.

John raised the sandwich to his mouth. "Eric said the auger broke down this morning, but I don't think it was the machinery that quit."

"He didn't even bother to look, Papa," Eric said. "He just stood there and laughed at me."

"I did look," John said. "And it looked like you'd killed it on purpose."

"But you wouldn't bother to explain how to keep it going, oh, no!" Eric dropped his magazine to the floor.

"When I did you couldn't grasp it."

"Grasp it? You talk like a three-year-old."

"I was trying to make it so you could understand," John said wryly.

"The hell with it," Eric said. "Papa, I'm not going to lift a hand till he shuts his month. When he can act like a man instead of an ape, I'll drive the truck."

August had gone to the water pail near the wash basin and had lifted the porcelain dipper to his lips. He lowered it. "I don't hear you," he said flatly.

"Go ahead and rot where you sit, Herr Doktor!" John said, and then turned to August. "Come on, Papa, you'll drive the truck for me?"

"I don't hear you either!" August dropped the dipper into the pail with a splash and walked to the screen door. He gripped the doorframe with his fingers and rested his chin on his arm.

From the door, the wheat field looked like an unbroken pool of gold, with the breeze raising ripples on its surface, splashing it up against the fences.



"Papa, he isn't going to help," John said, pointing back at Eric.

August glanced away from the door. "Why?" he said evenly.

"He just won't! Look, what if it was to rain, and the wheat isn't cut?"

"I think it would get wet." August smiled bitterly and walked back to the table. He pulled a chair up to the front window and propped his shoes on the sill. Then he sat with his back to his sons, munched on a sandwich, and stared out the window.

The room was dead still, and the silence was broken only when Eric rustled a page or John scuffed his shoes on the floor. Slowly the shadow of a low-hanging branch cast through one of the south windows, began to creep eastward across the floor and lengthen. Two hours passed.

Around three-thirty, John got up from an old rose-colored sofa where he had stretched out for a nap. He crossed the room and took a drink of water. August still sat by the window; he had taken his feet from the sill, but had not moved from the chair.

"Too bad the Doctor won't rough his hands, and do a little work," John said. "The whole day is going down the drain."

Eric had moved to the table to read and sat with his arms crossed before him. "I would gladly work if the only man who makes machinery run would stop his prancing and braying long enough to share his wisdom," he said, raising his eyes from a magazine.

"Tell me, Doctor," John said. "How in the hell do they ever expect you to be able to cure a sickness when you can't even keep a small gasoline engine running?"

"If you want to know, sickness takes patience and understanding. Evidently you don't need these to be successful with engines."

"I wish I had someone out here dumb enough to run an auger," John said.

"You don't have much trouble with it," Eric said.

"Your jokes are funny as hell," John said, crossing the room. "I damn well wish they'd cut wheat."

There was a scrape of chair legs on the floor as August pushed himself from the window. He stood, walked to the screen door and stepped onto the porch. "Come out here," he said, raising his voice.

John came to the door with Eric following behind. August raised his arm and pointed out over the lane to the west, toward the line of hills that ran north and south about five miles away and that hid all beyond but the sky from view.

"You see that?" he said.

The hills were bright with sunlight, setting them out in contrast to the ashen masses of clouds which pushed up behind them like shifting piles of black stone. Patches of shadow moved along the hills where small balls of vapor rolled across the sky above their slopes.

"You see that green patch south there, between those two heavy banks?" August moved his finger toward the spot. "You know what it means, boys. It means someone is going to get hailed on."

"Maybe it will go north of us," John said.

"I think maybe it won't, too!" August dropped his hand.

They stood on the porch with their eyes fixed on the clouds, slowly, evenly moving forward. "Even if we was to get a good hard shower, that wheat will go down, heavy as it is," John said.

"If it does hail," Eric said, "there won't be any heads to go down."

"You should have thought about that when you quit this morning."

"Crap!"

"That whole field could've been cut by now and a lot on the eighty," John said.

"Maybe after it hails, you can both go out with buckets and spoons and pick it up, so you won't have to work with each other," August said, stepping back inside.

After a moment, Eric came into the house. "Papa," he said, "if I were to drive and scoop, would you watch the auger so it keeps running? That's all, just watch the auger!"

August was leaning against the table looking at the floor. Finally, he nodded his head in assent.

Eric took his cap and walked onto the porch. "I'm going to drive that truck, so if you want to cut as much as you yell, I'll be waiting for you."

John came in for his cigarettes. "Well," he said, "maybe the guy is finally going to work a little. If he had just done like I told him, we wouldn't have had the trouble."

August looked at him and smiled sardonically.

"Besides," John added with a conscious shrug of the shoulders, "the storm might go north of us and not hurt a thing." He hurried out and down the steps into the yard.

"I think you are too late," August said to himself as his son walked away. "I think that you won't take enough out of that field to buy new hats for yourselves."

From the porch, August could see them work. John was whipping the combine on the corners with the big John Deere, not concerned about leaving a clump of wheat on each turn. He never left the porch except to help Eric with the auger and to help sweep the last bit of grain out of the truck. Most of the time he sat watching the clouds boil up and spill their darkness over the range of hills.

After a while, the breeze died down, and there was no rustle of leaves near the porch. When Eric came in, he was soaked with perspiration; and his skin was red with heat. This was the third load.

August watched him wipe the sweat from his glasses; and then take a grip on the scoop shovel, favoring the blisters that were raising on the palms of his hands. He had no energy to talk.

August stood in the truck bed, leaning against the side. Above, the sun was sliding behind the tumbling thunderheads; scattered flashes of lightning burst out of their folds. The sky behind them was pale green and gray. In back of him came the sound of the scoop shovel scraping against the metal in the floor of the truck.

"That's all, Papa," Eric said breathlessly. "Let's go."

"No hurry. This will be the last load anyway." August slipped over



the side of the truck, quieted the engine on the auger, and got into the truck cab.

The truck bounced over the rutted path from the yard to the field. When they stopped, August got out and looked up again. The air had cooled sharply, and it was beginning to sprinkle. The drops were berry-like and splashed heavily against the windshield. In a few minutes, John pulled out of the wheat and drove toward the truck.

"It's getting too wet," said August. "In a few minutes his cylinder will plug up." He watched the combine pull in next to the truck.

John jumped to the ground to start the combine auger while Eric swung the grain spout over the bed of the truck. They neither looked at one another nor exchanged words. The raindrops were more frequent now.

"You better try to pull it to the house before you get stuck," August shouted above the rattle of the combine motor and the hiss of the grain spilling into the truck.

John stopped the combine and started to get on the tractor. The rain was coming down hard now, making steam rise from the manifold of the hot engine where it hit. Then there was a metallic clank as a hail-stone bounced from the hood of the truck. The doors of the truck had no glass in the windows, and August jumped from the cab.

"Turn off that tractor and get under here!" he shouted as he ducked beneath the grainbed. Several more stones had ricocheted from the combine; Eric was rubbing his arm where one had hit him when he dove under the truck.

From where he knelt, August could see the hail become more intense. It pelted the combine and ripped the tractor umbrella to rags. He looked beyond the combine toward the uncut wheat. The stones were streaking into it, snapping the stems and shattering the heavy heads as the field of long, slender, upright stalks slowly dissolved into a mat of soggy, tangled straw. The hail stopped.

August sighed and leaned against one of the wheels, listening to the rain splash against the roof of the cab.

"If it had held off a while," John said, putting a piece of straw in his mouth, "I might of finished this patch."

"If it hadn't rained, you would still be sitting in the house glaring at each other instead of under this truck glaring at each other," August said.

"Maybe the eighty didn't get hailed," said Eric.

August looked down at a narrow rivulet running under the truck toward him. "Maybe it did, too."

Slowly the rain fell to a drizzle and then stopped. The three of them got up and stretched their legs. John walked to the umbrella and flicked a piece of the hanging cloth with his finger. August stepped into the edge of the battered wheat, and shoved his hands into his hip pockets with his back to the boys.

"If junior here hadn't crapped out this morning, we'd have gotten

the whole piece and most of the other," John said, scuffing the heel of his boot through the mud. "Now we haven't got enough to feed the chickens for the winter!"

"So you even want to blame the storm on me," Eric said, biting his lip. "I'm responsible for everything that goes wrong, always. Now you want to make me God who causes it to hail so you'll feel right about blaming that on me, too."

August turned from the tangle of fallen wheat and scooped up two handfuls of mud. It was soft and wet, and there were bits of grain mixed with it. He walked to where the boys stood glaring at each other.

"If you would learn that shouting isn't the answer to everything," Eric was saying, "it wouldn't be so damn impossible to work with you."

"Open your hands!" August said.

They turned to face him.

"I said, hold out your hands."

Startled, each slowly opened a palm and raised it. August stretched out his hands above his sons' and drew his fingers into tight fists. The mud squeezed out between them in thin flat ribbons that broke with their own weight and dropped into the open fingers of Eric and John.

Then he stepped back and wiped his hands on his pants. "I am going to the house now," he said, turning away. He dropped his arms and his whole frame seemed to sag.

The muck underfoot balled on his shoes and made hollow sucking sounds as he stepped away along the clean, even strip of stubble.

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game-time  
come on out and play with us  
we wont hurt you  
it's only a game anyhow  
come on be a good sport  
after all  
you cant win them all  
but i remember the last  
game only too well  
and my pain is  
not likely to become  
a wellhealed scar  
i dont want to play  
anymore  
but the memory of how  
nice it was to win  
persists  
and i know it is  
only going to be  
a minute until i  
can put on my  
overshoes.

dave daly

# Tom Sawyer and the Moral Development of Huckleberry Finn

MIKE FINNEY

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* cannot be read by any mature reader without the discovery being made that the presence of Tom Sawyer in the first chapters and his reappearance in the final chapters of the novel present an obvious, and even harsh, incongruity to an otherwise Huck Finn-dominated narrative. But this incongruity can serve a very important function in that it is quite relevant to a proper understanding of the moral development of Huck Finn—in the opening chapters by presenting the similarities of the two boys, and in the final chapters by accentuating their differences. In effect, Tom Sawyer serves as a focal point in the novel by providing a natural basis for comparing these similarities and differences. Whether Mark Twain consciously intended this to be Tom's major function is a question of only superficial importance, if any at all, for in discussing any work of art, intentions become irrelevant in the face of the accomplished product.

The novel can be conveniently divided, although this is probably the most overused phrase in literary criticism, into three parts, each of which is concluded by an important change in Huck's growth into maturity: from the beginning of the novel to page 87, XVI,\* where Huck says: "It hadn't ever come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did . . .;" from this point to page 225, XXXIII, where Tom Sawyer re-enters the novel; and from here to the end. However, whereas the break is distinct at page 225, the reference to page 87 is more arbitrary, in that the first part of the novel actually, and quite realistically, flows into the second with no real abrupt break in the continuity of the action. Yet Huck's statement here does represent a break in the continuity of his thought, if any conscious thought can be said to have been previously present, for it is at this point that Huck first consciously realizes the immensity of what it is that he is actually doing; it is at this point that Tom's influence over Huck really ends—the influence which has prompted Huck almost instinctively to consider the escapade only as a "grand adventure."

In the opening chapters, when he is generally under the influence of Tom Sawyer, Huck is largely a boy—highly adventurous, imaginative, and superstitious, but certainly not overburdened by his responsibilities, unique as they may be said to be. Tom is his hero, and Huck worships

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\* All page numbers in this essay apply to the Rinehart edition of *Huckleberry Finn*; chapter numbers apply to any edition.

the ground he walks on, considering him to represent all the desirable traits of character which he, himself, does not—respectability, intelligence, humility, in addition to the knowledge “as to what is *first-rate* adventure and what isn’t, being of the quality as he is.” Although Huck is usually realistic enough to realize the absurdities which Tom’s imagination leads the gang into, he is more often than not quite willing to sacrifice reality in exchange for the imaginative companionship of Tom, as, for example, when the gang “ambuscades the A-rabs.” But Huck is here also developing traits of manhood, traits which cannot be found in Tom as yet, for Huck sees suffering and hypocrisy in the world about him, and is at least somewhat conscious of a feeling of responsibility toward it; he is by no means the “mean and ornery” boy he takes himself to be.

In the opening chapters, Tom and Huck are basically alike, even though occasional flashes of Huck’s future development filter through his outbursts of boyish enthusiasm. However, once Huck is “loose” of the oppressive society of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, the occasionally cruel society of his “old man,” and that of Tom, which offers an escape from the other two in terms of boyish escapades; and once he becomes involved with Jim on Jackson’s Island, and, shortly thereafter, on the raft, the development of Huck’s moral consciousness is accelerated—slowly, and inconspicuously, but surely.

Huck’s first step toward self-realization is his discovery of the real man in Jim, a discovery which is re-enforced throughout the novel, and which is the culmination of a series of boyish practical jokes at the expense of Jim—pranks which were by no means maliciously intended, but which were nevertheless devised without an understanding of the human emotions of his companion. Huck had always previously considered a “nigger” to be something much less than a sensitive human being, rather more an insensitive white man’s plaything than anything else. But the jokes backfire; Jim’s feelings are hurt and revealed to Huck, and “it is fifteen minutes before Huck can work himself up to humble himself to a nigger; but he does it.” (86, XV)

On the following page (87, XVI), Huck first consciously realizes the real implications of his “grand adventure”; he first realizes that he is helping a slave to his freedom—the crime of crimes to the Southerner. It is at this point that he makes his first conscious attempt to discover the man in himself. Self-realization is often preceded by the realization of others, and Huck is beginning to find something entirely new and wonderful in Jim, and it naturally follows that he is beginning to find something of the same in himself.

These two incidents represent the motivating force of the novel. From this point to the climax, the action is rising action, or the complication of the novel, and consists invariably of the conflict produced in Huck’s mind between the established order, represented by Judge Thatcher, the Widow Douglas, Miss Watson, and even Tom Sawyer; and the opposing order, represented by the re-enforced examples of the man in Jim; or a conflict between a legal “right” which is morally



wrong, and vice versa. The climax can therefore be expected to occur only at that point where this conflict is resolved, one way or the other.

The climax occurs on page 214, XXXI; it is here that Huck finally becomes fully aware of the dignity that is Jim, and it is here, as a result, that Huck finally becomes aware of the dignity that is himself:

It was a close place. I took it up [the note to Miss Watson], and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right, then, I'll go to hell"—and tore it up.

Huck has expressed his resolution to the conflict; indeed, naively, for he has been educated by a society which ignores moral right—a society which marches collectively to heaven only by obeying the edicts of legal "right"—and rather than betray the newly-discovered creation which is himself, Huck vows to go to hell.

It is shortly after this point that Tom Sawyer makes his awkward reappearance, from which time he resumes the position of leadership which he had relinquished throughout the major portion of the novel, but only because he wasn't present. A realization of this fact is more important than one could possibly imagine. If the middle chapters of the novel were removed by the reader, and the final chapters connected to the opening ones, no one would be particularly startled by Tom's appearance at the Phelps', for Tom is the same imaginative, adventurous boy here that he was in the beginning; but Huck isn't. The harshness of Tom's reappearance is intensified because Huck's maturity has "sneaked up" on the reader from behind, has evolved slowly and inconspicuously, but surely. And finally, the harshness of Tom's immaturity intensifies the fact that Huck is no longer the boy that he was before the long voyage down the Mississippi by accentuating the differences which now exist between the two boys.

And in the end, as in our beginning, although Huck has gained self-realization, he is still willing to become a boy again, at least temporarily, although one of a great deal more maturity. He is perfectly willing once more to exceed the bounds of reality in exchange for the imaginative companionship of Tom, in return now, however, for Tom's assistance in freeing Jim—Huck's link between himself and the real values of the world around him—from the chains of slavery.

## Invocation

WILLIAM MARVEL

Now Muse—

Have I not writ according to your will?  
not worshipped you alone?

At appointed times not dug a pit  
and in it poured, in your honor,  
mingled blood and ink  
—a libation?

My fastings are well known to everyone.  
From your books, O most excellent Muse,  
I've read and wept (aloud).

And still you turn your head?

Has my heart not soared  
to follow the flight of birds  
that I might read some sign?

Have I not thrilled for thunder  
that I might learn some voice?

And you still withhold your aid?

Have I not given proof of my love,  
been diligent,  
spent energy like petty cash  
in suit for your favor?

And even offered to sleep with you  
and raise such children as we thus may breed  
to your honor alone?

And you still will not love me?

# To a Young Woman

That She Find a Proper Suitor

WILLIAM MARVEL

You there—

browneyed with your flashfire smile

girl—

Yes, you:

Must you always be keeping my heart

on the edge

of its seat

watching you do your veronicas

while the bull makes

otooclose

passes?

And after

the moment of truth

in the afternoon, death and

blood on the sand and

all that—

does one throw you a

(call you his)

Andalusian Rose?

And his incense voice swirling sweet

rising, caressing with fragrance your ear.

And I, barefoot, listening

in the coldstone courtyard down here.

Indifferently listening

(I may even try whistling

to show my indifference)

I may even write poetry

singing your browneyedcymbalclashsmile praise

to disguise my indifference.



KEITH PETERS

You know, it's a funny thing. After so long a time I still think of Pete Terpozi. I haven't seen him or heard from him for ten years, and you'd think you'd forget about a guy you only knew for about six months. 'Specially a guy like Pete. After all, he was just another bum in the navy, same as me and a million others. But Pete wasn't like the rest of us. He didn't get along too well—but I'm getting ahead of myself. I'll give it to you from the start.

Like I said before, I met Pete in the navy. I'd just come off duty with the *Midway* going into drydock. The brass decided to send me to Charleston. Anybody that's been in the service knows what it's like. The brass holler and you jump. You always get a chance to fill out a little paper that lists your choice for next duty station. In all those little pamphlets put out by the navy, they always say this is one of the good deals in serving your hitch with the fleet. That you can take your pick of duty stations. Or they say if you have a brother and you want to stay with him in service, they'll personally see to it you'll be aboard the same ship or in the same fleet. As if you'd want to stay with your brother, seeing as how most guys join the navy to get away from home. No sense having a reminder of it tagging along after you all day long. It takes the edge off it, or the kicks.

I went home after I left the ship, because I had forty-three days' leave coming after all that time at sea. I stuck it out for quite a while. It was great to see Mom and the place, even if Mom's getting along in years now and is kind of absent-minded. And our place isn't what you'd call fancy. Mom had me paint the old slat fence and I fixed the gate on my own, so you don't have to prop it up with a board. All it needed was a new hinge and a couple of nails.

I just puttered around the house, helping Mom clean and plant some flowers in a little spot she had cleared next to the house. One thing about Mom, she was always fixing things up to look better, 'specially after Dad died. Most of the kids I went to school with were gone or married and I didn't know many of the others there. Besides, they pulled such crazy stunts that I felt a little stupid running with them. Most of them were three, even four years younger than me. I did go over to see Buck, but he's married now and it's not the same. He's got a pretty wife. She served lemonade and cookies while I was there. I couldn't help noticing the way she walked when she came in from the kitchen. Kinda slow and easy-like, but her eyes were all alive, and they ran over you when she looked at you. But most of the time she looked at Buck and nodded whenever he said something. I asked Buck when she was out in the kitchen washing the glasses and stuff where he'd met such a pretty girl.

Buck looked proud and said "I saw her sittin' in the stands at the last

game I pitched, while I was waitin' to bat. I hit a home run and she hung around afterwards and we just got to goin' together. We ain't been married long." Buck looked toward the kitchen.

We talked about one thing and another, but I didn't stay long. Buck was too settled, like married guys usually are. I asked him if he wanted to go out for a beer, but he said he didn't drink much anymore. Hell, that gal really hogtied him.

I stayed at home twenty days and then I had to leave. I just couldn't stand it. Nobody around. Nothing to do except go see the one movie in town. I got kinda tired of it after the third time. They don't change movies but once a week. I said goodbye to Mom and caught a train for Charleston. I'd put in a request for Pearl Harbor, with Corpus Christi second. That's what I mean about the service. I tried to sleep, but I never could sleep on trains, so I read this book I brought along. All about this man who made out with four chicks. I had to admire him. He was smart, because he never got tangled up with them, just got what he wanted and got the hell out. The story had a bad ending, though. One of the chicks—it had to be the fat one—shot him. It just goes to show you.

The train finally pulled into Charleston at eleven o'clock at night. I'd never been in the place before and didn't have the least idea where the navy base was. So I had to corner a cab and that cost me two bucks. I showed my orders at the gate and the officer looked at me like I was crazy.

"Your orders say you're supposed to report to the band. There's no band on this base."

"Sir, I'm sure there isn't a mistake," I said. "There's a guy I used to be with who was transferred up here a while ago. He wrote to me, and the letter's postmarked Naval Base, Charleston, South Carolina."

I noticed the officer began to look tired.

"All right," he said. "I'll try to call somebody that might know."

He picked up the phone and I heard him ask for the admiral's office. Someone answered, I guess, because he asked if there was a band on the base. Then he nodded and said, "I'll be damned. Where is it?"

The officer got that tired look again and hung up.

"They have a band here all right," he said. He pushed his cap back and wiped his face with the back of his hand.

"The only trouble is, nobody seems to know where it is."

"Well, sir," I said. "I could start walking around looking for it, except I got this seabag with me and it's pretty heavy."

The officer looked at me and then at the seabag crammed full of stuff and then back at me.

"Yeah," he said. "I guess it would be too much for you."

For a while he didn't say anything. He just stood there scribbling on his report blank.

"I'll tell you what you do," he said finally. "You go over to that barracks right over there and sleep there for tonight. The MA will give



you a mattress and bedding. Then, tomorrow, at eight o'clock, you come back here and I'll see if I can find the band."

That officer took the longest time explaining things of anybody I ever saw. I don't think he was too bright. I told him thank you sir and hoisted the seabag to my shoulder. I walked out of the room and as soon as I got out of sight of the window, I put the seabag down and dragged it along behind me. I had so damn much stuff in there. I found the barracks and told the master-at-arms that the officer at the gate told me I was to sleep there for the night. He asked to see my orders.

"You're supposed to report to the band," he said.

"I tried to report to it, but nobody can find out where it is," I said. "Do you know?"

"No. No, I didn't even know they had a band here. This is the messcooks' barracks, but if the officer told you to come here, then I guess it's okay."

He rolled down the hall and I followed.

"I'll get you a mattress. Be sure you turn it in in the morning. By the way, we get up at five-thirty."

I didn't say anything, because I wanted to sack out in the worst way. I got the mattress from him, flipped it on the metal bands they call bedsprings in the navy, and sailed off to sleep.

The next morning I ate chow, sat around until eight o'clock and went back to see that officer at the gate. When I walked in the shack, I could see his face sag. I don't think he cared for me much. He made about three phone calls, and said he couldn't find out just exactly where the band barracks was, so why don't I just start looking for it. The thought of lugging that seabag around the base was pretty discouraging. I said Yessir in a voice that probably sounded like okay, you bastard, make me lug this damn bag to hell and back. I wandered around for near an hour, and just as I was about ready to drop, I ran into some second class that said he didn't know where the band was, but he'd heard them practicing down around the submarine barracks. I said thanks and started to pull away from him. Then I knew I forgot something so I turned around and yelled at him.

"Hey, where are the sub barracks?"

He got a sort of pained look on his kisser, like Buck did when I asked him how the Yankees were doing. He jerked his finger toward the northeast part of the base and took off, shaking his head. I could see there were a lot of high and mighty guys here. Well, I tugged at that seabag and finally got it on my shoulder, which felt like it was going to drop down to my knees, and found the sub barracks. I was just going inside to ask somebody if they knew about the band when this guy across the street yelled at me. I crooked my neck, trying to see over the bag. In a minute I knew I had found the place. That was Randolph over there.

"Hell, Randy, how you doin'?"

"Fine, Rock. They send you down here, huh?"

"Yeah," I said. I stumbled across the hot asphalt and dropped the bag. "Man, I thought I'd never find you guys."

"Nobody knows we're here," Randolph said. He grinned and showed a set of grimy yellow teeth snuggled under a scraggly mustache. "That's what makes this place such a gas."

"I'll buy that," I said. "Where's the barracks?"

Randy pointed across the street. "See that big tall building there on the east and the one west of it?"

"Yeah. Which one is it?"

"It's the little shack in between," Randy said. "It used to be a boiler room or something. It's small, but they're only two guys staying there now. Everybody else is living together off base in apartments or married."

"It doesn't look too bad," I said. I dragged my seabag across the brown grass and kicked the door open with my foot. The room was pretty good size and bare as the girl on a Playboy calendar. A few chairs were scattered around and a piano sat over in the corner near the only window.

"This is where we rehearse," Randy said. His white jumper bulged down near his belt. He had sure got fat since I saw him last.

"You'll bunk in the other room." Randy led the way through the door. Three bunks squatted on one side, the mattresses folded back and bare. On the other side, three more bunks were sandwiched in between lockers, hunched over the warped hardwood floor. A black-haired guy was sitting on a bunk, drawing something on a piece of paper. In front of him, on the floor, was a picture of a good-looking girl that looked like it had been cut out of a magazine. The guy had it propped up with a big book to keep it from bending in the middle. He didn't even turn around when we walked in the room. I dropped my seabag on the floor.

"Pete," Randy said, "This is Rocky Stansen. He plays trumpet. Pete Terpozi."

The guy turned around real slow and looked me over. His eyes were the damndest things I ever saw. They were coal black and seemed to look right through you. He didn't get up, so I walked over to him and stuck out my paw. He finally grabbed it and gave me a bone crusher.

"Glad to know you, Pete. I'll be staying here with you and Randy."

"Yeah," Pete said. "Well, I guess one more won't be too bad."

Right away I figured I wasn't going to get along with this guy. He looked tough and he talked tough, like he owned the damn navy. I didn't know what else to say to him so I asked Randy where to put my stuff and got everything unpacked and in my locker. All the time I was fixing my locker up, Pete was sitting hunched over on his bunk, drawing the girl. Every time I made a noise he shifted around and looked over at me. He acted like he was the master painter or somebody and shouldn't be bothered. He didn't ever say anything, but I could tell from the way he looked at me he wasn't very happy about the noise.

I finished up and went over and got checked in. That night Randy

and I went to eat chow together. I didn't eat much, because they served chipped beef on toast, and I had so damn much of that stuff on the ship I just couldn't take anymore. So I shot the breeze with Randy when we sat down at the long table.

"Randy, what's the deal with Pete? He seems like a weirdie." Randy rammed a forkful of spuds in his mouth. The gravy trickled down on his chin and he swept the black stubble with the back of his hand.

"Oh, he's okay," Randy said. "He's a little touchy, that's all. Used to fight his way home from school every night. Came from a tough part of Boston."

"Hell, I guess that explains it," I said. The milk tasted good and cold. "When I was unpacking this afternoon, I made a little noise, naturally, and he acted like I was really bugging him."

"Oh, he's all right. Just a little touchy, especially about his drawing."

When we got back to the barracks, Pete was sitting there watching TV. I hadn't noticed the TV set before. I took a seat next to him and watched the screen, hoping that he would say something. But he sat there, with one leg thrown over the arm of the leather chair, like I didn't even exist. I could stand that for only so long.

"You been down here long, Pete?" I said.

He looked over at me for a minute with those damned eyes. Then he turned back to the TV set before he said anything.

"Too damn long."

That's all he said. He sure didn't like to talk much. I sat there for quite a spell, trying to figure out a way to get him to talk. Hell, I don't know why I was sweating it. He was such an unfriendly guy. Guess it was because I knew I'd have to live around him for quite a while. Then it hit me.

"Did you finish the picture you were working on?"

I thought this would get him going and sure enough, it did the trick.

"Yeah, I finished it."

I could tell he was waiting for me to say something.

"I'd like to see how it came out," I said.

Pete dropped his leg on the floor.

"Sure," he said. He pried himself out of the deep chair and lumbered across the floor. He had the weirdest walk I've ever seen. He clodded along with his feet hitting the floor real hard, like a bull elephant thudding across the room. And the way he carried his head to one side with his neck twisted. Like he expected someone to take a swing at him. I could tell right away that this was going to be a long and beautiful friendship. He came back with the picture and turned on the rest of the lights. Then he walked over to the TV set and flipped it off. He flopped in the leather chair and handed over the picture. I don't know much about drawing, but I wasn't going to let Pete know it. Matter of fact, the drawing looked pretty good. He had done it in some sort of black stuff. It looked sloppy to me, but there wasn't any doubt that it was a girl.

"It looks good," I said. "How long you been drawing?"

"Eight years," Pete said. "I have a scholarship for a Boston art school as soon as I get out."

That picture broke the ice, all right. We talked for a long time that night. At least I did. Pete mostly listened, and now and then he'd say a couple of words. He was sure the quietest guy I ever met. Nothing to say.

We got along pretty good for the next few days. After band rehearsal we'd go over and eat chow together. I didn't have much to do with any of the other guys in the band except Randy, because they were married or working at part-time jobs and the only time I saw them was at rehearsal or when we were playing a gig or honors.

After a while Pete and I started going out on liberty together. One night we were having a couple of beers in a place on Market Street, and I decided to ask Pete why he was so quiet. We'd had about four beers.

"Okay, I'll tell you," Pete said. "But you've got to promise not to tell anybody. They think I'm a little strange right now."

I snorted on the beer.

"Sure," I said. "I won't tell a soul."

Pete leaned forward in the booth and fixed those black eyes on me. I never did get used to his eyes.

"Have you ever read anything by Freud?" Pete said. He was pretty excited and he talked real soft, like he was afraid someone else might hear.

"Freud?" I said. "What'd he do?"

"Hell, he was a German who wrote a lot about psychology."

"Oh, yeah, now I remember," I said. I hadn't the slightest idea who the hell he was. But I figured to play along with the game.

"Well, anyway, he had a theory about people. He said that people had positive and negative charges."

"You mean like a car battery?" I said. I tried to say it real easy and keep the sarcasm out of it.

"That's right," Pete said. He leaned closer to me and I could smell the soured beer on his breath. "When two people are talking, they have these two charges. The person that does the talking gives the guy listening a positive charge. If he talks too long, he gives this other guy all his positive charge."

I had a long pull at the bottle of beer. He was a screwball.

"Well," I said. "What happens?"

"Don't you see?" Pete said. He sounded so damned superior. "It's just like when you take a battery and drain it of a charge. It runs down and becomes dead. It's the same way with a person. He loses all his positive charge and has nothing but negative left. He gets all run down, tired."

I had the sudden urge to get the hell out of there, but I knew I'd have to treat this guy with kid gloves. He was completely off his rocker.

"Yeah, I see what you mean." I nodded my head slowly.

"What you try to do is maintain your positive charge at a high level," Pete said. "It gives you strength."

I cupped my hand around my mouth and coughed.

"Sure," I said. "That makes sense all right. And I suppose, if you do get low on your positive charge, you try to get a guy to listen to, to get re-charged."

"That's it, that's right," Pete said. He looked relieved now that I understood.

Well, after that night, I knew I'd better stay away from Pete as much as possible. He gave me the creeps. He was big, a lot bigger than me, and there's no telling what he might do if he thought that crazy all the time. For a few weeks I went out with him to hear the guys jamming at the Carriage House, or just to get a beer. He told me about this gal he was dating. A schoolteacher, no less. I asked him if he had fixed her yet and he got mad as hell. I didn't say anymore about it, although I couldn't figure out why he was spending all that money on her and not getting anything. But I kept it to myself.

Little by little, I tried to get away from Pete. Not real sudden, because I knew that would make him mad. He'd told me all these secret theories and stuff, and warmed up to me. So I figured I had to be pretty sly about the deal.

One night he asked me if I wanted to go to the show with him.

"I'd like to go, Pete," I said. "But the chief told me I better get to practicing on my trumpet or I'd lose first chair."

"I wish you could go," Pete said. "But if you got to practice, maybe we can make it sometime the last part of the week."

"Sure," I said. Of course the chief didn't give a damn whether anybody practiced. We were supposed to rehearse from eight to eleven in the morning, but most of the time we sat around and played poker. Once in a while the chief would sit in on a hand, but I always dropped out when he did, because he was the only guy that could beat my bluffing and the first couple of times I played with him, he cleaned me. So I just kinda disappeared when I saw the chief look interested in the game.

Pete and I started to separate. I didn't have much to say to him anymore and I always went early to chow. If I started out for chow, Pete would holler "Wait for me" and I shouted back "I can't stand the damn food—I'm going to eat at the canteen." I knew that would take care of it, because Pete was tighter than a clam. He would date this girl once in a while and drink a couple of beers, but he didn't go in for a real good party.

I must have gone about it a little too fast even though I thought I was pretty careful, because once when I was coming back from chow, I saw Pete coming toward me, lumbering like a freight train right down the middle of the sidewalk. I moved over on my side a little, but Pete didn't move an inch. Pete never moved an inch. His shoulder thudded into my left arm real hard. I didn't say anything and neither did he until a couple of hours after chow. Then I felt pretty bad about the way I was treating him. Well, I take that back. I didn't feel too bad—I thought



I might ease up on him a bit. Really, I figured to make it rougher for him, but I knew I had to slow it down.

So, that night, I came up to him sitting in that leather chair and started to talk with him. He loosened up right away and out of a clear blue sky he asked me if I had done any fencing. I said I had. I told him about fixing the fence back home when I was on leave. He laughed and said that he was talking about swords.

"No," I said. "I didn't know they fought with swords anymore."

Pete looked real exasperated.

"They don't fight with them," he said. "It's a sort of a game. They put a rubber tip on the sword or foil, and both fencers wear masks to protect their faces. You can even get uniforms if you want them."

"What's the point of the thing?" I said.

Pete laughed again. "Well, most people fence for sport and exercise. I want to tell you something else that most people don't know." Pete's voice got real confidential. He looked around to see if Randy was in the room. He wasn't. Randy had been going off on drunks for five or six days at a time, and we hadn't seen much of him.

"The important thing about fencing is that it'll help sharpen your mind."

I figured I'd heard everything before, but this took the cake. I'd heard he was getting out in two more months. I thought with a little luck I could stick it out that long.

That night he convinced me that we should go order a couple of foils and masks. A week later we got them and had at it. Like I say, Pete was big, but I was faster. I usually got the best of him, but sometimes he brought his foil down on me like a club and he had big arms. One night I had him cold. He was off balance and I laid the rubber tip right at his belly. He didn't give up, though, like he should have. He brought that right arm down and caught me just above the wrist. It felt like a real bad charley horse. The arm got all puffed up and blue where the edge of his foil crossed it. Pete said he was sorry—I told myself I'd never forget it. I'd get even with him if it was the last thing I did.

I went along with him for a while longer. We'd be real tired after playing with those swords and we talked quite a bit while we dropped in the chairs to rest. Pete told me about his home and the tough neighborhood. He said he never wanted to see another fight. I could see it was a lie, after the way he'd been acting with that sword. We went out together once in a while, but he really began to bug me now. Everything he did was loud. When we rode on the bus, he always talked in a way so loud people turned around and looked at us. He walked along the street like he owned the place, and I got mighty worried, 'specially late at night, that he was going to get us into trouble. But he never did. His loud talking and everything began to get on my nerves and I knew I had to back out of there fast. All his talk about charges and psychosomething symptoms was beginning to drive *me* crazy.

So I decided to pull the freeze on him. I'd had good luck with this

thing before. You just get everybody to quit speaking to a guy, and pretty soon he'd come crawling back on his knees. Of course, I didn't use the freeze unless I figured nothing else would work and the guy had really gone out of line. Pete was always out of line.

Next time I saw Randy I told him about all the things Pete had told me. Like human beings were full of electricity and swords sharpened the mind—all that stuff. Then I spread it around to the rest of the guys, one at a time. Pretty soon you could tell it was working. I don't know why Pete told me all his secrets. Randy didn't know about them before I told him and neither did anybody else. Well, you could tell the freeze was starting to set in. The guys in the band looked at Pete funny and didn't speak to him unless he spoke first. Then, when they answered him, they were real careful what they'd say. I quit talking to him too, and started spending all my spare time (which was just about all day) away from the barracks.

Things were working just fine for a while. One day Pete came up to me and asked what the hell was going on with the guys in the band.

"What do you mean?" I said. "I haven't noticed anything different, except Randy is staying drunk for a week or better at a time."

"Nobody's speaking to me anymore," Pete said. "They all act like I got some contagious disease." He looked hurt and puzzled.

"It's all in your mind," I said. "Most of the guys have been moody lately because they're wondering if they're going to get that pay raise. You're imagining things."

"Nope," Pete said. "There's something going on, and I'm going to find out what it is."

After that he began drawing stuff like mad, picture after picture. He didn't draw pretty young girls so much now. Women, pretty enough, but old enough to be his mother. I never saw him work much, but when I'd get back late at night, there would be another picture or two stacked over by his bunk.

Gradually the guys got to smiling among themselves about Pete, because he was going around trying to hear everybody chewing the fat. Usually they weren't talking much about him—they had gotten used to him. But pretty soon they started snickering and asking him how many volts did he think they had today and Pete would get mad as hell. Sometimes he wouldn't even shave and he'd get up with his black eyes rimmed with red, like he wasn't sleeping much.

Then something happened I hadn't counted on. One night Randy and I were talking about Pete. I was telling Randy I thought Pete had better go see a doctor or somebody because he was going to crack up. Randy told me he'd fix it up with the chief to have a psychiatrist take a look at Pete. We were standing out in the rehearsal room and I didn't hear the door to the bunkroom open. There was Pete standing in the doorway. He didn't say anything. He just stood there real tense. His hands were shut so tight that they were white and quivering. I was scared but I mustered a little extra and walked past him and over to

my bunk. I wasn't sure he'd overheard us, I told myself, but deep down I knew he had.

I stretched out on the bunk and got out a new detective book I had just bought. All this slow and easy. I looked up and saw Pete standing over me and I got this prickly feeling, and he had one hand raised and I damn near passed out when I saw he had his big jackknife opened and in his paw. His face was all screwed up and he was shaking all over.

"Goddamn you, Rocky. You traitor."

His black eyes tore me apart. I couldn't take my glance away from those eyes.

"You son of a bitch," Pete said. "You're a little Hitler. Another Hitler, that's what you are."

Pete had trouble talking. I wanted to say something but my throat was all tight and my mouth was grinding teeth. My stomach bunched up and I just lay there on the bunk, looking up at him.

"You're the one that planned this thing. You son of a bitch."

Then the damndest thing happened. He turned and threw the knife. Not at me, you understand, but it thwanged and stuck in the gypsum wall on the other side of the room, vibrating like a picked string. Then Pete ran out and I could hear him crying as he hit the door of the rehearsal room and stumbled out of the place.

So that's it. After that deal, we never spoke to each other. Something went haywire with Randy's deal, because Pete never got checked out with the psychiatrist. Too bad. The bastard was really out of it. He got out in a couple of weeks and I heard he made the art school. Such a hard-hearted guy I've never met.

# A Space of Peace

JAMES DALEY

Six o'clock now;  
At eight, the train for Paris.  
I take my last look:  
This chapel—St. Anthony  
That cathedral—Munster.  
One chides the homing soul,  
The antlike agitation.  
Can I continue to carry my nest with me?

A final walk,  
A final talk  
With powers I've never seen,  
And myself,  
The people,  
The friends,  
The town.  
No, it will only be over  
As a day is,  
Adding to the rim of what is to come.

In New York—the memory of that time  
Will play itself out.  
Tonight  
I will just walk around,  
Into and through  
The cathedral,  
Snatching silently at those moments

Of peace, I envy  
Her in tugging the clouds.  
Till morning in Paris:  
The meat-market and Notre Dame,  
Where I'll sit upon a bench  
And thrum my lute,  
As they waken about  
Me  
From their card-boarded beds,  
Blanketed in canvas.





4. An obvious reference to Wyrð, the Anglo-Saxon god of fate. Cf., *Beowulf*.
5. South—this word has caused more difficulty to editors of Finney than any other single word in his works. Prof. W. C. Hummel explains it in terms of certain socio-regional connotations in twentieth century America. Higginson's criticism on this stand is particularly illuminating:

Professor Hummel's position were easy to see if Finney had written the line "goin' South," (goin' being regional dialectal for the standard received American form). However, Finney employs the received form, and thus the "South" here is clearly one which is actually north of the Mason-Dixon line. Masterson's *Regional Dialects: USA*, and Schooley's *Kinky Heads and Greek Porticos: A Study of Life in the Old South* throw some (but not much) light on the subject.

Perhaps the final answer is that Finney said South, but meant West.

6. again—together with the previous word, South (see note 5), this seems to be a reference to the yearly migration of the birds South (sic) for the winter. This would seem to date Finney's poem in the fall of 1960, which coincides perfectly with the start of the Second Great Ice Age. Recent Carbon-14 dating has given us 1987 as the probable date of the Harvard manuscript, which is probably the original. The Harvard ms. is not in Finney's own hand, which indicates that he doubtless used a scribe rather than writing his poetry down directly. On this subject Finney has written a delightful seven-line lyric:

"FINNEYES WORDES UNTO ADAM, HYS OWNE SCRIVEYN"

Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle  
Pound or Finney for to wryten newe,  
Mayst thou down the steppes of Kytes ge-falle.

(The last four lines have not been recovered)

For a discussion of the Finney manuscripts and their probable dates, see PMLA, CCCXVI. Prof. Raymond Ditmars, of the New York Zoological Society, says that the birds use the position of the stars to navigate South, by which observation may well explain Finney's problems with "South" (west) mentioned in note 5.

7. This line has been seen as a reference to *J. B.*, a play by a contemporary of Finney's, A. MacLeish; also as John Biggs, a son by John Biggs, Sr., and a classmate of Finney's at Clongowes, the Jesuit boarding school outside Dublin. Biggs was also apparently the inspiration for Finney's famous novel, *Portrait of the Scholar as a Young Man*.
8. On the other hand, it may be a reference to J. B. Bowers, a freshman architecture student at Kansas State U. (see note 1) at approximately the same time as Finney, but whom Finney never had in class, and whom Finney thus would probably not know from Adam (see note 6).
9. Or, it may even be an anagram meaning (J) Francis Bacon, who was probably the real author of Finney's works (although many other names have been suggested, some of which might be more convincing than Bacon's, were it not for the fact that the anagram so obviously refers to Bacon, whose last name begins with a "b").
10. Or it might even be a pure invention, created in order to fill out the meter. As MacLeish (see note 7) has said:  
A poem should not mean, but be.
11. Yes—(see note 3). The repetition of the "s" sounds reinforces the hissing effect of the poem. Scholars have had some difficulty deciding why Finney would want the poem to hiss, anyway. Perhaps, he meant it to be an imitation of the sounds his audience would make when they first listened to it.
12. A reference to the Chinese New Year, which occurs in the fall, when the birds fly "South again" (see notes 5 and 6).
13. Sunday—the Lord's day.

14. Monday—variously known as “Blue Monday” or the “day after the night before.” Finney was known to party a lot on Sunday nights.
15. French—this calls attention to and reinforces the pun contained in the word, “Monday.” The French word for Monday is *lundi*, a pun on the word, *laundry*. It is thought that Finney used to do his laundry on Mondays.
16. OK—this line appears in red ink at the bottom of the original manuscript. Higginson believes it not to be Finney’s, but the work of a teacher (probably of the so-called “creative writing”) grading Finney’s work. The absurdity of this view should be evident upon a close examination of the poem itself, it obviously being hardly “OK” by any literary standards—intuitive or rational.

## Somewhere

R. CLIFTON PANGBURN

Somewhere,  
over behind that stone fence  
growing in the shadows numbly,  
quietly, are flowers not forgetting  
their communion with weeds.  
They speak among themselves  
of Descartes and Berkeley—  
Socratic words of ignorance  
amid laughter and pointing.  
Theirs are the  
white, carved, stone-blemished fields  
mounded and wilted.  
They stand, the carrion of seekers  
among dead rocks and skeletons,  
breathing monotony—the disease of days  
where pain laughs drunkenly at  
diamonds and golden hair.  
And I;  
from the forever forest,  
from the paths flown by ageless birds,  
from white moments where time waits,  
am beckoned to be judged.

# Genesis

KEITH LAQUEY

A velvet mist embraces the shivering dawn.  
The last star trembles, grows bright and dies.  
Soft winds caress the drowsy earth,  
A night bird disturbs this solemn genesis.

The morning sea robed in chaste quiescence.  
Shafts of gold penetrate the molting clouds  
And glisten on the wet gray blacks of the granite beach.

Now a beam kisses the tranquil softness of azure waters.  
Reflected in the cool depths a figure is glimpsed,  
Swaying, beckoning, promising the unreal, the love.  
Smiling, the eyes invite.

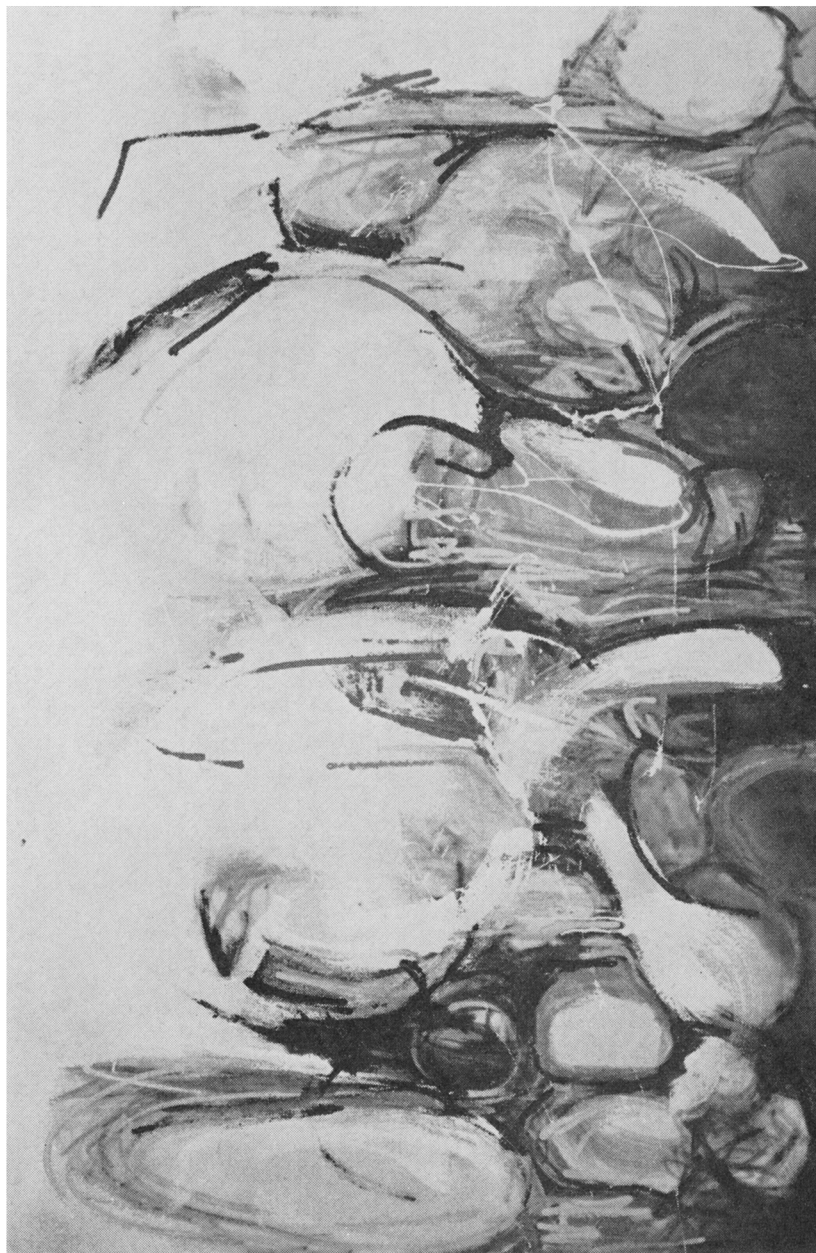
I am afraid . . .

I stumble to the brink, the sand grows cold.  
A seagull screams!  
A finger moistened, my hand submerged.  
A vision!

Whirling opaques spiraling towards eternity; color,  
Cascading and colliding against the walls of my thirsting brain.

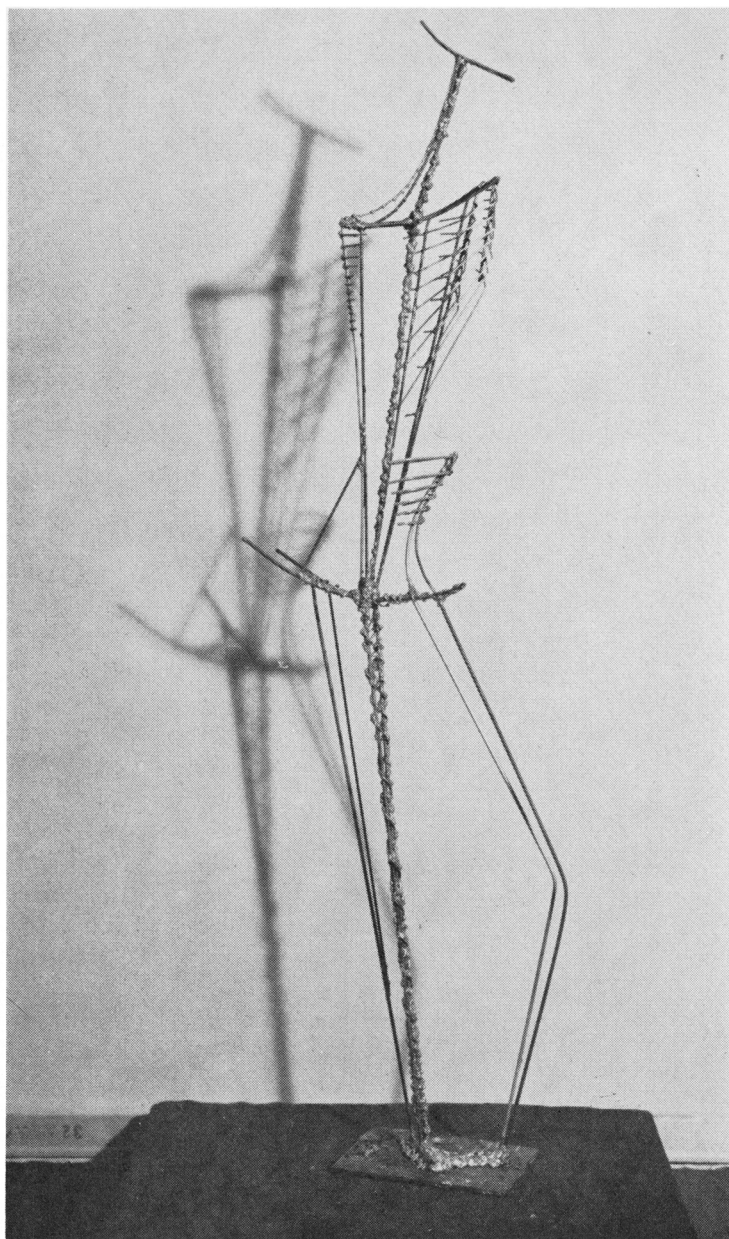
I am so weak, breathing is difficult.  
What is the darkness?  
Majestic symbol of an antique muse.

My vision fades . . .  
The sun stops.



—LARRY DUNHAM





—LOREN MANGES





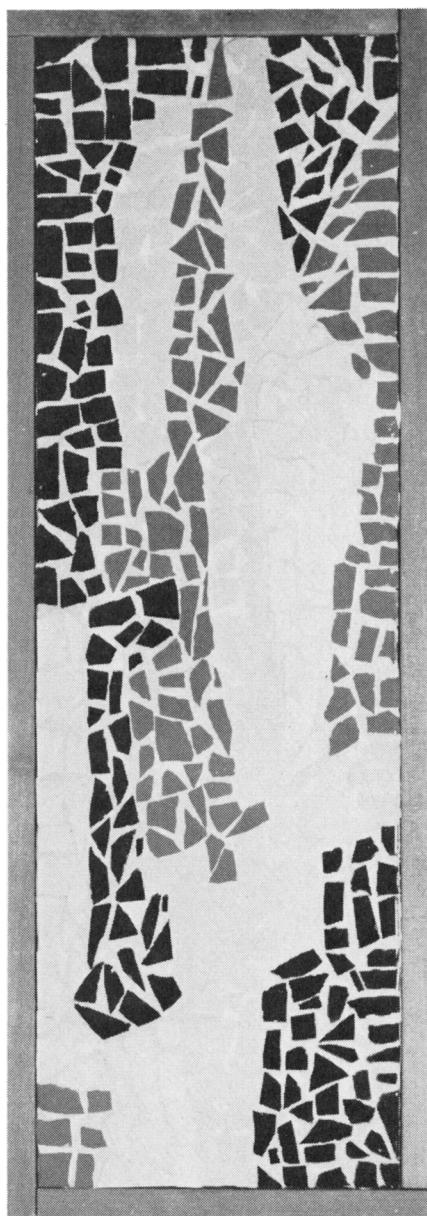
—SUZANNE FAIRBANKS



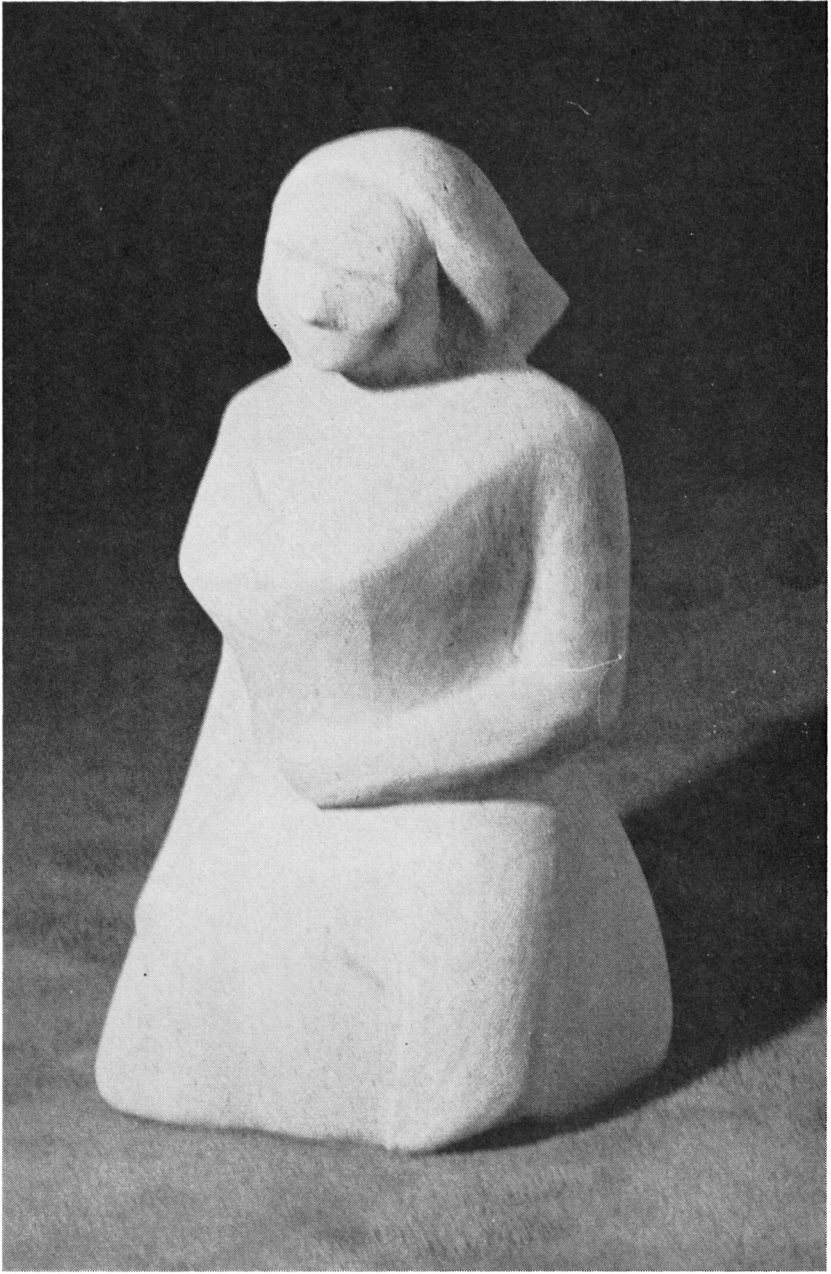
—GARY LAWRENCE



—DAVE YUST



—ANN PHILLIPS



—KAREN BRAMAN





—JOHN COWAN



# One for the Money, Two for the Show

ROBERT JOHNSON

As Parson Henry began his final prayer, Dick Mueller took off his battered felt hat. His unkempt grey hair picked up the breeze and tickled the top of his head. Other heads were bared around him. He looked over the top of them, seeing all the people he had known for so many years. Slowly his eyes turned back to the preacher and he listened to the droning monotone of his prayer, accompanied only by the soft rustling of the elm leaves overhead. Now and then a dead leaf floated down, swaying rhythmically, landing noiselessly. A leaf fell on the packing-box coffin that held Amos Barnes, was picked up by the wind and whisked into the waiting hole.

It had been fall *last* time, too, though the leaves had already fallen. Dick looked over at the gravestone adjacent to the freshly dug hole. It was brighter than most around, and plainer.

Ezekiel Barnes  
Born      1886  
Died      1955  
May he rest in  
Peace

The same people—all Dick's old friends—had also watched Amos Barnes' father, Zeke, put away that day; Parson Henry had presided and his monotone prayer had droned much as it did now over Amos. . . .

After Parson Henry whispered his "amen," Amos and Alf Barnes turned from the grave and walked quickly toward the waiting car. They rode slowly from the cemetery and turned onto the main highway. Dick watched them disappear on their way to Edgerton. When he turned back toward the grave, the people were scattering, some leaving, others regrouping near the grave.

"Well, Dick," Bill Thornton, one of Dick's best friends, and the village lawyer, said, "looks like the whole damned town made it to this one. Old Zeke was sure well loved."

Dick looked down at Bill who was an even foot shorter than himself, and chuckled softly. "Yeah. Though there ain't many wasted tears that I can see."

Bill kicked a little lump of sod. "Not one person here gave much of a damn about Zeke while he was living, except maybe you and Samuelson, and even you guys didn't have much to do with him."

Bill was right. Dick hadn't cared much for the son-of-a-bitch. Zeke was pretty much no good. "Oh, he din't harm me none. We spoke."

"Oh, Christ. Look what's coming. That's all I need." Bill nodded

his head sideways at two men coming toward them. "Hello, Bob. Hello, Clyde. Nice *show*, huh?" he said.

Clyde Robertson maneuvered his body next to Bill Thornton and slapped him on the back. "Yeah. Ol' Henry really does a funeral up brown. Remember the Hill boy's? Now there was Henry's masterpiece. He had 'em a-weepin' that time. Not many tears today, though."

"Nope," Bob Wilkins said, placing his ample body on the other side of Bill. "Warn't much use today. Nobody keered much."

It looked to Dick as if Bill had been made a part of an enormous sandwich, lean sandwiched by fat, so that Bill almost disappeared.

"Ya know, Dick," Bob said, squinting, "even the orphaned sons din't seem none too mournful."

"Well, sir, they ain't never got along with the ol' man, an' the money'll take care o' what little hurt there may be. Ain't that so, Dick?" Dick didn't answer, being too busy trying to hide from Mrs. Taylor and Lucy. "Now, Dick," Clyde said, "don't hide. That ain't no way ta treat yer intended." Bob joined Clyde in uproarious laughter.

Dick tried his best not to blush, but even after years of teasing he still couldn't stop himself. He only wished that Lucy Taylor, his landlady's daughter, would give up. It would make his life a hell of a lot easier.

The danger was over. The Taylors walked by, seeming not to notice him.

Bill tried to unwedge himself, but Clyde grabbed his arm. "Jist a minute, Bill. Can't ya stay an' jaw a spell?"

"Yeah," Bob said. "We been wonderin' 'bout some things an' thought mebbe you c'd help us. Another argument, ya know, an' you bein' closer to them Barnes boys than anybody, we thought . . ."

"What Bob means is, who's the hungry one? Me, I say it's Amos. I'm *sure* of it." Clyde looked triumphantly at Bob.

Bob looked back. "Ain't so. Alf's the one that wants to get hold o' that money. It jist burns in that ol' mean eye o' his."

The two men moved together as they argued, and Dick wondered for a minute whether or not Bill would survive. Bill pushed the two men aside and escaped temporarily, but soon he was back between them. "Look. If you two gossip-mongers think I'd tell you if your pants were on fire, you're all wet. What's *your* business is *your* business and what's the *Barnes* boys' is *theirs*." His face was turning red, whether from compression or anger, Dick couldn't say.

"Aw, Bill," Bob said in a soothing tone, "there ain't no harm in it."

"Harm or no, I'm not telling."

Clyde shrugged and said, "Never mind that. How 'bout the *will*? You know what's in *it*, dontcha?"

"If I drew it up and didn't, I'd be one hell of a lawyer." He looked quickly from one man to the other, as if trying not to miss his opportunity for escape.

"Well?" Clyde asked.

Bill ignored him.

"Well what?" Dick, who had kept out of the argument intentionally, asked.

"Who gets what?" Bob asked.

"Did it ever occur to you apes that there might not be any money?" Bill asked.

"Hell, there's bound ta be money. All them good crops an' spen' the way he did? Sure there's money," Bob said, looking at Dick for approval.

Dick had known Zeke only slightly, but Bob was right about the crops and the spending. Zeke had been a strange bird, keeping to himself, coming to town occasionally for supplies. Sometimes he came to Dick's lumberyard to buy odds and ends and they'd talk awhile, but that was just about the extent of their acquaintance. Dick scratched the back of his neck, pushing his hat forward over his eyes. "Yeah, s'pose yer right. Figgers, anyway."

"How's it split up, Bill?" Clyde asked.

"Yeah. What's in the will?" Bob nudged Bill's arm with his elbow.

"Damned if I remember," Bill said. "Somehow it's slipped by me for the moment."

"C'mon, Bill. We'll know soon enough, anyway."

"That's right. You'll know soon enough." Bill, seizing an opportunity to escape, hurried toward his car and yelled back over his shoulder, "Coming, Dick?"

Dick turned from the two men and trotted after him. "See ya," he shouted back at Bob and Clyde, but they were busy talking to Sheriff Samuelson.

Bill made no attempt to start a conversation in the car, so Dick watched the scenery along the side of the road. Shortly after the river wound to the south, about three miles from the cemetery, the car passed a small run-down farm house—the Barnes place. Dick looked at it carefully as he rode by, trying to imagine what had become of all of Zeke Barnes' money. Soon he would know, but it was pleasant to guess a little while longer. One corner of the porch sagged dangerously; maybe Zeke had undermined it in an attempt to conceal his money. Or maybe the old covered well was the hiding place. The money could have been hidden almost any place under the rough yard. There was a wealth of hiding places around the house. Well, he would know soon enough.

As Bill's car rolled into Edgerton, Dick forgot his fantasy. Strangely, for the first time, he thought of the distance from Edgerton to its cemetery. Whether for some superstitious reason or through some misplaced faith that their town was to become a huge metropolis, the founders had elected to buy a cemetery lot fifteen miles in the country. It was at best inconvenient.

At noon, two days after the funeral, Dick squeezed through the door of the Hi-Life Bar and Grill. Never had he seen it so crowded; there wasn't a table available anywhere. Dick muscled his way to the bar,

but could get no service from the barkeeper, Hank Perkins, who dashed madly from one end of the bar to the other.

Gradually the din of the crowd subsided, until there was scarcely a murmur. Dick looked over the heads of the people and watched Bill Thornton walk through the path that cleared for him to the bar. He nodded to Dick, and leaned on the bar next to him, his face held in his cupped hands. Somehow, Bob Wilkins and Clyde Robertson had maneuvered their way to his side, hanging over him, apeline.

"What'll it be, Bill?" Hank asked.

"Tuna salad and a glass of beer." Bill didn't look up.

"Well . . . ya git it read?" Bob asked, his face almost in Bill's. Bill drew back slightly.

"C'mon, Bill. There ain't no reason to clam up now." Clyde peered at Bill over Bob's shoulder.

Someone standing behind the four men yelled, "Hey, Thornton, we ain't got all day."

Hank Perkins set Bill's order down in front of him, accepting payment, but not moving away from his position across from the lawyer. "Gotta headache, Bill? Wanna Alka-Seltzer?"

Bill shook his head, took a bite from his sandwich, and sipped his beer. Slowly, he straightened up, never quite reaching full height, and turned toward his audience. "Yes, it's read. And no, there isn't any reason to clam up now."

Dick noticed the drawn, worried look on his friend's face. He had never seen him look quite like that before. There *had* been the time of the hurricane, but that was just fatigue; it hadn't been like this. "Bill," he said softly, "you better siddown."

There weren't any chairs.

Turning back to the bar, Bill finished his sandwich and beer, ignoring the pleas to hurry—hungry, anxious pleas. When he finished he turned back and leaned against the bar, looking at the floor. He fumbled through his pockets, finally taking a worn sheet of paper from his coat pocket. Unfolding it carefully, he held it up, away from the craning looks of Bob and Clyde. He read it twice before clearing his throat. Complete silence fell over the bar. "It says, 'I leave everything to Amos and Alfred. They are to share equally, unless one gets married, and then all goes to the bachelor.'" He stopped reading, refolded the paper, and replaced it in his pocket.

Dick was bewildered by the sketchy will, but all the questions that occurred to him were anticipated by the men in the crowd, especially Bob and Clyde. They all flooded out as soon as the first dumb wonder was overcome.

"Well, how much money was there?"

"*Was* there any money?"

"You mean that's all there was?"

"Are you kiddin' us?"

Dick knew Bill hadn't been kidding. There was that tired, worried look on his face. Something unpleasant had happened.

"How'd Amos an' Alf take it, Bill? Bet they warn't none too pleased," Bob blurted out. Not waiting for an answer, he said, "Jist what I bin tellin' you, Clyde. That ol' bastard was mean. Amos won't mind too much, but Alf'll be plenty bothered."

"Aw, the hell you say. Amos's the greedy one. He'll be burned, you bet," Clyde said, looking around the crowd.

Bill looked up at Dick and said, heatedly, "Let's get out of here."

"Okay," Dick said.

But Bob and Clyde were blocking the way. "Well, how *did* they take it?"

"C'mon, you guys, let 'im out." Dick wanted to get Bill out before he got any madder. There wasn't another man in town who could match Bill Thornton's temper, but there wasn't a man in town that couldn't lick him. That was the way things worked. Now, take himself. He was the biggest man in town, but wouldn't fight for the world.

He helped Bill push his way through the mob until they were outside. "I'll see ya later, Bill. Ya be okay?" He turned to go back for some lunch.

"Wait a minute, will you? Don't run off," Bill said, looking at him pleadingly.

"Okay. Whatcha want?"

"Oh, I just want to talk for a while, that's all."

"Sure, Bill. Anything."

They walked across the square, past the ugly old Civil War monument—the butt of playful jokes for most of the town. Dick patted it as he always did. Soon they reached the edge of town. Bill turned from the road and, Dick following, walked up Edgerton Hill. He didn't speak until they were on the top, looking down on the town. "I couldn't tell *them* anything. Just like a bunch of wolves."

"Yeah. They *do* seem a little hungry, don't they?" Dick chuckled self-consciously.

"It was pretty rough, Dick. They really took it hard. I never thought it would be that bad." He looked at Dick, his eyebrows drawn tightly together.

"You don't have ta tell me about it if ya don't want, Bill." Dick was trying to say the right thing, though he knew that Bill had to tell someone.

When Bill started, it flowed out without a let-up. "Well, you heard the will. After I read it to them, they just stood there looking at me for awhile. Then they looked at each other and didn't say a word for I don't know how long. Amos was the first to say anything. He just said, 'Well, that's that, I guess. Ain't nothin' can be done now.' Alf, he stared at Amos, fire just coming out his eyes, I thought he'd light into him right there. He said, 'On'y one reason I figger you'd be so dad-burned easygoin'. You know where the old man hid the money. You know!'" Bill stopped for a minute, picked up a rock, and threw it down the hill. "Amos never blinked, and said, real quiet, 'No, Alf, I don't. I ain't no thief.' But Alf just shouted right back, 'Liar, God

damned liar. You're stealin' my half just as sure.' They had at it for awhile and Alf wouldn't eat his words and Amos, he began to get mad, and got madder and madder."

Bill's small frame seemed to have shrunk even smaller before Dick's eyes; Dick had never felt so large as when he stood there over the little man. "Jesus. Who would've thought it? . . . Is that all, Bill?"

Bill looked up at him, startled. "Yes. Except that after that they never said a word. They nodded in my direction, then Amos walked out and Alf followed. The last I saw, Amos was walking down the alley in back of my office about ten steps in front of Alf."

"If that ain't the damndest. Brothers." Dick looked down the hill into the main street of Edgerton. The men had begun to leave the Hi-Li, spreading out towards their jobs and their homes. "I won't say anything about it, Bill." He looked down at Bill, whose eyes were fixed on the town.

"It doesn't matter. Hilda heard everything that went on."

Well, that ought to do it, Dick thought. Hilda, Bill's secretary, was the biggest gossip in town. It would be all over by the time they got back.

"I've got to get on back to the office, Dick. There's a pile of legal work I've got to do on this will."

"I'll bet," Dick said. He turned and followed Bill and they walked back into Edgerton.

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Parson Henry slowly closed his Bible, looked at the dreary coffin, and turned away.

Dick squatted down next to Bill Thornton, picked up a leaf, and ground it between his fingers. The powder floated from his hand and he looked carefully at the skeletal remains. "Bill?" He looked up at the lawyer. "Where d'ya s'pose Alf run off to?"

"I don't know, Dick. Any number of places, I guess," Bill said. "I went out to the Barnes place a couple days ago and didn't see any sign of him."

"I know," Dick said, throwing the remains of the leaf on the ground and standing up. "Guess he ain't waitin' aroun' ta git hung."

Bob Wilkins and Clyde Robertson waddled up to the two men, laughing together.

"Hey, Dick," Clyde said, "what's Mr. Harvard Law School got ta say 'bout the murder?"

Dick looked at them, not sure whether he was expected to answer or not. When Clyde and Bob stared back, he answered, "Bill says he ain't sure it *was* a murder."

The two men snorted and looked at Dick, ignoring Bill, "Whadda you say, Dick?"

Dick looked self-consciously at Bill, feeling sorry for him. It was strange that he should always be ridden about his learning. He and Doc Hawkins were the only educated men in town and it seemed a



handicap to them. Dick had wanted to go to engineering college, but he had inherited the lumber yard instead and there he was.

"Well?"

"Oh . . . I think it was." Dick was a little ashamed to have to disagree with Bill.

Bob and Clyde smiled at each other. Bob said, "Course it was. Any damnfool can see that. Even if Alf's runnin' off don't prove nothin', his not showin' up *here* does."

Bill looked at the two men and took off his hat. "You sons-of-bitches make me ill. You come around making it unpleasant for anybody interested in minding his own business. Why don't you beat it?"

Bob and Clyde looked at each other in mock surprise. "Did you hear that, Clyde? I don't think Mr. Thornton wants us aroun'."

"Yeah, I heard, Bob. Uh . . . say, Bill . . . if Alf din't do it, who d'ya s'pose did?"

"Now *that* isn't a question I'm prepared to answer just now." Bill jammed his hat back on his head.

"See? You don' know," Bob said.

"*But* . . . I'm not discounting the possibility of suicide."

"Did ya hear that, Clyde? Dick, ya hear that?"

Dick looked at Bill. Why did they always have to bring him into it? He disagreed with Bill, but he didn't want to make an issue of it. He just nodded his head at Bob.

"Well whaddaya think of *that* fer stupidity?" Bob looked from Dick to Bill and back again.

Dick shrugged, muttering, "Don't seem too likely with no gun aroun'. But Bill knows mor'n we do 'bout it. Mebbe he's right."

"Oh, hell, Dick," Clyde said, hooking his thumbs inside his wide, red suspenders, "nothin' 'tall points to suicide. Bill don't know *nothin'*."

Dick looked at the two men, standing like twin mountains, formidable and imposing. Next to them, Bill's tiny figure, neat in its dark suit, stood dwarfed and fidgeting. Bill looked at the ground where he was digging with the toe of his right shoe. Suddenly he looked at the two mountains. Christ, Dick thought, here it comes.

"Who the hell do you guys think you are, God or something? I ought to bust you right in your fat noses." Bill stopped and looked from one to the other, his feeble jaw thrust out.

Dick said, as sternly as he could, which, he felt, wasn't any too stern, "Hey, you guys, remember where y' are. This *was* a funeral."

Bill seemed to calm instantly, relaxing, and turned away from the two men. He looked at Dick with a look that seemed to be almost grateful and said, "Sorry. I almost forgot. Come on. Let's go back to town."

When Dick got to Bill's car, he looked back and saw Bob and Clyde laughing and slapping each other's backs.

During the week that followed Amos' funeral, nearly everyone in Edgerton devoted his full attention to the murder—or so it seemed to

Dick. It had been his habit, ever since moving into Mrs. Taylor's after his father died, to go to the Hi-Li every evening. Since the murder, however, he had had to rush through dinner so that he could get there early enough to get a seat. Business had swelled unbelievably. The semi-official meeting place for all discussions of the murder, the Hi-Li filled shortly after supper-time, and remained full until it closed at two o'clock.

Just before supper on the Friday after the funeral, the first really cold day of the fall, Dick walked down the stairs at Mrs. Taylor's, hurried out the door, holding the storm-door open behind him, picked up the square-folded newspaper, and dashed back in the house. Just inside the door he nearly ran Lucy Taylor down. This was probably the millionth time he had nearly run her down since coming to the Taylor house. Somehow she had a knack for smelling him out and putting herself in his way. When he first moved there at twenty, she had been ten and had developed a school-girl crush on him. In the years that followed, she had pursued him off and on, never quite giving up hope, no matter how hard he tried to discourage her. It had been her pursuit that had caused Dick to take refuge in the Hi-Li every night.

Lucy looked up at him, blinking her eyelashes rapidly. "Brrrr. You certainly do cool a place off, Richard."

"Uh-huh. Is supper ready?" Dick started to walk around her to the dining room, from which he could hear the voices of Bob Wilkins, Clyde Robertson, and the other three boarders. He unfolded his paper and glanced at the headline—NO PROGRESS IN BARNES MURDER.

"Still nothing, Richard? I *do* wish Sheriff Samuelson would capture Alfred. It all makes me so nervous." She took his arm and walked into the dining room with him.

After dinner Dick made his daily excuses to Lucy and walked to the Hi-Li. He noticed that it was busier than usual for six-thirty. Dick followed Bob and Clyde—the other boarders having seen some friends who had saved them seats—toward the back of the bar where they found a table. They sat down—Dick facing the corner—and dispatched Clyde to get some beers.

A brawny man at the adjacent table yelled over at Bob, "Hey, Bob, did ya catch Frank's editorial?"

Bob shook his head, snatched the paper from Dick's hand, and leafed through it until he came to the editorial page. Dick watched him read haltingly down the column, chuckling every now and then.

By the time he had finished, Clyde had come back with three steins, set them on the table, and dropped heavily into his chair. Dick watched his head disappear behind the paper, bobbing out frequently to say, "Oh, man, you should see *this!* Frank gives Sammy hell."

Dick knew that Sheriff Samuelson hadn't been spending *all* his time on the Barnes case, but . . . Come to think of it, he didn't know if Sammy had done anything. He pretty much kept to himself and didn't talk a lot about his job.

Clyde ducked out again and said, "Ed calls Sammy a rockin' chair sheriff. Ain't *that* a fine one."

"True, too," Bob said, lowering Dick's paper. "Bet he ain't been off his fat butt since he bought his way into office."

"Oh, come on," Dick said. "We never had much trouble. He ain't a bad sheriff."

Clyde looked at Bob, chuckling. "Bought his way, hell. He's too cheap. Got us all drunk on rot-gut's what he did."

The brawny man at the neighboring table leaned over toward Clyde, putting his hand on Clyde's shoulder for balance. "Mebbe he got *you* drunk. Me he just bullied."

Bob laughed. "That'd be easy."

Dick thought the men were being a little rough on Sammy, even if they were kidding. He remembered when he was a kid, worshipping Freddy Samuelson, the best third baseman Edgerton ever had. Dick went early to all the games so he could sit near third base and watch the great man closely. Even when Dick got old enough to play, Samuelson was still there at third base. They had played together ten years and then Samuelson had been too old to play and had quit to coach. Now he was sixty-eight and folks were saying he was too old to sheriff.

"Samuelson's okay," Dick said.

"You wanta know what *I* think?" Bob asked.

"Now that you mention it, no," Clyde answered.

Bob ignored him, turning toward Dick. "*I* think he's *feared* o' catchin' up with ol' Alf."

"Mebbe," Clyde said, "but that'd take a sight o' catchin', if ya ask me."

Dick took a sip of beer, set his stein down, and scratched the back of his neck. "Yeah. But Sammy ain't *sure* that Alf done it. Fact is, none of us are."

"*Sure!* Hell, how sure do ya have ta be? Even if he ain't the one, seems like a good enough bet ta jist bring 'im in," Bob said. He took a long drink, gasped, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

Dick shrugged, unwilling to believe that Sammy was a coward. "Where ya gonna start lookin'?"

"Don' know," Bob said, "but my bet is he ain't 'roun' here none too close."

Clyde brought his meaty fist down on the table. "*That*, my friend Robert, is where you're dead wrong. Fur my money he's jist a-settin' back up in them hills, laughin' at the whole damned bunch of us."

Dick noticed that the din in the bar had subsided somewhat. Bob nudged Clyde and pointed toward the door. Dick turned and saw Sheriff Samuelson moving along the bar, looking for an opening. Finally, right at the end of the bar, next to Dick's table, he found an empty place. Dick watched him order a beer and sip tentatively at it. Samuelson turned and looked good-naturedly at the men in the bar who were watching him. He winked at Dick and then looked at Bob and Clyde. "Cut in on somethin', did I, boys?"

Bob said, "Nope. Can't say's ya did. We was jist talkin' 'bout the murder, an' seein's how you're 'bout as involved as the rest of us, guess there aint no reason ta quit."

Sheriff Samuelson looked puzzled, then looked at Dick. "What murder? Bin a murder roun' here that I missed, Dick?"

Dick smiled.

"'Cordin' t' ol' Frank there has," the brawny man at the adjacent table said, pointing at the paper spread in front of Bob.

"Why, really now. That's a durn shame. Guess I oughtta start readin' the paper more often." Samuelson turned to the bar and took a drink of beer.

Dick thought of the way Sammy used to steal bases. He would walk off the base and look real sleepy-eyed, as if he hadn't been to bed for at least three nights; then, when the pitcher wound up, he would light out for second base. He'd hardly ever get caught. Samuelson looked sleepy-eyed now, too . . . but maybe he was just tired. After all, he was pretty old, and a fellow loses his speed.

"Guess ya better," someone at a nearby table yelled. "Alf Barnes is jist a-waitin' fur ya, Sammy."

Samuelson turned around quickly, a look of mock surprise spreading over his face. "Is *he* the brutal murderer?"

"Why, *Sheriff*," Clyde said, "you s'pose it was suicide, an' grief struck dear ol' Alf an' he jist hiked into the wilderness?"

"Mebbe."

"Like hell," Bob said.

The man standing next to Samuelson at the bar laughed and said, "Sammy, you was here las' week when the Barnes boys come in. Whattaya make o' *that*? Huh?"

Dick had been there, too. The incident had bothered him a lot during the past few days. It all came back to him again, even Amos' and Alf's entrance into town, which, though he had not seen it, must have been like all their other entrances during the last five years.

Amos Barnes turned the old Model A into the square and parked it, running it up to the curb at a forty-five degree angle. In the back seat, Alf Barnes sat, stiff and alert. Amos turned off the lights, got out of the car, and walked along the board sidewalk toward the Hi-Li. When he had walked about ten or fifteen feet, Alf climbed from the back seat and followed him. Both men marched, as if at the front and the rear of a column of men, never looking to the side.

As Amos pushed his way through the door of the Hi-Li, Dick, who was sitting with Bill Thornton at a table near the center of the bar, looked up. Amos closed the door carefully behind him and walked to the near end of the bar. In a few seconds, the door swung open again and Alf came in, slamming the door behind him. He walked past Amos, along the bar, and stopped at the opposite end.

Dick went back to his beer, sipping slowly. Those Barnes boys just about beat all. No one even noticed them much any more, they had

been at it so long. They had become an institution, like the monument in the square. No one really condemned the Civil War relic, but everyone laughed—that is, if they even gave it a thought.

Hank Perkins, the bartender, stopped opposite Amos, polishing a stein. "What'll it be, Amos?"

"Stein," Amos said, his large hands clasped together in front of him, his head bent forward.

"Comin' up." Hank inspected the stein carefully, filled it, and slid it in front of Amos. He took the fifteen cents from the bar and shouted, "Hey, Alf, what's yer pleasure?"

Alf looked up and stared at his reflection in the mirror. "Same as las' time. It works."

Hank reached under the bar and found a bottle. He put it down in front of Alf. Alf poured a drink, threw it down and poured another, Hank watching him. "Easy, Alf. Don't be fur hittin' it too hard, huh?" Hank said.

Alf shrugged his shoulders and drank the second shot.

"Looks like ol' Alf's gonna git plastered again, don't it?" Dick said.

"I'm afraid so, Dick. Damn, I don't like to see it. Three times last week and now he's starting in again," Bill said.

Dick watched Alf toss down a third shot, take a deep breath, and pour a fourth. The Barnes boys held the same fascination for Dick they had held for the last five years. Everywhere he saw them, he watched them, unable to understand their strange behavior. They were probably the only real mystery in his life.

Alf drank the shot.

Amos turned away from the bar and walked to an empty table in the corner. He sat down, his back to the wall, pulled a grimy deck of cards from his pocket and began to play solitaire. Between games he shuffled the cards abstractedly, yet skillfully, for a full minute or two, staring at Alf, who was quickly emptying his bottle.

People began to come into the bar at about eight-thirty, and by nine the Hi-Li was doing a good business, at least for a week-day. Every now and then Dick looked up at Alf, who was still drinking heavily, wondering how much more he could put away, hoping he would quit. Amos waited patiently in the corner.

Alf labored around, steadying himself by bracing his elbows on top of the bar. He glared at Amos for a long while.

Dick said in a hoarse whisper, "Hey, Bill . . . look't Alf. I never seen him like *that*."

When Dick looked back around, Alf was raising his right arm, his index finger pointing shakily at his brother. Slowly his head turned away, his eyes following, trying to focus on the men in the bar.

"See 'im. Goodol' Amos. Muh *brother* . . ." Alf said.

Silence suddenly draped the room.

" . . . Look't 'im . . . solitaire . . . jus' like 'im ta play a stupid game like that. Ask 'im if he'd play with me. No . . . Ask 'im where he hid it . . . Go 'head, ask 'im." His finger began to shake violently. He

screwed his eyes around so he could see it and seemed to be trying to steady it; it kept on shaking. "*Bastard!*" He looked straight at Amos. "Half's mine . . . God damn thief."

Amos picked up his cards, not bothering to face them, put them in his pocket, got up, and walked toward the door.

"Hey, you, where ya think *you're* goin'? . . . come back, you son-a-bitch . . . come back."

Amos stepped through the door and disappeared from the rectangle of light which escaped to the street. Alf tottered away from the bar and moved toward the door, his legs trailing his body by about half a step. He made it outside and stumbled away from the door.

Inside, the silence had not yet lifted, but gradually, first one corner turned back, then another, and soon it was yanked away completely.

"Well, *God* damn," Dick said. "Whattaya s'pose broke loose?"

Bill was running his finger around the top of his stein. He looked up into Dick's face. "I don't know. Probably nothing to it."

"But five years. Not talk for five years and then *this*?" Dick thought about those five years of silence. As far as he knew, they hadn't talked to each other for all that time; nor had they ever been separated. Now their wall of silence had come tumbling down. Dick looked at Bill and said, "Don't s'pose Amos foun' the money after all?"

"No. I mean I don't even know if there was any. They think so, though, and that's all that counts." Bill looked over toward the door, his forehead wrinkling.

"Sure beats me," Dick said.

Dick looked at Sheriff Samuelson dubiously. It didn't seem to him that Amos would have committed suicide. Still, there was a chance, he supposed.

"Puzzler, hell," Clyde said. "You can't tell me ol' Alf din't do it. I saw 'im spout off las' week, and there was murder jist a-comin' out his eyes." Clyde jammed his cigar back in his mouth and stared ferociously at the sheriff.

Sammy snorted and finished his beer. "Can't convict a man on them groun's," he said, fishing in his pocket. He took out a couple of coins and dropped them on the bar.

"Nope, that's true nuff. But ya can sure's hell haul 'im in," Bob said.

Samuelson shook his head slowly, a slight smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Well, thanks fur lettin' me in on all this, fellers. Guess I'll have ta start lookin' aroun' fur murderers. G'night." He walked to the door, turned, and waved to the men in the bar. "Hey. If anyone catches Alf, bring 'im aroun'. I'd sure like ta set an' jaw with 'im a spell."

Dick watched him vanish through the door and listened to his footsteps retreating on the board sidewalk. He sat, trying to sort through the jumble of the past week, unconscious of anything being said around him. Standing amidst the swirling rumors and speculations which flowed about him stood two pillars of certainty which he could grasp. Amos



Barnes was dead—shot through the head in the house he shared with his brother—and Alf Barnes had disappeared. Where he had gone no one knew, though the most persistent rumor had it that he was hiding in the hills in which he had hiked and hunted since he was a little boy.

Early the following Monday evening Dick sat in the Hi-Li, once again with Bob and Clyde. He would have preferred Bill Thornton's company, but since the funeral he had been unable to coax him into going there with him, so it meant that either he had to drink alone, which he didn't want to do, or go with Bob and Clyde.

Shortly after the boys had ordered their first beers, Sheriff Samuelson strolled into the Hi-Li and took a seat near the door, leaning his chair against the wall. He clasped his hands behind his head and smiled at the people who were sprinkled around in little groups.

The sparkle's still there, Dick thought. He remembered Sammy's expression when he had coached the team. Edgerton would get a comfortable lead and Sammy'd just lean back and beam fit to kill. Dick smiled at Sammy, catching his eye. Sammy smiled back.

"Hey, fellers," he shouted, winking at Dick. "Ya hear the latest?" His voice carried through the whole bar.

Bob looked over at Dick, setting his half-raised beer on the table. "What's the ol' joker up to now?" he asked.

Clyde, who had already finished his beer, took a swig from Bob's. "Dunno," he said. "Le's go over an' find out."

The two men heaved out of their chairs and made their way to the sheriff's table, bumping into chairs and tables on the way. Dick finished his beer and followed them.

"Gather roun', boys," Samuelson said, looking at Bob and Clyde, smiling. "Hey, Hank, bring me a beer, willya?"

Hank, who had been standing right next to the sheriff, rushed away to fill the order.

"What is it, Sammy?" Bob asked, leaning his enormous body forward on the table. It slid away from him.

"Yeah. What's up?" Clyde asked.

Dick knew that they were in for a wait, so he just settled down in his chair and watched the sheriff.

"Ya don't expect a feller ta talk much on a throat that's parched as mine, do ya?" He looked first at Bob, then at Clyde.

Hank Perkins, the bartender, set a stein, about half of which was head, in front of Samuelson. "On me, Sammy," he said.

"Naw. That's no way ta make money. Here." He handed over fifteen cents, picked up the beer, and sipped nonchalantly, peering over the rim at the men. "Ahhh. Nothin' like a cold beer ta cut that ol' thirst." He set the stein on the table, placing it precisely on the old moisture ring.

"Oh, fur cryin' in a bucket, Sammy," Bob said. "Out with it."

Samuelson took another long drink, hesitated a moment, and said, "Guess where they've seen Alf Barnes."

"Seen 'im! Je-sus. Where?" Clyde fell back in his seat.

"Over in Wesleyville." Sammy took another drink.

"No," Bob said, scratching the roll of fat on the back of his neck.

"That fur sure?" Dick asked, still not sure what Sammy was trying to do. He was so playful about it. He didn't even seem to care.

Samuelson looked at Dick, almost sadly, it seemed to him. "Nope. 'Fraid it's jist a rumor. They've seen 'im clear over to Bates Center, too."

"That's a helluva walk," one of the bystanders said.

"Forty-five miles," Bob said.

"And in Hiram. And in Overton. Want me ta go on?"

"Go on ta hell," Clyde said.

"That true, Sammy? All them places?" Dick asked. "They all say they've seen 'im?"

Samuelson looked at him for some time and said, "That's what they say, Dick."

"Who ya s'pose is spreadin' them rumors?" Hank Perkins asked.

"Oh, cranks an' nervous folks, mos'ly, I reckon." Sheriff Samuelson finished his beer and let his chair fall to the floor.

"Well," Bob said, "mebbe if ya'd go on out an fetch 'im yourself, ya wouldn't be bothered by 'em."

Samuelson stood up quickly and grabbed Bob's shirt by the neck. Dick looked at his eyes and saw that they were still bright. "You're right. Come on," Sammy said. "Me an' you's a-goin' huntin'. I'll even let *you* point out where we'll start."

"Now look here, Sammy. You know that ain't none o' my business," Bob said, pushing the sheriff's hand away.

"Yeah, I know. Flappin' your fat mouth is, though." Samuelson sat down and stared at Bob.

Dick chuckled softly, as did a few men in the crowd, but stopped when Bob looked sharply at him. He looked at Sammy, feeling some of the old, childlike affection coming back. Sammy was still the battler—the guy nobody could push around.

The door to the bar slammed hard, jerking Dick's mind back into the bar. He looked up and saw Ned Parker—a short scrawny man—standing, looking around the bar. He hurried over to Sheriff Samuelson's table.

"Sammy, Jake tol' me ya'd be here . . . woulda called, but . . ."

"Easy, Ned. Set an' pant a spell." The sheriff looked at Bob. "Git. Let Ned set there."

Ned sat in the chair Bob vacated. Dick couldn't imagine what the Barnes' next door neighbor was doing there, but he supposed that it must have something to do with Amos' death. He scooted his chair closer to Ned, noticing for the first time the sweat which stood in little drops below Ned's thick, black hair.

Breathing easier, Ned began again. "He's out there. Ya gotta git 'im!"

Samuelson leaned closer. "Alf?" he asked.

"Yep. It's him."

"Where'd ya see 'im?"

"Sneakin' aroun' the Barnes place." Ned took off his hat and ran his right sleeve across his forehead.

"You see 'im, Ned?"

"No. 'Twas Bobby."

"When?"

"Oh, 'bout a half hour back. He saw 'im a-hoofin' hell-fur-leather towards the woods out back."

"Din't see 'is face?"

"No. Guess not."

"Might not be Alf, y'know. Bobby think it was?"

"Yep. Sure's anythin'."

"What the hell was Bobby *doin'* over there, anyhow? Not treasure huntin', was he?"

"Oh, *no*, not Bobby. Rex's lost or dead or somethin'. That's his dog. An' he was jist out lookin' fur 'im's all. Bobby ain't no *thief*."

"I know. But you know kids. . . . Well, thanks, Ned. Guess I'll go on out an' have a look." Samuelson got up, looked around at the men who surrounded the table, smiled, and left the bar. Ned Parker followed closely on his heels.

Dick watched them disappear through the door, feeling the blast of cool, late-fall air that rushed into the warm bar. He wondered if Bobby Parker really had seen Alf; after all, it was dark, and kids do have pretty big imaginations. It was probably just some money-hungry bastard out after buried treasure.

The men who were bunched around the table moved back to their places, but Clyde stayed anchored in his chair and Bob fell back into the chair he had emptied for Ned Parker, so Dick didn't move.

Bob sighed slightly after he got settled. "Well, whatcha make o' *that*?"

"It's Alf a'right. He's after that there money," Clyde said.

"How long ya figger it'll take ol' Sammy now that he's up off his fat butt?" Bob asked, looking over at Dick.

"If Alf done it, Sammy'll git 'im," Dick said.

"If he done it. Course he done it. Jesus, Dick. Ask anybody. They'll tell ya," Bob said.

"I gotta agree on that," Clyde said.

"Sammy's all right, I tell ya."

"I never said he ain't. He's jist slow. Old," Bob said.

"I gotta git on home," Dick said, pushing away from the table. "Got some accounts to git straight. See ya." He stood up and walked out of the bar into the crisp air.

All the following week, stories came to the bar about a strange treasure hunt at the Barnes place. Every morning fresh holes were found around the property, one of which nearly undermined a corner of the front porch. Inside the house, floor boards had been torn up, leaving holes large enough for a man to slip through. The whole property was be-

coming a shambles. The strange thing to the town was that Sheriff Samuelson refused to stake the place out.

Dick had watched the sheriff more closely, however. Throughout the riding Sammy had been taking during the week, Dick noticed a change gradually taking place.

On Friday, Dick, who had avoided Bob and Clyde for the larger part of the week, left Taylors' later than usual; Bob and Clyde had already been gone for half an hour. He walked alone to the Hi-Li, singing softly to himself. When he entered the bar, it was nearly full, with only a seat empty here and there. He looked around and saw Clyde waving at him, motioning to one of two vacant chairs at his table. Oh well, he thought, that's it, I guess. He walked over and sat down.

"Hello, stranger," Bob said.

Dick nodded to the two men.

Just then, Clyde's head jerked up. Dick looked around and saw Sheriff Samuelson walk up to the bar. He leaned his elbows on it and slumped over. Hank set a beer down in front of him. Nothing would disturb that guy's routine, Dick thought. If he wants a beer every night, no amount of riding will keep him from getting it.

Clyde stood up and lumbered over to the bar, picked up Sammy's drink, and brought it back to the table. Sammy followed him.

"Okay, Clyde. Let's have it," Sammy said, stopping about a yard from the table.

"Aw, Sammy," Bob said. "Here we saved a seat for ya an' ya won't even take it."

"C'mon, Sammy. Sit down." Clyde pulled back the empty chair.

"What're you guys up to, anyway?" Dick said. He looked up at Sammy.

"Sit down, Sammy," Bob said.

Sammy looked from the chair to his beer to each of the men, finally falling into the seat, sighing.

The men drank in silence for a short time before Clyde said, "Hey, Sammy, any more holes out aroun' the Barnes place?"

"Yeah. The house still standin', is it?" Bob asked.

"When ya gonna call out Cliff's dogs? 'Bout time, wouldn't ya say?" Clyde asked.

Dick had been watching Samuelson's face, a frown spreading across his own. "Shut up," he said.

Samuelson looked up at the men, fatigue lining and shading his face. Clyde and Bob looked away and sipped at their beer.

"Whatsa matter? . . . Nothin' more ta say, huh? Mebbe I ain't bin tryin'?" Samuelson said.

"No it ain't that," Clyde said.

"Hell, no. We was jist ridin' ya a little," Bob said, intent on his beer.

"Alf's a tough 'un," Clyde said. "We don't blame *you* none. We're jist on edge a mite, too."

Sammy didn't seem to pay any attention. He just sat there, all hunched

over, drinking his beer. When he finished, he stood up, and walked slowly out of the bar.

Dick turned on the boys. "You guys are *real* bright, aren'tcha? Couldn't ya see that it had got to 'im? Jesus."

"We didn't know," Clyde said, looking at the table.

As the days unwound into weeks, the Hi-Li's business gradually fell back toward its pre-funeral level. The first snow had come, staying for a few days, then vanishing almost as quickly as it had come. After the thaw, it had stayed warm for almost a week; now, once again the ground had frozen and the rough, grey clouds had moved into the sky.

One evening, about four weeks after Amos' funeral, Dick sat with Bob and Clyde in the nearly deserted bar, playing hearts. For some reason, unknown to Dick, the two men refused to play anything else. Once or twice he had tried to get them interested in gin, but they had insisted on hearts.

"God, it's dull around here," Bob said.

"Oh, play your card," Clyde said.

Bob pulled a card from his hand and dropped it on the table.

"Ya mean ya don't have one lousy club?" Clyde said.

Bob looked in his hand and threw another card on the table—a club.

"Fer crissake, git in the game," Clyde said.

It seemed more like old times to Dick. During the business about Amos' death, Bob and Clyde had agreed on just about everything. Now they were at it again. He had never played with them but what they didn't fight about something.

Dick followed suit and Clyde reached out and dragged the trick back to him. Clyde looked sideways at Bob and said, "Are ya ready ta play the game, now?"

Bob threw his cards down, scattering them all over the table. "What a crummy game. Deal me out."

Clyde shrugged and gathered the cards to him, taking Dick's from his hand. He faced them, shuffled them, and arranged them for solitaire. He played for awhile, making little progress.

"Hey," Bob said, "put the five o' diamonds on the six o' spades."

Clyde looked at him sharply and said, "You wanna play it?"

"Naw. Go ahead," Bob said, going back to his beer. He looked around the empty bar, frowning.

Dick felt a draft of cold air on his ankles. Looking up he saw an old man in denim work clothes shutting the door, a smug smile lighting what Dick knew to be an ordinarily dreary face. In fact, Dick couldn't recall having ever seen Jeb Swanson smile. Little wonder, too, living fifteen miles in the country and taking care of a cemetery at that.

Jeb strolled to the bar, his hands in his pockets, and leaned against it. Looking around the bar at the few men present, his smile faded slightly.

"What'll it be, Jeb?" Hank asked.

"A draw." He looked at the men again. "Jist bin over ta Sammy's house," he said in a loud voice. All the men in the bar looked up quickly.

Jeb's smile returned. "Yessir," he said, "ol' Sammy was glad ta see *me* a'right." Jeb looked around again, leaning toward his audience slightly, rocking back again to his beer. "He's bin out there."

"Sammy?" Hank asked.

"No. *Alf*, damn it. Who else?" He settled back against the bar.

Dick followed Bob and Clyde as they lumbered over to the caretaker, arriving ahead of the rest of the men in the bar.

Bob thrust his face down toward Jeb's and said, "How d'*you* know, Jeb?"

"Oh, 'bout one—no, wouldn't've been one—yes, 'twas one after all, 'cause I'd jist finished my lunch. 'Bout one, I figgered 'twas time ta check the graves over at the west end. I was down pickin' up some sticks an' stuff; ya know, that wind we had here couple days back blew a lot o' stuff down. I was pickin' up Pappy Barnes' grave . . ."

"Fur crissake, Jeb," Clyde said, "what happened?"

"I'm gittin' there. Jist keep yer shirt on." Jeb glared at the men, waiting for nearly a minute before starting again.

That old coot, Dick thought. It was probably the first time he'd ever had anything to tell anybody and he was really making something out of it. Unless his will power broke, they might never find out what he was trying to say.

"Le's see. Where was I?" he asked, looking around the group of men.

"You was pickin' up Pappy Barnes' goddamn grave," Bob said.

"Oh, yeah. I was pickin' up Pappy Barnes' grave, stuffin' the twigs an' stuff in this big bag, singin' away when I chanced ta look over at Amos' grave an' what d'ya s'pose I saw?"

The men in the crowd fidgeted nervously, moving closer to the old man.

"Right there, hooked over the stone, was a wreath made o' evergreen an' dead leaves an' things. Now ain't that somethin'?"

"Well, *Je-sus*," a bystander said. "Alf, ya s'pose?"

"That's what I *said*, ain't it?" Jeb turned back to the bar and drank his beer.

"What'd Sammy say?" Clyde asked.

"He din't know what ta make of it," Jeb said, turning back to the men. "He jist stared at that there wreath and said, 'Thanks, Jeb,' real quiet like. He was still starin' at it when I lef'."

"When ya reckon he put it there?" Hank asked.

"Had ta be las' night or I woulda seen it."

"Mebbe this means he's lef' us fur good," Bob said. "Good riddance."

"Could be," Clyde said. "Then again, mebbe not."

Dick couldn't imagine what it all meant. He hadn't heard anything about Alf for almost two weeks—ever since the thaw when the last holes had been dug around the Barnes place. Since then, Alf had disappeared completely.

It wasn't long until men started coming to the bar, as if guided by some mystical hand. It was always the same.

"Hey, ya hear the news 'bout Alf?"



"Yeah. Hank called me. Ain't that somethin'?"

"Uh-huh."

The crowd grew; by eleven, for the first time in nearly two weeks, the Hi-Li was full.

The cards at Dick's table had been put away and he sat listening to Bob and Clyde. Bob said, smiling a huge, fat smile, "This's more like it. Now things is jumpin' again."

"Yeah," Clyde said. "Ain't been like this fur two weeks."

"Closer ta ten days. Wouldn't you say so, Dick?" Bob asked.

Dick looked at him, but didn't want to get into an argument. Who the hell cares, he thought.

"Two weeks. 'Member, it was jist before the snow. . . ."

A young man burst into the bar, stopping just inside the door, and yelled, "Hey . . . They've fou' 'im!"

"Alf?"

"Yeah."

"Where?"

"Out to the Barnes place. Dead."

"Dead?"

"Yeah."

"How d'you know?"

"Heard on the phone."

A siren began to whir; picking up speed, it soon shrilled, rising and falling, then softening in the distance.

Clyde looked at Bob and Dick and said, "C'mon. Le's go." The two huge men lumbered for the door, Dick following in their wake. There was a brief scuffle as Bob and Clyde tried to go out together, but Bob gave way and the men tumbled onto the sidewalk. It was snowing—a fine powdery snow. Before they had gotten half way to the Taylors', cars were hurrying out of town. Bob and Clyde ran faster—perhaps faster than they had ever run before, Dick thought—and soon they were piling into Bob's car which stood in the street, facing the wrong direction. Bob gunned the engine, jerked out the clutch, wheeled around, almost hitting a car, and sped out of town toward the Barnes place.

As he sat squeezed against the door, Dick thought of all that had just happened. What did it all mean? Where did the wreath come from? Dead? It had all happened so fast that he could not get things in any order in his mind. Then there was all that business after Amos' funeral. Nothing tied together. He looked out the window and watched the snow fly toward the car, blurring the night.

They pulled up behind an old pick-up truck beside the highway. When Dick jumped out, the snow, which was blowing now, cut into his face. He ran past a long line of cars, turned into the driveway, and dashed across the front yard to a large crowd of men gathered on the front porch. Another group of men stood in the front yard.

Dick could see over the heads of the men in front of him into the front room; the door was wide open, swinging creakingly back and forth. Inside, Sheriff Samuelson knelt over Alf Barnes, who lay on the

floor, blood still moist around a hole in the side of his head. In his right hand lay a black revolver. The sheriff opened Alf's left hand and took out a crumpled bit of newspaper. He read it carefully and then looked down at Alf.

"What is it, Sammy?" someone near the front of the crowd asked. Samuelson reread it, folded it carefully, and put it in his pocket.

"Hey, c'mon, Sammy. What is it?" another voice asked.

The sheriff didn't pay any attention.

Dick felt a tug at his sleeve. Clyde looked up into his face and said, "Hey, Dick, what's goin' on?"

"Dunno," Dick said.

"C'mon. Let's go see what Ned's got ta say." Dick followed them reluctantly over to Ned Parker, who was at the center of the other knot of men.

"Hey, Ned," Bob yelled. "Hear you're the one that found Alf. That right?"

"Tha's right, Bob." Ned leaned casually on his shotgun.

"When?" Clyde asked.

"Oh, 'bout half an hour ago. Heerd a shot an' come a-runnin'. There he was, deader'n hell." Ned paused and looked around him. "Never guess what I *found*."

"What?" Bob asked, crowding closer.

"Well, ya remember Rex—Bobby's dog? Well sir, he was in there, tied to a table."

"'Live?" Bob asked.

"Yep. Friskier'n hell. Beats all. Don' know why he'd want Rex," Ned said, running his hand up and down the shotgun barrel.

Dick heard the shuffling of feet behind him and turned around. Sheriff Samuelson was just coming out of the house, looking around the crowd of men. "Ned," he shouted, "you out there?"

Ned walked toward the porch. "Yep. *I'm* here," he said.

"Run on over ta yer place an' call the coroner, will ya?"

"Sure, Sammy." Ned jogged out of sight, his shotgun swinging out to one side.

"C'mon, Sammy. What's in the paper?" someone said, insistently.

Samuelson sat down on the porch, took out a cigarette, lit it and inhaled deeply. He took the slip of paper from his pocket and read it over carefully. Finally, he looked at the crowd and said softly, "It's jist Amos' obituary," he said. "Now, you've seen the whole show. Go on home, will ya? No use'n yer stayin' 'roun' here no more."

Dick turned away from the crowd and started walking slowly toward the car. Soon, Bob and Clyde caught up with him.

"Well, what d'ya make o' that, Dick?" Clyde asked.

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

They got into the car and drove slowly back toward town. It had started to snow harder now—big, fluffy flakes that landed on the windshield, only to be whisked away by the windshield wiper.

"Well, guess that's that," Bob said.

"Yep," Clyde said.

"What's what?" Dick asked.

"Well . . . You know," Bob said.

Dick didn't know, so he just kept quiet, trying to shut out Bob and Clyde's chatter.

"Wonder no one else got killed."

"That son-of-a-bitch, Alf. Good thing he's dead."

"Well, it's all clear now."

"Yeah."

All clear, hell, Dick thought. All at once he was very sick of the talk and of Bob and Clyde. He tried desperately to fit everything together—to understand—but nothing would fit. Zeke was dead. Amos was dead. Alf—hated Alf—was dead. That was all he could understand.

The car stopped in front of the Hi-Life Bar and Grill. The men got out and walked to the door, Bob opening it. Inside, the noisy crowd had begun to gather again. Dick stopped outside and said, "I'm goin' on home."

"Aw, come on," Clyde said.

"I don't feel too good." He turned away from the bar and walked along the board sidewalk toward the Taylors', scuffling his shoes through the clean, white snow.

## Translation Horace 1, IX

WILLIAM MARVEL

Ah, see—

Soracte gleams with thick-heaped snow  
and pines arch low beneath their frozen yoke.  
The bitter cold constricts the river's flow;  
But we should thaw.

For the blaze, more branches;  
and for us, four-years mellowed Sabine wine;  
and everything else we leave for the Gods.  
When they becalm, across the thrashing seas,  
the clashing winds, no ash or cypress nods.  
Forget tomorrow, count those days profit  
the Fates pay out.

And you, Young Man, do not disdain sweet love,  
nor the dance, until grim age catches you.  
In squares and parks are soft-whispered calls  
and lover seeks lover under night;  
her laugh gives her away and  
he takes his prize.

## Dying Space

ART HOBSON

Fury wells out of chambers of the earth,  
Red streamers of destruction fly skybound;  
Fire and terror are rampant now on the streets of cities  
Where life can find no breathing space,  
Where life finds only dying space.

"Now! Quickly," cries the sparrow. "Reach out to it;  
Cling to it now, hold it fast to your bosom;  
Nourish it, feed it with the breath of your body,  
For hope can find no breathing space;  
For hope finds only dying space."

Darkness spreads its wings over cities  
And darkness hurls an iron curse upon the world,  
Flings a hell-bent javelin into the breasts of continents  
Where light shall have no breathing space,  
Where light has only dying space.

The sparrow flies, crying, "If you would live, find love;  
Cling to it in all the lonely hours, and when it is gone  
Remember it always." His words echo from the horizon:  
"For love must find a breathing space;  
For love must have no dying space."

## Autumn's Span

ART HOBSON

The span is short:

Autumn comes in splotch and blur of color  
Born out of the green flank of summer;  
Autumn is burned against the land  
And it flames into a panorama of  
Colored glass spattered and shining,  
Crepe paper, cellophane, all glittering,  
Till November comes and blows it away.

Twenty autumns gone now:

Twenty times the mural has been spread before these eyes  
Existing for a week, perhaps two,  
Then dashed on the cold rocks of winter.  
Today autumn is on the land once more:  
Runners of yellow and crimson, fragments of orange lie  
Beneath the sky-pasture of deep blue;  
The golden mantle twinkles now in the breeze.

Once each year, when summer is burning out  
And winter is storing up its boulders of ice,  
These few weeks of brilliance lie over the land.  
The hours, the days run past us and are gone:  
November comes and puts out the flame.  
Twenty-one autumns now, and soon another November;  
The autumns, the Novembers soon slip by us:  
The span is short.

# The Nightcap

MARY LEE WALLERSTEDT

I lay in bed with that startled sensation you feel right after you've shut off the light, when the darkness seems suddenly to have been dumped on you. It's before you get used to the night, and you can't even pick out the outlines of your dresser or tell the difference between the plaster wall and the glassiness of the mirror. You see, Mother and Daddy had gone out for dinner, and I had been left alone. I didn't have to go to bed at any particular time, so I stayed up much later than usual—so late, in fact, that by the time I was ready for bed I was startled by every small sound and creak of the floor, and I kept seeing odd things out of the corners of my eyes. I was comfortable now. I had taken a bath before I put on my pajamas, and I could smell the soap when I put my arm up across my face, and feel the hairs standing straight up after their scrubbing, tickling my nose. I usually prefer dirty sheets to clean, because dirty ones have had a chance to get softened up, and the clean ones are always so hard and scratchy, but tonight the clean ones felt smooth and silky. They must have been the good percale ones which Mother used for company, but sometimes put on our beds by mistake, or if the dryer was on the blink and she had to wait another week to wash. My toothpaste had left a good peppermint taste in my mouth, and when I ran my tongue over my teeth, they felt smooth and glassy. I love the feeling of being clean and in a cozy bed. I love it so much, in fact, that I try to make my body as heavy as possible, so that it will sink deeper into the mattress, and I can feel the sheets on top of me, following me down. When you make your head heavy too, the pillow bunches up on either side of it, and if the covers are tight up under your chin, every part of you feels warm and secure except your nose, which feels strangely cold and unprotected.

The pillow was covering up my ears so much, I could hear only a vague sound outside, but when I jerked my head out of its downy hole, I could hear voices and the slamming of car doors. It was my parents coming home with the folks they had gone to dinner with. I could hear the front door unlocking, and the voices, which had been lost in the open, were funneled through the doorway and filled up the house. The sound of high heels came clomping down the hallway, turning as it reached the door of my bedroom, and was finally muffled by the rug on Mother and Daddy's bedroom floor. Purses clicked open and then shut again, and then there was the return trek down the hall to the living room. The voices rose to higher pitches, and beneath their babbling, ice trays were being opened in the kitchen.

I was hot and restless now. Do you suppose they thought I was asleep? I felt like a peeping Tom at a window as I lay there listening in the dark. I even got all goose-pimply, like I was afraid of being caught, but I don't know why, because it wouldn't have made the least bit of difference to



anybody if they had found out I was awake and listening. I first heard my father's voice, and then I recognized most of the others. I knew everyone who'd come over, and they were the kind of people that you could just sit and watch for hours. It wasn't that they were such cards or characters or anything, but you know how everybody is a little queer in one way or another, if you really stop and think about it.

My body tightened, and I wondered if these were growing pains. Every muscle wanted so much to be full grown, and though I couldn't feel them, my brain cells must have been moving faster too. I hoped they'd arrange it so I wouldn't be stranger than other grown-ups, for I wanted to be a most captivating sort, with just the right clothes and the right things to say, and I'd have a most charming husband. I could just imagine sitting among friends at a cocktail party. I put my knees up in bed and crossed my legs so I could get the full effect. It seemed logical for me to be wearing a sheath dress, because my pajama pants were being stretched across my legs, and by draping the sheet across my chest, and tucking it underneath my sides, I was fitted into a strapless creation. The rest of the sheet was draped overskirts. I poised an imaginary drink in one hand, and an invisible cigarette in the other. I was truly the center of everyone's attention, but as I chatted gaily on I looked only at my husband.

The hand with the cigarette could be laid down in bed, as a person might hold his arm down at his side while he smoked, but the hand holding the glass had to be stuck straight up in the air, and it was getting numb. I had to yawn, too, and that broke the spell a little more, until my game wasn't fun any more. I wasn't really sleepy, though, and I was getting more and more wide awake all the time. I flopped around, first on my side, then over on my stomach, then on the other side, until by the time I ended up on my back again, I was so hot I kicked off the covers. This seemed to be an invitation to step right out of bed. I climbed onto the cold floor, shuffled through the dark, and opened my door. The average person might have been blinded by the light, or deafened by the noise, but I was intoxicated by the smell of different kinds of perfume mixed with cigarette smoke.

I went in Mother and Daddy's bedroom, and even if you'd been deaf and dumb and unable to smell, you would have known there was company because of the strange coats draped on the bed. Up by the pillows was a white leather jacket, and before I even thought about whether I should bother it or not, I'd picked it right up. The leather was somehow thin and wrinkled looking, and there was a wide belt that was just dangling from one of the loops. It even had red satin lining, and the label was embroidered with gold threads. Under the store's name, in little tiny letters, it read, "Chicago-New York-Dallas," and while I was examining all of this I was wondering how much the jacket had cost. Not that I cared, of course, but I just would like to have known how much it cost. I gingerly put it back on the bed, and ran my fingers over a mustard-colored wool coat which felt almost like velvet. My mother's fur coat was lying there, too. The light made it look shiny and silky

looking, and the brown pelts felt softer than anything at all. I knew it hadn't been cheap, by any means, but it looked rather matronly. Mother had this silly notion that she wasn't the "sporty" type, and I guess if she wanted to look like an old lady before her day, it was all right with me.

I wanted to go in and join the company, but there I was looking at myself in the dressing table mirror like a frightened albino. I mean I really did look like an albino! My hair is colorless, and my face is pale, and my eyes don't even look blue unless I'm standing in the most glaring sunlight. Now if I looked like a Swedish princess with pale blue eyes and sun-bleached eyebrows—you know how they picture them in magazines with ski sweaters and the mountains in the background and they never have on any lipstick—I wouldn't be griping, or even like a fashion model who looks like she had white powder on her face, it wouldn't be so bad, but I don't. I look plain, like they speak of peasants looking plain. It made me sort of sick inside, standing there looking at myself. My folks' friends' girls have their hair done at the beauty shop. I know they do, and so even if their hair is as drab a color as mine, it at least looks curled and sophisticated. My hair is *sborn*. It really does just look chopped off. If I had gone to the beauty shop, it would have been a "pixie" cut, but my mother thinks she is a real wizard with the scissors, and consequently I look like I have a bowl haircut, done with graduated sizes of bowls, so that it is in layers, and from the bottom layers my ears stick out. They aren't the smallest ears you've ever seen, either. With a long ruffled nightgown, I might have had a slightly feminine appearance, but my last year's flannel pajamas were not the kind you'd wear out in society. In fact, I couldn't even go to bed with self-respect. The only reason they hadn't bothered me earlier was because they were clean. Actually, they were faded, and shrunk up above my ankles and wrists, and you know how flannel gets after it's been washed a million times—thin, and covered with little balls of cotton? Well, mine were like that—fit for the rag bag. If I were doing it, I would throw them away and burn them, but my mother uses things until they absolutely can't be used any more. You'd think we were in the Poor House or something. She thinks flannel is good rag material, so these would go in the rag bag. My pajamas happened to be on my body, however, and I would have to wear them all winter, but most of all, tonight, when I felt like going out with the company. Did Mother want to be ashamed of me? Maybe she didn't even care, but I cared, and I was ashamed of these OLD RAGS.

Some girls would make even rags look good, but oh Lordy, I have no figure. I am absolutely straight up and down, except for my hips. But even my hips are neither cute nor sexy, but just countless pounds of shapeless fat. In front I have the opposite problem—no meat on my bones whatsoever. I get a sick, achy feeling every time I think about it, and it's too painful even to look.

I thought maybe if I ran in and grabbed my robe, it would help to cover me up, so I went in my room and put it on, but I might just as well not have bothered. It came even above the short pants and sleeves

of my pajamas, and was a faded yellow, old-fashioned chenille bathrobe, which I wouldn't have been caught dead in. By this time I was getting panicky. What if someone had come down the hall and seen me, or what if everyone left before I got to see them? I had to hurry. I went in my room, and in a bottom drawer I found some summer pajamas. They were pink seersucker with white lace trimming, and even if they did smell funny because they'd been stored away so long, and even if they were wrinkled and out of season, they did fit me, and they were practically brand new. I put these on as fast as I could, and took one last peek at myself in the mirror, and by this time I was getting pretty frantic. I raced into Mother's room, opened her dresser drawer, and took out her eyebrow pencil. I'd watched her put it on so many times, but when I tried I made a big brown smudge above one eyebrow, and the other one looked like it grew down to the top of my nose. I looked worse than before, and it took a lot of rubbing to get it all off. Maybe I had the clean, well-scrubbed look, after all, except for my nose, which had disgusting little droplets of oil standing out all over it. I wiped off my nose with my forefinger, and then I cleaned out the corners of my eyes. I'd have to try and look tired, like I'd been in bed for hours and hours, when I went into the other room, so that they wouldn't really expect too much. I proceeded down the hall and into the kitchen, where Daddy was mixing drinks.

"I couldn't go to sleep, so I thought it would help if I got up for awhile."

"Go on in and say hello, and I'll bring you a Seven-Up."

I sort of stumbled into the living room, and I'll have to admit, I was really trying to act sleepy. I walked pigeon-toed, and rubbed my eyes. Mother made some remark about whether I was still awake.

"We could have kept our voices down."

"You know me, when I start laughing."

"I completely forgot your room was right at the end of the hall."

"She probably just crawled in bed when she heard us coming, we know!"

I went over and sat at the far end of the davenport, by the fireplace.

"Well, if it isn't Harry Johnson's little girl. You bring 'em up sort of unprotected, don't you, Swede?" This was Bob Bryan, a lawyer, who spoke up. He was always saying something aimed at me, and then he'd grin and wrinkle up his nose. He was a big guy, and somehow you just didn't expect him to wrinkle up his nose at you. I always felt funny when I looked at him, with his big hairy hands. "Up 'til all hours with your parents' racy friends." Everyone laughed at this, for you know really they were all just middle-aged homebodies.

"That reminds me of the damndest thing that happened today. Those kids, I swear if I couldn't get out of the house once in a while, I'd go stark raving mad." This was Mrs. Bryan, his wife, who was starting to talk, and before you knew it she was off on one of her tangents. My cheeks had been hot and rosy feeling, but I got cold all of a sudden. I felt like I'd been cut off short. I tried to smile and make my eyes wide

so I wouldn't look like my eyes were all tight and embarrassed. I didn't want anybody to notice how I felt. Anyway, she was just chuckling at herself in this story she was telling, and her dimples got deeper and deeper, and her black eyes got bigger and bigger as she talked on. I was too busy watching her to pay any attention to what she was saying. One thing that always startled me about her was the way she loved to use cuss words, but it wasn't really crude, and it was sort of amusing to everyone, especially the men. It was also fun to watch her hands. They weren't large, but they looked strong and tan, and on her wedding ring finger she wore several diamonds. I mean there was one big ring, and then a smaller one, which must have been her wedding ring, and then these were surrounded by a couple of circlets of smaller diamonds. You can tell it would take a rather strong-looking hand to carry all this weight. Besides her hands themselves, her fingernails had the same strongness. They were rounded on top, and the ends were tapered so they curled under. They were painted a bright red, and they were no doubt the hardest looking fingernails I've ever seen. She also held a cigarette in one hand, which definitely added to the effect. My own nails were tiny and I used Daddy's clippers to cut them off short. Just then Mother barged in with a plate of cheese and crackers. I don't know why she had to be so obnoxious about passing them. She just plain interrupted. I really thought it was a poor thing for her to do. Another thing about my mother, I just couldn't picture her with a cigarette in her hand. I didn't know if this was good or bad, but I couldn't picture it. Mother *finally* sat down, and when my eyes went back to Mrs. Bryan I thought that if you weren't put in such a stupor by her dimples and eyes and hands, you could see that she had hardly a waistline at all, and that her calves were too bulgy to be pretty. This was quite a discovery, for I knew that she'd tried to hide these ugly facts by her clothes. They were always in bright colors—bold ones—and she would wear a huge artificial rose at her bustline, or gobs of necklaces. I could let my nails grow out, and with a little padding here and a girdle there and lots of make-up . . . I put one arm out, with my hand on my knee, and crossed my legs. My legs were good looking. I stretched my neck up tall, for models had long necks, and mine was long, too. I had an uncle who always commented on the shape of my head, so maybe I could make my neck look like a pedestal for a piece of marble statue—my well-shaped skull. I wouldn't talk about children or housework, but art and actresses. I would say, "I discovered the most *gorgeous* art treasure of the centuries the other day. You all must come over for cocktails some evening and see what you think," or "Let's fly to New York for June Allyson's opening." Daddy had brought my Seven-Up in to me, and I tried to drink it like you would a highball, one decisive swallow after another, but it was flat and tasteless. You really had to drink it more like water, several glunks at a time.

"Well, tell me how school is anyway, Beth Ann." The conversation had come to a standstill, and that was the only thing Mr. Shrapner could think of to say. Mr. Shrapner wore horn-rimmed glasses that magnified

his eyes so many times I was always afraid of looking at him, just like you wouldn't look into a flash camera. His eyes were boring down on me right now, and I really did want to make some remark that would make everyone sit up and take notice.

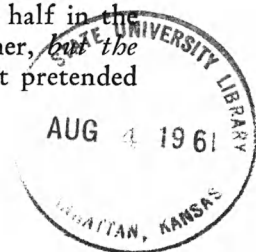
"You wouldn't believe it, but I really do like it this year." Of course they'd believe it, because they knew what a sickening little do-gooder I was. I should have at least not been so phony about it.

"Listen to that, Mrs. Shrapner." I was sorry I had said anything. Their daughter was in my class at school, and so of course they knew all about me. I always liked Mr. and Mrs. Shrapner until I thought of her. Sherry Shrapner was a two-faced little snot, if I've ever seen one. She made me feel so good some days when she ate with me at noon in the cafeteria, and then came over to my locker in between classes. I always looked forward to the next day, but then she'd be with her gang again, and not even speak to me. I'd tried one day to go ahead and be with them, but they always seemed to walk in groups of twos and threes and be talking, and I couldn't say what I wanted to say at the right times, and I'd just get farther and farther behind and nobody ever noticed that I wasn't walking with them any more. I could go on and on about her and all her friends, but then she was pretty and popular, so who was I to talk?

"Yes, I know, Ward, but Sherry's just not made that way; she never has enjoyed school or liked her teachers." This was said with an offhand, self-righteous little smile, but I never knew this was anything to be so proud of. They must really like the way she acted, and be proud of all the friends she had and how pretty she was, even though her grades were bad and she talked back to her teachers. "She just has too much nervous energy, and if I were some of her teachers I wouldn't understand her either." She addressed the group now: "Ward and I just don't know where to turn next." This was obviously just said for effect. I held my breath for fear Daddy would speak up and give them some old-fashioned advice on where to turn, but everyone seemed to be as jovial as ever, though they did hurry on to find other things to talk about.

Mrs. Shrapner got up to get a potato chip from the tray on the coffee table, with a remaining trace of her distressed look, and as she sat down she smoothed her hose over her legs. I noticed her expensive shoes, and her simple skirt and sweater which probably cost around sixty dollars. This was really chic, but every time you turned around Sherry had on a new outfit, and a cashmere sweater on Sherry always just about made me sick. I wondered if Mother felt the same way about Mrs. Shrapner, but she must not have, because she was grown up and besides she wasn't the sporty type and wouldn't have worn a sweater, anyway.

Those potato chips did look awfully good, and Mother had made my favorite cheese dip, but just as I stuck a potato chip into the bowl, it snapped in two, leaving one half in my hand and the other half in the cheese dip. It wasn't a little corner of the potato chip either, ~~but the~~ *whole other half*. I didn't know quite what to do, so I just pretended



that nothing had happened, but the next time Mr. Bryan went over for some cheese dip, it was rather hard for him to get at it.

My father announced then that he had a new record he wanted everyone to hear. I'd been listening to it for days, and I didn't think it was that good, but sure enough, he put it on the record player. He not only put it on, but he turned it up quite loud so that everyone could hear the full effect of the high fidelity. I think everyone was trying to look interested, while secretly being bored to death, and deafened besides. I wished my father would just sit down and forget it. Mother was yawning at this point, as she had been all evening. She said that just sitting around talking bored her, and it was truly a wonder that she didn't suggest a game of charades. I was so thankful she controlled herself, and I was hoping that maybe they were getting a kick out of Daddy.

To tell you the truth, I was getting awfully tired myself, but I had to rehearse my exit several times in my mind, before I just blundered out of the room. I'd have to be careful and not trip over the coffee table, or look clumsy as I walked around the stool. I could go sit by Mrs. Bryan and chat for awhile and then leave unnoticed, but what would I chat about? I could just leave quickly, like I was upset for being awakened in the middle of the night, or smile and act lovable and say, "It was so much fun to see you all again." Finally, I got up from the couch and said, "I believe I've heard this several times before, so I'll say good-night." This brought a general appreciable laugh from the gathering, and I was off to bed. I shut the door, and climbed into bed again. I had to put my flannel pajamas back on for warmth's sake. The record had been turned off in the other room, and everyone had started talking, but it was hard to catch single words and sentences. I wanted to hear somebody say something nice about me, and my heart was thumping so loudly that the conversation in the other room got more and more jumbled. Mother and Daddy would tell me in the morning.





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