Come Back, Dr. Caligari

Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts — 1968
City Life — 1970
Sadness — 1972
Amateurs — 1976
Great Days — 1979
Overnight to Many Distant Cities — 1983
Sam's Bar — 1987
Sixty Stories — 1981
Forty Stories — 1987
Flying to America: 45 More Stories — 2007
Guilty Pleasures — 1974
Snow White — 1967
The Dead Father — 1975
Paradise — 1986
The King — 1990

Come Back, Dr. Caligari

by Donald Barthelme

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To my mother and father

Contents

Florence Green is 81

DINNER WITH FLORENCE GREEN. The old babe is on a kick tonight: I want to go to some other country, she announces. Everyone wonders what this can mean. But Florence says nothing more: no explanation, no elaboration, after a satisfied look around the table bang! she is asleep again. The girl at Florence's right is new here and does not understand. I give her an ingratiating look (a look that says, "There is nothing to worry about, I will explain everything later in the privacy of my quarters Kathleen"). Lentils vegetate in the depths of the fourth principal river of the world, the Ob, in Siberia, 3200 miles. We are talking about Quemoy and Matsu. "It's a matter of leading from strength. What is the strongest possible move on our part? To deny them the islands even though the islands are worthless in themselves." Baskerville, a sophomore at the Famous Writers School in Westport, Connecticut, which he attends with the object of becoming a famous writer, is making his excited notes. The new girl's boobies are like my secretary's knees, very prominent and irritating. Florence began the evening by saying, grandly, "The upstairs bathroom leaks you know." What does Herman Kahn think about Quemoy and Matsu? I can't remember, I can't remember…

Oh Baskerville! you silly son of a bitch, how can you become a famous writer without first having worried about your life, is it the right kind of life, does it have the right people in it, is it going well? Instead you are beglamoured by J. D. Ratcliff. The smallest city in the United States with a population over 100,000 is Santa Ana, California, where 100,350 citizens nestle together in the Balboa blue Pacific evenings worrying about their lives. I am a young man but very brilliant, very ingratiating, I adopt this ingratiating tone because I can't help myself (for fear of boring you). I edit with my left hand a small magazine, very scholarly, very brilliant, called The Journal of Tension Reduction (social-psychological studies, learned disputation, letters-to-the-editor, anxiety in rats). Isn't that distasteful? Certainly it is distasteful but if Florence Green takes her money to another country who will pay the printer? answer me that. From an article in The Journal of Tension Reduction: "One source of concern in the classic encounter between patient and psychoanalyst is the patient's fear of boring the doctor." The doctor no doubt is also worrying about his life, unfolding with ten minutes between hours to smoke a cigarette in and wash his hands in. Reader, you who have already been told more than you want to know about the river Ob, 3200 miles long, in Siberia, we have roles to play, thou and I: you are the doctor (washing your hands between hours), and I, I am, I think, the nervous dreary patient. I am free associating, brilliantly, brilliantly, to put you into the problem. Or for fear of boring you: which? The Journal of Tension Reduction is concerned with everything from global tensions (drums along the Ob) to interpersonal relations (Baskerville and the new girl). There is, we feel, too much tension in the world, I myself am a perfect example, my stomach is like a clenched fist. Notice the ingratiating tone here? the only way I can relax it, I refer to the stomach, is by introducing quarts of Fleischmann's Gin. Fleischmann's I have found is a magnificent source of tension reduction, I favor the establishment of comfort stations providing free Fleischmann's on every street corner of the city of Santa Ana, California, and all other cities. Be serious, can't you?

The new girl is a thin thin sketchy girl with a big chest looming over the gazpacho and black holes around her eyes that are very promising. Surely when she opens her mouth toads will pop out. I am tempted to

remove my shirt and show her my trim midsection sporting chiseled abdominals, my superior shoulders and brilliantly developed pectoral-latissimus tie-in. Jackson called himself a South Carolinian, and his biographer, Amos Kendall, recorded his birthplace as Lancaster County, S.C.; but Parton has published documentary evidence to show that Jackson was born in Union County, N.C., less than a quarter mile from the South Carolina line. Jackson is my great hero even though he had, if contemporary reports are to be believed, lousy lats. I am also a weightlifter and poet and admirer of Jackson and the father of one abortion and four miscarriages; who among you has such a record and no wife? Baskerville's difficulty not only at the Famous Writers School in Westport, Connecticut, but in every part of the world, is that he is slow. "That's a slow boy, that one," his first teacher said. "That boy is what you call real slow," his second teacher said. "That's a slow son of a bitch," his third teacher said. And they were right, right, entirely correct, still I learned about Andrew Jackson and abortions, many of you walking the streets of Santa Ana, California, and all other cities know nothing about either. "In such cases the patient sees the doctor as a highly sophisticated consumer of outre material, a connoisseur of exotic behavior. Therefore he tends to propose himself as more colorful, more eccentric (or more ill) than he really is; or he is witty, or he fantasticates." You see? Isn't that sensible? In the magazine we run many useful and sensible pieces of this kind, portages through the whirlpool-country of the mind. In the magazine I cannot openly advocate the use of Fleischmann's Gin in tension reduction but I did run an article titled "Alcohol Reconsidered" written by a talented soak of my acquaintance which drew many approving if carefully worded letters from secret drinkers in psychology departments all over this vast, dry and misunderstood country. . .

"That's a slow son of a bitch," his third teacher remarked of him, at a meeting called to discuss the formation of a special program for Inferior Students, in which Baskerville's name had so to speak rushed to the fore. The young Baskerville, shrinking along the beach brushing sand from his dreary Texas eyes, his sad fingers gripping $20 worth of pamphlets secured by post from Joe Weider, "Trainer of Terror Fighters" (are they, Baskerville wondered, like fire fighters? do they

fight terror? or do they, rather, inspire it? the latter his, Baskerville's, impossible goal), was even then incubating plans for his novel The Children's Army which he is attending the Famous Writers School to learn how to write. "You will do famously, Baskerville," said the Registrar, the exciting results of Baskerville's Talent Test lying unexamined before him. "Run along now to the Cashier's Office." "I am writing doctor an immense novel to be called The Children's Army!" (Why do I think the colored doctor's name, he with his brown hand on the red radishes, is Pamela Hansford Johnson? Why do I think?) Florence Green is a small fat girl eighty-one years old, old with blue legs and very rich. Rock pools deep in the earth, I salute the shrewdness of whoever filled you with Texaco! Texaco breaks my heart, Texaco is particularly poignant. Florence Green who was not always a small fat girl once made a voyage with her husband Mr. Green on the Graf Zeppelin. In the grand salon, she remembers, there was a grand piano, the great pianist Mandrake the Magician was also on board but could not be persuaded to play. The Zeppelins could not use helium; the government of this country refused to sell helium to the owners of the Zeppelins. The title of my second book will be I believe Hydrogen After Lakehurst. For the first half of the evening we heard about the problem of the upstairs bathroom: "I had a man come out and look at it, and he said it would be two hundred and twenty-five dollars for a new one. I said I didn't want a new one, I just wanted this one fixed." Shall I offer to obtain a new one for Florence, carved out of solid helium? would that be ingratiating? Does she worry about her life? "He said mine was old-fashioned and they didn't make parts for that kind any more." Now she sleeps untidily at the head of the table, except for her single, mysterious statement, delivered with the soup (I want to go to some other country!), she has said nothing about her life whatsoever. . . The diameter of the world at the Poles is 7899.99 miles whereas the diameter of the world at the Equator is 7926.68 miles, mark it and strike it. I am sure the colored man across from me is a doctor, he has a doctor's doctorly air of being needed and necessary. He leans into the conversation as if to say: Just make me Secretary of State and then you will see some action. "I'll tell you one thing, there are a hell of a lot of Chinese over there." Surely the very kidneys of wisdom, Florence Green

has only one kidney, I have a kidney stone, Baskerville was stoned by the massed faculty of the Famous Writers School upon presentation of his first lesson: he was accused of formalism. It is well known that Florence adores doctors, why didn't I announce myself, in the beginning, from the very first, as a doctor? Then I could say that the money was for a very important research project (use of radioactive tracers in reptiles) with very important ramifications in stomach cancer (the small intestine is very like a reptile). Then I would get the money with much less difficulty, cancer frightens Florence, the money would rain down like fallout in New Mexico. I am a young man but very brilliant, very ingratiating, I edit with my left hand a small magazine called. . . did I explain that? And you accepted my explanation? Her name is not really Kathleen, it is Joan Graham, when we were introduced she said, "Oh are you a native of Dallas Mr. Baskerville?" No Joan baby I am a native of Bengazi sent here by the UN to screw your beautiful ass right down into the ground, that is not what I said but what I should have said, it would have been brilliant. When she asked him what he did Baskerville identified himself as an American weightlifter and poet (that is to say: a man stronger and more eloquent than other men). "It moves," Mandrake said, pointing to the piano, and although no one else could detect the slightest movement, the force of his personality was so magical that he was not contradicted (the instrument sat in the salon, Florence says, as solidly as Gibraltar in the sea).

The man who has been settling the hash of the mainland Chinese searches the back of his neck, where there is what appears to be a sebaceous cyst (I can clear that up for you; my instrument will be a paper on the theory of games). What if Mandrake had played, though, what if he had seated himself before the instrument, raised his hands, and. . . what? The Principal Seas, do you want to hear about the Principal Seas? Florence has been prodded awake; people are beginning to ask questions. If not this country, then what country? Italy? "No," Florence says smiling through her emeralds, "not Italy. I've been to Italy. Although Mr. Green was very fond of Italy." "To bore the doctor is to become, for this patient, a case similar to other cases; the patient strives mightily to establish his uniqueness. This is also, of course, a tactic for evading the psychoanalytic issue." The first thing the All-American

Boy said to Florence Green at the very brink of their acquaintanceship was "It is closing time in the gardens of the West Cyril Connolly." This remark pleased her, it was a pleasing remark, on the strength of this remark Baskerville was invited again, on the second occasion he made a second remark, which was "Before the flowers of friendship faded friendship faded Gertrude Stein." Joan is like one of those marvelous Vogue girls, a tease in a half-slip on Mykonos, bare from the belly up on the rocks. "It moves," Mandrake said, and the piano raised itself a few inches, magically, and swayed from side to side in a careful Baldwin dance. "It moves," the other passengers agreed, under the spell of post-hypnotic suggestion. "It moves," Joan says, pointing at the gazpacho, which sways from side to side with a secret Heinz trembling movement. I give the soup a serious warning, couched in the strongest possible terms, and Joan grins gratefully not at me but at Pamela Hansford Johnson. The Virgin Islands maybe? "We were there in 1925, Mr. Green had indigestion, I sat up all night with his stomach and the flies, the flies were something you wouldn't believe." They are asking I think the wrong questions, the question is not where but why? "I was reading the other day that the average age of Chiang's enlisted men is thirty-seven. You can't do much with an outfit like that." This is true, I myself am thirty-seven and if Chiang must rely on men of my sort then he might as well kiss the mainland goodbye. Oh, there is nothing better than intelligent conversation except thrashing about in bed with a naked girl and Egmont Light Italic.

Despite his slowness already remarked upon which perhaps inhibited his ingestion of the splendid curriculum that had been prepared for him, Baskerville never failed to be "promoted," but on the contrary was always "promoted," the reason for this being perhaps that his seat was needed for another child (Baskerville then being classified, in spite of his marked growth and gorgeous potential, as a child). There were some it was true who never thought he would extend himself to six feet, still he learned about Andrew Jackson, helium-hydrogen, and abortions, where are my mother and father now? answer me that. On a circular afternoon in June 1945 -- it was raining, Florence says, hard enough to fill the Brazen Sea -- she was sitting untidily on a chaise in the north bedroom (on the wall of the north bedroom there are twenty

identically framed photographs of Florence from eighteen to eighty-one, she was a beauty at eighteen) reading a copy of Life. It was the issue containing the first pictures from Buchenwald, she could not look away, she read the text, or a little of the text, then she vomited. When she recovered she read the article again, but without understanding it. What did exterminated mean? It meant nothing, an eyewitness account mentioned a little girl with one leg thrown alive on top of a truckload of corpses to be burned. Florence was sick. She went immediately to the Greenbrier, a resort in West Virginia. Later she permitted me to tell her about the Principal Seas, the South China, the Yellow, the Andaman, the Sea of Okhotsk. "I spotted you for a weightlifter," Joan says. "But not for a poet," Baskerville replies. "What have you written?" she asks. "Mostly I make remarks," I say. "Remarks are not literature," she says. "Then there's my novel," I say, "it will be twelve years old Tuesday." "Published?" she asks. "Not finished," I say, "however it's very violent and necessary. It has to do with this Army see, made up of children, young children but I mean really well armed with M-1's, carbines, .30 and .50 caliber machine guns, 105 mortars, recoilless rifles, the whole works. The central figure is the General, who is fifteen. One day the Army appears in the city, in a park, and takes up positions. Then it begins killing the people. Do you understand?" "I don't think I'd like it," Joan says. "I don't like it either," Baskerville says, "but it doesn't make any difference that I don't like it. Mr. Henry James writes fiction as though it were a painful duty Oscar Wilde."

Does Florence worry about her life? "He said mine was old-fashioned and they didn't make parts for that kind any more." Last year Florence tried to join the Peace Corps and when she was refused, telephoned the President to complain. "I have always admired the work of the Andrews Sisters," Joan says. I feel feverish; will you take my temperature doctor? Baskerville that simple preliterate soaks up all the Taylor's New York State malmsey in reach meanwhile wondering about his Grand Design. France? Japan? "Not Japan dear, we had a lovely time there but I wouldn't want to go back now. France is where my little niece is, they have twenty-two acres near Versailles, he's a count and a biochemist, isn't that wonderful?" The others nod, they know what is wonderful. The Principal Seas are wonderful, the Important

Lakes of the World are wonderful, the Metric System is wonderful, let us measure something together Florence Green baby. I will trade you a walleyed hectometer for a single golden micron. The table is hushed, like a crowd admiring 300 million dollars. Did I say that Florence has 300 million dollars? Florence Green is eighty-one with blue legs and has 300 million dollars and in 1932 was in love, airily, with a radio announcer named Norman Brokenshire, with his voice. "Meanwhile Edna Gather's husband who takes me to church, he's got a very good job with the Port, I think he does very well, he's her second husband, the first was Pete Duff who got into all that trouble, where was I? Oh yes when Paul called up and said he wouldn't come because of his hernia -- you heard about his hernia -- John said he'd come over and look at it. Mind you I've been using the downstaics bathroom all this time." In fact the whole history of Florence's radio listenership is of interest. In fact I have decided to write a paper called "The Whole History of Florence Green's Radio Listenership." Or perhaps, in the seventeenth-century style, "The Whole and True History of Florence Green's Radio Listenership." Or perhaps. . . But I am boring you, I sense it, let me say only that she can still elicit, from her ancient larynx, the special thrilling sound used to introduce Captain Midnight. . . The table is hushed, then, we are all involved in a furious pause, a grand parenthesis (here I will insert a description of Florence's canes. Florence's canes line a special room, the room in which her cane collection is kept. There are hundreds of them: smooth black Fred Astaire canes and rough chewed alpenstocks, blackthorns and quarterstaffs, cudgels and swagger sticks, bamboo and ironwood, maple and slippery elm, canes from Tangier, Maine, Zurich, Panama City, Quebec, Togoland, the Dakotas and Borneo, resting in notched compartments that resemble arms racks in an armory. Everywhere Florence goes, she purchases one or more canes. Some she has made herself, stripping the bark from the green unseasoned wood, drying them carefully, applying layer on layer of a special varnish, then polishing them, endlessly, in the evenings, after dark and dinner) as vast as the Sea of Okhotsk, 590,000 square miles. I was sitting, I remember, in a German restaurant on Lexington, blowing bubbles in my seidel, at the next table there were six Germans, young Germans, they were laughing and talking. At Florence Green's

here-and-now table there is a poet named Onward Christian or something whose spectacles have wide silver sidepieces rather than the dull brown horn sidepieces of true poets and weightlifters, and whose poems invariably begin: "Through all my clangorous hours. . ." I am worried about his remarks, are his remarks better than my remarks? We are elected after all on the strength of our glamorous remarks, what is he saying to her? to Joan? what sort of eyewash is he pouring in her ear? I am tempted to walk briskly over and ask to see his honorable discharge from the Famous Writers School. What could be more glamorous or necessary than The Children's Army, "An army of youth bearing the standard of truth" as we used to sing in my fourth-grade classroom at Our Lady of the Sorrows under the unforgiving eye of Sister Scholastica who knew how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. . .

Florence I have decided is evading the life-issue. She is proposing herself as more unhappy than she really is. She has in mind making herself more interesting. She is afraid of boring us. She is trying to establish her uniqueness. She does not really want to go away. Does Onward Christian know about the Important Lakes of the World? Terminate services of employees when necessary. I terminate you, brightness that seems to know me. She proceeded by car from Tempelhof to a hotel in the American zone, registered, dined, sat in a chair in the lobby for a time observing the American lieutenant colonels and their healthy German girls, and then walked out into the street. The first German man she saw was a policeman directing traffic. He wore a uniform. Florence walked out into the traffic island and tugged at his sleeve. He bent politely toward the nice old American lady. She lifted her cane, the cane of 1927 from Yellowstone, and cracked his head with it. He fell in a heap in the middle of the street. Then Florence Green rushed awkwardly into the plaza with her cane, beating the people there, men and women, indiscriminately, until she was subdued. The Forms of Address, shall I sing to you of the Forms of Address? What Florence did was what Florence did, not more or less, she was returned to this country under restraint on a military plane. "Why do you have the children kill everybody?" "Because everybody has already been killed. Everybody is absolutely dead. You and I

and Onward Christian." "You're not very sanguine." "That's true." For an earl's younger son's wife, letters commence: Madam. . . "We put in the downstairs bathroom when Bad came to visit us. Bad was Mr. Green's sister and she couldn't climb stairs." What about Casablanca? Santa Cruz? Funchal? Malaga? Valletta? Iraklion? Samos? Haifa? Kotor Bay? Dubrovnik? "I want to go to some other place," Florence says. "Somewhere where everything is different." For the Talent Test a necessary but not a sufficient condition for matriculation at the Famous Writers School Baskerville delivered himself of "Impressions of Akron" which began: "Akron! Akron was full of people walking the streets of Akron carrying little transistor radios which were turned on."

Florence has a Club. The Club meets on Tuesday evenings, at her huge horizontal old multibathroom home on Indiana Boulevard. The Club is a group of men who gather, on these occasions, to recite and hear poems in praise of Florence Green. Before you can be admitted you must compose a poem. The poems begin, usually, somewhat in this vein: "Florence Green is eighty-one/ Nevertheless she's lots of fun. . ." Onward Christian's poem began "Through all my clangorous hours. . ." Florence carries the poems about with her in her purse, stapled together in an immense, filthy wad. Surely Florence Green is a vastly rich vastly egocentric old-woman nut! Six modifiers modify her into something one can think of as a nut. "But you have not grasped the living reality, the essence!" Husserl exclaims. Nor will I, ever. His examiner (was it J. D. Ratcliff?) said severely: "Baskerville, you blank round, discursiveness is not literature." "The aim of literature," Baskerville replied grandly, "is the creation of a strange object covered with fur which breaks your heart." Joan says: "I have two children." "Why did you do that?" I ask. "I don't know," she says. I am struck by the modesty of her answer. Pamela Hansford Johnson has been listening and his face jumps in what may be described as a wince. "That's a terrible thing to say," he says. And he is right, right, entirely correct, what she has said is the First Terrible Thing. We value each other for our remarks, on the strength of this remark and the one about the Andrews Sisters, love becomes possible. 1 carry in my wallet an eight-paragraph General Order, issued by the adjutant of my young immaculate Army to the troops: "(1) You are in this Army because you wanted to be. So you have to do

what the General says. Anybody who doesn't do what the General says will be kicked out of the Army. (2) The purpose of the Army is to do what the General says. (3) The General says that nobody will shoot his weapon unless the General says to. It is important that when the Army opens fire on something everybody does it together. This is very important and anybody who doesn't do it will have his weapon taken away and will be kicked out of the Army. (4) Don't be afraid of the noise when everybody fires. It won't hurt you. (5) Everybody has enough rounds to do what the General wants to do. People who lose their rounds won't get any more. (6) Talking to people who are not in the Army is strictly forbidden. Other people don't understand the Army. (7) This is a serious Army and anybody that laughs will have his weapon taken away and will be kicked out of the Army. (8) What the General wants to do now is, find and destroy the enemy."

I want to go somewhere where everything is different. A simple, perfect idea. The old babe demands nothing less than total otherness. Dinner is over. We place our napkins on our lips. Quemoy and Matsu remain ours, temporarily perhaps; the upstairs bathroom drips away unrepaired; I feel the money drifting, drifting away from me. I am a young man but very brilliant, very ingratiating, I edit. . . but I explained all that. In the dim foyer I slip my hands through the neck of Joan's yellow dress. It is dangerous but it is a way of finding out everything all at once. Then Onward Christian arrives to resume his yellow overcoat. No one has taken Florence seriously, how can anyone with three hundred million dollars be taken seriously? But I know that when I telephone tomorrow, there will be no answer. Iráklion? Samos? Haifa? Kotor Bay? She will be in none of these places but in another place, a place where everything is different. Outside it is raining. In my rain-blue Volkswagen I proceed down the rain-black street thinking, for some simple reason, of the Verdi Requiem. I begin to drive my tiny car in idiot circles in the street, I begin to sing the first great Kyrie.

The piano player

OUTSIDE HIS WINDOW FIVE-YEAR-OLD Priscilla Hess, square and squat as a mailbox (red sweater, blue lumpy corduroy pants), looked around poignantly for someone to wipe her overflowing nose. There was a butterfly locked inside that mailbox, surely; would it ever escape? Or was the quality of mailboxness stuck to her forever, like her parents, like her name? The sky was sunny and blue. A filet of green Silly Putty disappeared into fat Priscilla Hess and he turned to greet his wife who was crawling through the door on her hands and knees.

"Yes?" he said. "What now?"

"I'm ugly," she said, sitting back on her haunches. "Our children are ugly."

"Nonsense," Brian said sharply. "They're wonderful children. Wonderful and beautiful. Other people's children are ugly, not our children. Now get up and go back out to the smokeroom. You're supposed to be curing a ham."

"The ham died," she said. "I couldn't cure it. I tried everything. You don't love me any more. The penicillin was stale. I'm ugly and so are the children. It said to tell you goodbye."

"It?"

"The ham," she said. "Is one of our children named Ambrose? Somebody named Ambrose has been sending us telegrams. How many do we have now? Four? Five? Do you think they're heterosexual?" She made a moue and ran a hand through her artichoke hair. "The house is rusting away. Why did you want a steel house? Why did I think I wanted to live in Connecticut? I don't know."

"Get up," he said softly, "get up, dearly beloved. Stand up and sing. Sing Parsifal."

"I want a Triumph," she said from the floor. "A TR-4. Everyone in Stamford, every single person, has one but me. If you gave me a TR-4 I'd put our ugly children in it and drive away. To Wellfleet. I'd take all the ugliness out of your life."

"A green one?"

"A red one," she said menacingly. "Red with red leather seats."

"Aren't you supposed to be chipping paint?" he asked. "I bought us an electronic data processing system. An IBM."

"I want to go to Wellfleet," she said. "I want to talk to Edmund Wilson and take him for a ride in my red TR-4- The children can dig clams. We have a lot to talk about, Bunny and me."

"Why don't you remove those shoulder pads?" Brian said kindly. "It's too bad about the ham."

"I loved that ham," she said viciously. "When you galloped into the University of Texas on your roan Volvo, I thought you were going to be somebody. I gave you my hand. You put rings on it. Rings that my mother gave me. I thought you were going to be distinguished, like Bunny."

He showed her his broad, shouldered back. "Everything is in flitters," he said. "Play the piano, won't you?"

"You always were afraid of my piano," she said. "My four or five children are afraid of the piano. You taught them to be afraid of it. The giraffe is on fire, but I don't suppose you care."

"What can we eat," he asked, "with the ham gone?"

"There's some Silly Putty in the deepfreeze," she said tonelessly.

"Rain is falling," he observed. "Rain or something."

"When you graduated from the Wharton School of Business," she

said, "I thought at last! I thought now we can move to Stamford and have interesting neighbors. But they're not interesting. The giraffe is interesting but he sleeps so much of the time. The mailbox is rather interesting. The man didn't open it at 3:31 p.m. today. He was five minutes late. The government lied again."

With a gesture of impatience, Brian turned on the light. The great burst of electricity illuminated her upturned tiny face. Eyes like snow peas, he thought. Tamar dancing. My name in the dictionary, in the back. The Law of Bilateral Good Fortune. Piano bread perhaps. A nibble of pain running through the Western World. Coriolanus.

"Oh God," she said, from the floor. "Look at my knees."

Brian looked. Her knees were blushing.

"It's senseless, senseless, senseless," she said. "I've been caulking the medicine chest. What for? I don't know. You've got to give me more money. Ben is bleeding. Bessie wants to be an S.S. man. She's reading The Rise and Fall. She's identified with Himmler. Is that her name? Bessie?"

"Yes. Bessie."

"What's the other one's name? The blond one?"

"Billy. Named after your father. Your Dad."

"You've got to get me an air hammer. To clean the children's teeth. What's the name of that disease? They'll all have it, every single one, if you don't get me an air hammer."

"And a compressor," Brian said. "And a Pinetop Smith record. I remember."

She lay on her back. The shoulder pads clattered against the terrazzo. Her number, 17, was written large on her chest. Her eyes were screwed tight shut. "Altman's is having a sale," she said. "Maybe I should go in."

"Listen," he said. "Get up. Go into the grape arbor. I'll trundle the piano out there. You've been chipping too much paint."

"You wouldn't touch that piano," she said. "Not in a million years."

"You really think I'm afraid of it?"

"Not in a million years," she said, "you phony."

"All right," Brian said quietly. "All right." He strode over to the piano.

He took a good grip on its black varnishedness. He began to trundle it across the room, and, after a slight hesitation, it struck him dead.

Hiding man

ENTERING EXPEECTING TO FIND the place empty (I. A. L. Burligame walks through any open door). But it is not, there is a man sitting halfway down the right side, heavy, Negro, well dressed, dark glasses. Decide after moment's thought that if he is hostile, will flee through door marked EXIT (no bulb behind exit sign, no certainty that it leads anywhere). The film is in progress, title Attack of the Puppet People. Previously observed films at same theater, Cool and the Crazy, She Gods of Shark Reef, Night of the Blood Beast, Diary of a High School Bride. All superior examples of genre, tending toward suggested offscreen rapes, obscene tortures: man with huge pliers advancing on disheveled beauty, cut to girl's face, to pliers, to man's face, to girl, scream, blackout.

"It's better when the place is full," observes Negro, lifting voice slightly to carry over Pinocchio noises from puppet people. Voice pleasant, eyes behind glasses sinister? Choice of responses: anger, agreement, indifference, pique, shame, scholarly dispute. Keep eye on EXIT, what about boy in lobby, what was kite for? "Of course it's never been full." Apparently there is going to be a conversation. "Not all these years. As

a matter of fact, you're the first one to come in, ever."

"People don't always tell the truth."

Let him chew that. Boy in lobby wore T-shirt, printed thereon, LADY OF THE SORROWS. Where glimpsed before? Possible agent of the conspiracy, in the pay of the Organization, duties: lying, spying, tapping wires, setting fires, civil disorders. Seat myself on opposite side of theater from Negro and observe film. Screen torn from top to bottom, a large rent, faces and parts of gestures fall off into the void. Hard-pressed U. S. Army, Honest John, Hound Dog, Wowser notwithstanding, psychological warfare and nerve gas notwithstanding, falls back at onrush of puppet people. Young lieutenant defends Army nurse (uniform in rags, tasty thigh, lovely breast) from obvious sexual intent of splinter men.

"Don't you know the place is closed?" calls friend in friendly tone. "Didn't you see the sign?"

"The picture is on. And you're here."

Signs after all mean everyone, if there are to be exceptions let them be listed: soldiers, sailors, airmen, children with kites, dogs under suitable restraint, distressed gentlefolk, people who promise not to peek. Well-dressed Negroes behind dark glasses in closed theaters, the attempt to scrape acquaintance, the helpful friend with the friendly word, note of menace as in Dragstrip Riot, as in Terror from the Year 5000. Child's play, amateur night, with whom do they think they have to deal?

"The silly thing just keeps running," alleges friend. "That's what's so fascinating. Continuous performances since 1944. Just keeps rolling along." Tilts head back, laughs theatrically. "It wasn't even any good then, for chrissake."

"Why do you keep coming back?"

"I don't think that's an interesting question."

Friend looks bland, studies film. Fires have started in many areas, the music is demure. I entrust myself to these places advisedly, there are risks but so also are there risks in crossing streets, opening doors, looking strangers in the eye. Man cannot live without placing himself naked before circumstance, as in warfare, under the sea, jet planes, women. Flight is always available, concealment is always possible.

"What I meant was," continues friend, animated now, smiling and gesturing, "other theaters. When they're full, you get lost in the crowd. Here, if anybody came in, they'd spot you in a minute. But most people, they believe the sign." I. A. L. Burligame walks through any open door, private homes, public gatherings, stores with detectives wearing hats, meetings of Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise, but should I boast? Keep moving, counterpunching, examination of motives reveals appeal of dark places has nothing to do with circumstance. But because I feel warmer. The intimation was, most people do what they are told, NO LOITERING, NO PARKING BETWEEN 8 AM AND 5 PM, KEEP OFF THE GRASS, CLOSED FOR REPAIRS KEEP OUT. Negro moves two seats closer, lowers voice confidentially.

"Of course it's no concern of mine. . ." Face appears gentle, interested, as with old screw in Girl on Death Row, aerialist-cum-strangler in Circus of Horrors. "Of course I couldn't care less. But frankly, I feel a certain want of seriousness."

"I am absolutely serious."

On the other hand, perhaps antagonist is purely, simply what he pretends to be: well-dressed Negro with dark glasses in closed theater. But where then is the wienie? What happens to the twist? All of life is rooted in contradiction, movement in direction of self, two spaces, diagonally, argues hidden threat, there must be room for irony.

"Then what are you doing here?" Friend sits back in sliding seat with air of having clinched argument. "Surely you don't imagine this is a suitable place?"

"It looked good, from the outside. And there's no one here but you."

"Ah, but I am here. What do you know about me? Nothing, absolutely nothing. I could be anybody."

"So could I be anybody. And I notice that you too keep an eye on the door."

"Thus, we are problematic for each other." Said smoothly, with consciousness of power. "Name's Bane, by the way." Lights pipe, with flourishes and affectations. "Not my real one, of course."

"Of course." Pipe signal to confederates posted in balcony, behind arras, under EXIT signs? Or is all this dumb show merely incidental, concealing vain heart, empty brain? On screen famous scientist has

proposed measures to contain puppet people, involving mutant termites thrown against their flank. The country is in a panic, Wall Street has fallen, the President looks grave. And what of young informer in lobby, what is his relevance, who corrupted wearer of T-shirt, holder of kite?

"I'm a dealer in notions," friend volunteers. "Dancing dolls, learn handwriting analysis by mail, secrets of eternal life, coins and stamps, amaze your friends, pagan rites, abandoned, thrilling, fully illustrated worldwide selection of rare daggers, gurkhas, stilettos, bowies, hunting, throwing."

"And what are you doing here?"

"Like you," he avers. "Watching the picture. Just dropped in."

We resume viewing. Role of Bane obscure, possible motives in igniting conversation: (1) Agent of the conspiracy, (2) Fellow sufferer in the underground, (3) Engaged in counterespionage, (4) Talent scout for Police Informers School, (5) Market research for makers of Attack of the Puppet People, (6) Plain nosy bastard unconnected with any of the foregoing. Decide hypotheses (1), (2), and (6) most tenable, if (6), however, simple snubs should have done the job, as administered in remark "People don't always tell the truth," in remark "I notice you too keep an eye on the door." Also discourse has hidden pattern, too curious, too knowledgeable in sociology of concealment. Cover story thin, who confines himself to rare daggers, gurkhas, bowies, hunting, throwing in this day and age when large-scale fraud is possible to even the most inept operator, as in government wheat, television, uranium, systems development, public relations? Also disguise is commonplace, why a Negro, why a Negro in dark glasses, why sitting in the dark? Now he pretends fascination with events on screen, he says it has been playing since 1944, whereas I know to my certain knowledge that last week it was She Gods of Shark Reef, before that Night of the Blood Beast, Diary of a High School Bride, Cool and the Crazy. Coming: Reform School Girl on double bill with Invasion of the Saucer Men. Why lie? or is he attempting to suggest the mutability of time? Odor of sweetness from somewhere, flowers growing in cracks of floor, underneath the seats? Possible verbena, possible gladiolus, iris, phlox. Can't identify at this distance, what does he want? Now he looks sincere, making face

involves removing glasses (his eyes burn in the dark), wrinkling forehead, drawing down corners of mouth, he does it very well.

"Tell me exactly what it is you hide from," he drops, the Enola Gay on final leg of notorious mission.

Bomb fails to fire, Burligame reacts not. Face the image of careless gaiety, in his own atrocious phrase, couldn't care less. Bane now addresses task con amore, it is clear that he is a professional, but sent by whom? In these times everything is very difficult, the lines of demarcation are not clear.

"Look," pleads he, moving two spaces nearer, whispering, "I know you're hiding, you know you're hiding, I will make a confession, I too am hiding. We have discovered each other, we are mutually embarrassed, we watch the exits, we listen for the sound of rough voices, the sound of betrayal. Why not confide in me, why not make common cause, every day is a little longer, sometimes I think my hearing is gone, sometimes my eyes close without instruction. Two can watch better than one, I will even tell you my real name."

Possible emotions in the face of blatant sincerity: repugnance, withdrawal, joy, flight, camaraderie, denounce him to the authorities (there are still authorities). And yet, is this not circumstance before which the naked Burligame might dangle, is this not real life, risk and danger, as in Voodoo Woman, as in Creature from the Black Lagoon?

Bane continues. "My real name (how can I say it?) is Adrian Hipkiss, it is this among other things I flee. Can you imagine being named Adrian Hipkiss, the snickers, the jokes, the contumely, it was insupportable. There were other items, in 1944 I mailed a letter in which I didn't say what I meant, I moved the next day, it was New Year's Eve and all the moving men were drunk, they broke a leg on the piano. For fear it would return to accuse me. My life since has been one mask after another, Watford, Watkins, Watley, Watlow, Watson, Watt, now identity is gone, blown away, who am I, who knows?"

Bane-Hipkiss begins to sob, cooling system switches on, city life a texture of mysterious noises, starting and stopping, starting and stopping, we win control of the physical environment only at the expense of the auditory, what if one were sensitive, what if one flinched in the dark? Mutant termites devouring puppet people at a great rate, decorations

for the scientists, tasty nurse for young lieutenant, they will end it with a joke if possible, meaning: it was not real after all. Cheating exists on every level, the attempt to deny what the eye reveals, what the mind knows to be true. Bane-Hipkiss strains credulity, a pig in a poke, if not (6) or (1) am I prepared to deal with (2)? Shall there be solidarity? But weeping is beyond toleration, unnatural, it should be reserved for great occasions, the telegram in the depths of the night, rail disasters, earthquakes, war.

"I hide from the priests" (my voice curiously tentative, fluting), "when I was the tallest boy in the eighth grade at Our Lady of the Sorrows they wanted me to go out for basketball, I would not, Father Blau the athletic priest said I avoided wholesome sport to seek out occasions of sin, in addition to the sin of pride, in addition to various other sins carefully enumerated before an interested group of my contemporaries."

Bane-Hipkiss brightens, ceases sobbing, meanwhile film begins again, puppet people move once more against U. S. Army, they are invincible, Honest John is a joke, Hound Dog malfunctions, Wowser detonates on launching pad, flower smell stronger and sweeter, are they really growing underneath our feet, is time in truth passing?

"Father Blau took his revenge in the confessional, he insisted on knowing everything. And there was much to know. Because I no longer believed as I was supposed to believe. Or believed too much, indiscriminately. To one who has always been overly susceptible to slogans they should never have said: You can change the world. I suggested to my confessor that certain aspects of the ritual compared unfavorably with the resurrection scene in Bride of Frankenstein. He was shocked."

Bane-Hipkiss pales, he himself is shocked.

"But because he had, as it were, a vested interest in me, he sought to make clear the error of my ways. I did not invite this interest, it embarrassed me, I had other things on my mind. Was it my fault that in all that undernourished parish only I had secreted sufficient hormones, had chewed thoroughly enough the soup and chips that were our daily fare, to push head and hand in close proximity to the basket?"

"You could have faked a sprained ankle," Bane-Hipkiss says reasonably.

"That was unfortunately only the beginning. One day in the midst of a good Act of Contrition, Father Blau officiating with pious malice, I leaped from the box and sprinted down the aisle, never to return. Running past people doing the Stations of the Cross, past the tiny Negro lady, somebody's maid, our only black parishioner, who always sat in the very last row with a handkerchief over her head. Leaving Father Blau, unregenerate, with the sorry residue of our weekly encounter: impure thoughts, anger, dirty words, disobedience."

Bane-Hipkiss travels two seats nearer (why two at a time?), there is an edge to his voice. "Impure thoughts?"

"My impure thoughts were of a particularly detailed and graphic kind, involving at that time principally Nedda Ann Bush who lived two doors down the street from us and was handsomely developed. Under whose windows I crouched on many long nights awaiting revelations of beauty, the light being just right between the bureau and the window. Being rewarded on several occasions, namely 3 May 1942 with a glimpse of famous bust, 18 October 1943, a particularly chill evening, transfer of pants from person to clothes hamper, coupled with three minutes' subsequent exposure in state of nature. Before she thought to turn out the light."

"Extraordinary!" Bane-Hipkiss exhales noisily. It is clear that confession is doing him good in some obscure way. "But surely this priest extended some sort of spiritual consolation, counsel. . ."

"He once offered me part of a Baby Ruth."

"This was a mark of favor?"

"He wanted me to grow. It was in his own interest. His eye was on the All-City title."

"But it was an act of kindness."

"That was before I told him I wasn't going out. In the dark box with sliding panels, faces behind screen as in Bighouse Baby, as in Mysterious House of Usher, he gave me only steadfast refusal to understand these preoccupations, wholly natural and good interest in female parts however illicitly pursued, as under window. Coupled with skilled questioning intended to bring forth every final detail, including self-abuse and compulsive overconsumption of Baby Ruths, Mars Bars, Butterfingers, significance of which in terms of sexual

self-aggrandizement was first pointed out to me by this good and holy man."

Bane-Hipkiss looks disturbed, why not? it is a disturbing story, there are things in this world that disgust, life is not all Vistavision and Thunderbirds, even Mars Bars have hidden significance, dangerous to plumb. The eradication of risk is the work of women's organizations and foundations, few of us, alas, can be great sinners.

"Became therefore a convinced anticlerical. No longer loved God, cringed at words 'My son,' fled blackrobes wherever they appeared, pronounced anathemas where appropriate, blasphemed, wrote dirty limericks involving rhymes for 'nunnery,' was in fine totally alienated. Then it became clear that this game was not so one-sided as had at first appeared, that there was a pursuit."

"Ah. . ."

"This was revealed to me by a renegade Brother of the Holy Sepulcher, a not overbright man but good in secret recesses of heart, who had been employed for eight years as cook in bishop's palace. He alleged that on wall of bishop's study was map, placed there were pins representing those in the diocese whose souls were at issue."

"Good God!" expletes Bane-Hipkiss, is there a faint flavor here of. . .

"It is kept rigorously up-to-date by the coadjutor, a rather political man. As are, in my experience, most church functionaries just under episcopal rank. Paradoxically, the bishop himself is a saint."

Bane-Hipkiss looks incredulous. "You still believe in saints?"

"I believe in saints,

"Holy water,

"Poor boxes,

"Ashes on Ash Wednesday,

"Lilies on Easter Sunday,

"Crâches, censers, choirs,

"Albs, Bibles, miters, martyrs,

"Little red lights,

"Ladies of the Altar Society,

"Knights of Columbus,

"Cassocks and cruets,

"Dispensations and indulgences,

"The efficacy of prayer,
"Right Reverends and Very Reverends,
"Tabernacles, monstrances,
"Bells ringing, people singing,
"Wine and bread,
"Sisters, Brothers, Fathers,
"The right of sanctuary,
"The primacy of the papacy,
"Bulls and concordats,
"The Index, the Last Judgment,
"Heaven and Hell,
"I believe it all. It's impossible not to believe. That's what makes things so difficult."
"But then. . ."
"It was basketball I didn't believe in."

But there is more, it was the first ritual which discovered to me the possibility of other rituals, other celebrations, for instance Blood of Dracula, Amazing Colossal Man, It Conquered the World. Can Bane-Hipkiss absorb this nice theological point, that one believes what one can, follows that vision which most brilliantly exalts and vilifies the world? Alone in the dark one surrenders to Amazing Colossal Man all hope, all desire, meanwhile the bishop sends out his patrols, the canny old priests, the nuns on simple errands in stately pairs, I remember the year everyone wore black, what dodging into doorways, what obscene haste in crossing streets!

Bane-Hipkiss blushes, looks awkward, shuffles feet, opens mouth to speak.

"I have a confession."
"Confess," I urge, "feel free."
"I was sent here."

Under their noses or in Tibet, they have agents even in the lamaseries.

"That reminds me of something," I state, but Bane-Hipkiss rises, raises hand to head, commands: "Look!" As Burligame shrinks he strips away his skin. Clever Bane-Hipkiss, now he has me, I sit gape-mouthed, he stands grinning with skin draped like dead dishrag over paw, he is

white! I pretend imperturbability. "That reminds me, regarding the point I was making earlier, the film we are viewing is an interesting example. . ."

But he interrupts.

"Your position, while heretical, has its points," he states, "but on the other hand we cannot allow the integrity of our operation to be placed in question, willy-nilly, by people with funny ideas. Father Blau was wrong, we get some lemons just like any other group. On the other hand if every one of our people takes it into his head to flee us, who will be saved? You might start a trend. It was necessary to use this" (holds up falseface guiltily) "to get close to you, it was for the health of your soul."

Barefaced Bane-Hipkiss rattles on, has Burligame at last been taken, must he give himself up? There is still the sign marked EXIT, into the John, up on the stool, out through the window. "I am empowered to use force," he imparts, frowning.

"Regarding the point I was making earlier," I state, "or beginning to make, the film we are watching is itself a ritual, many people view such films and refuse to understand what they are saying, consider the. . ."

"At present I have more pressing business," he says, "will you come quietly?"

"No," I affirm, "pay attention to the picture, it is trying to tell you something, revelation is not so frequent in these times that one can afford to diddle it away."

"I must warn you," he replies, "that to a man filled with zeal nothing is proscribed. Zeal," he states proudly, "is my middle name."

"I will not stir."

"You must."

Now Bane-Hipkiss moves lightly on little priest's feet, sidewise through rows of seats, a cunning smile on face now revealed as hierarchical, hands clasped innocently in front of him to demonstrate purity of intent. Strange high howling noises, as in Night of the Blood Beast, fearful reddish cast to sky, as in It Conquered the World, where do they come from? The sweetness from beneath the seats is overpowering, I attempted to warn him but he would not hear, slip the case from jacket pocket, join needle to deadly body of instrument, crouch in readiness.

Bane-Hipkiss advances, eyes clamped shut in mystical ecstasy, I grasp him by the throat, plunge needle into neck, his eyes bulge, his face collapses, he subsides quivering into a lump among the seats, in a moment he will begin barking like a dog.

Most people haven't the wit to be afraid, most view television, smoke cigars, fondle wives, have children, vote, plant gladiolus, iris, phlox, never confront Screaming Skull, Teenage Werewolf, Beast with a Thousand Eyes, no conception of what lies beneath the surface, no faith in any manifestation not certified by hierarchy. Who is safe in home with Teenage Werewolf abroad, with streets under sway of Beast with a Thousand Eyes? People think these things are jokes, but they are wrong, it is dangerous to ignore a vision, consider Bane-Hipkiss, he has begun to bark.

Will you tell me?

HUBERT GAVE CHARLES AND Irene a nice baby for Christmas. The baby was a boy and its name was Paul. Charles and Irene who had not had a baby for many years were delighted. They stood around the crib and looked at Paul; they could not get enough of him. He was a handsome child with dark hair, dark eyes. Where did you get him Hubert? Charles and Irene asked. From the bank, Hubert said. It was a puzzling answer, Charles and Irene puzzled over it. Everyone drank mulled wine. Paul regarded them from the crib. Hubert was pleased to have been able to please Charles and Irene. They drank more wine.

Eric was born.

Hubert and Irene had a clandestine affair. It was important they felt that Charles not know. To this end they bought a bed which they installed in another house, a house some distance from the house in which Charles, Irene and Paul lived. The new bed was small but comfortable enough. Paul regarded Hubert and Irene thoughtfully. The affair lasted for twelve years and was considered very successful.

Hilda.

Charles watched Hilda growing from his window. To begin with, she was just a baby, then a four-year-old, then twelve years passed and she

was Paul's age, sixteen. What a pretty young girl! Charles thought to himself. Paul agreed with Charles; he had already bitten the tips of Hilda's pretty breasts with his teeth. Hilda thought she was too old for most boys Paul's age, but not for Paul.

Hubert's son Eric wanted Hilda but could not have her.

In the cellar Paul continued making his bombs, by cellar-light. The bombs were made from tall Schlitz cans and a plastic substance which Paul refused to identify. The bombs were sold to other boys Paul's age to throw at their fathers. The bombs were to frighten them rather than to harm them. Hilda sold the bombs for Paul, hiding them under her black sweater when she went out on the street.

Hilda cut down a black pear tree in the back yard. Why?

Do you know that Hubert and Irene are having an affair? Hilda asked Paul. He nodded.

Then he said: But I don't care.

In Montreal they walked in the green snow, leaving marks like maple leaves. Paul and Hilda thought: What is wonderful? It seemed to Paul and Hilda that this was the question. The people of Montreal were kind to them, and they thought about the question in an ambiance of kindness.

Charles of course had been aware of the affair between Hubert and Irene from the beginning. But Hubert gave us Paul, he thought to himself. He wondered why Hilda had cut down the black pear tree.

Eric sat by himself.

Paul put his hands on Hilda's shoulders. She closed her eyes. They held each other with their hands and thought about the question. France!

Irene bought Easter presents for everyone. How do I know which part of the beach Rosemarie will be lying upon? she asked herself. In Hilda's back yard the skeleton of the black pear tree whitened.

Dialogue between Paul and Ann:

-- You say anything that crawls into your head Paul, Ann objected.

-- Go peddle your hyacinths, Hyacinth Girl.

It is a portrait, Hubert said, composed of all the vices of our generation in the fullness of their development.

Eric's bomb exploded with a great splash near Hubert. Hubert was

frightened. What has been decided? he asked Eric. Eric could not answer.

Irene and Charles talked about Paul. I wonder how he is getting along in France? Charles wondered. I wonder if France likes him. Irene wondered again about Rosemarie. Charles wondered if the bomb that Eric had thrown at Hubert had been manufactured by his foster son, Paul. He wondered too about the strange word "foster," about which he had not wondered previously. From the bank? he wondered. What could Hubert have meant by that? What could Hubert have meant by "from the bank"? he asked Irene. I can't imagine, Irene said. The fire sparkled. It was evening.

In Silkeborg, Denmark, Paul regarded Hilda thoughtfully. You love Inge, she said. He touched her hand.

Rosemarie returned.

Paul grew older. Oh that poor fucker Eric he said.

2

The quality of the love between Hubert and Irene:

This is a pretty good bed Hubert, Irene said. Except that it's not really quite wide enough.

You know that Paul is manufacturing bombs in your cellar don't you? Hubert asked.

Inge brushed her long gold hair in her red sweater.

Who was that man, Rosemarie asked, who wrote all those books about dogs?

Hilda sat in a cafe waiting for Paul to return from Denmark. In the cafe she met Howard. Go away Howard, Hilda said to Howard, I am waiting for Paul. Oh come on Hilda, Howard said in a dejected voice, let me sit down for just a minute. Just a minute. I won't bother you. I just want to sit here at your table and be near you. I was in the war you know. Hilda said: Oh all right. But don't touch me.

Charles wrote a poem about Rosemarie's dog, Edward. It was a sestina.

Daddy, why are you writing this poem about Edward? Rosemarie

asked excitedly. Because you've been away Rosemarie, Charles said.

At Yale Eric walked around.

Irene said: Hubert I love you. Hubert said that he was glad. They lay upon the bed in the house, thinking about the same things, about Montreal's green snow and the blackness of the Black Sea.

The reason I cut down the black pear tree Howard, which I've never told anyone, was that it was just as old as I was at that time, sixteen, and it was beautiful, and I was beautiful I think, and we both were there the tree and me, and I couldn't stand it, Hilda said. You are still beautiful, now, at nineteen, Howard said. But don't touch me, Hilda said.

Hubert was short in a rising market. He lost ten thousand. Can you pay the rent on this house for a while? he asked Irene. Of course darling, Irene said. How much is it? Ninety-three dollars a month, Hubert said, every month. That's not much really, Irene said. Hubert reached out his hand to caress Irene but decided not to.

Inge smiled in the candlelight from the victory candle.

Edward was tired of posing for Charles's poem. He stretched, growled, and bit himself.

In the cellar Paul mixed the plastic for another batch of bombs. A branch from the black pear tree lay on his work-table. Seeds fell into his toolbox. From the bank? he wondered. What was meant by "from the bank"? He remembered the kindness of Montreal. Hilda's black sweater lay across a chair. God is subtle, but he is not malicious, Einstein said. Paul held his tools in his hands. They included an awl. Now I shall have to find more Schlitz cans, he thought. Quickly.

Irene wondered if Hubert really loved her, or if he was merely saying so to be pleasant. She wondered how she could find out. Hubert was handsome. But so was Charles handsome for that matter. And I, I am still quite beautiful, she reminded herself. Not in the same way as young girls like Hilda and Rosemarie, but in a different way. I have a mature beauty. Oh!

From the bank? Inge wondered.

Eric came home for the holidays.

Anna Teresa Tymieniecka wrote a book to which I. M. Bochenski contributed a foreword.

Rosemarie made a list of all the people who had not written her a

letter that morning:

George Lewis
Peter Elkin
Joan Elkin
Howard Toff
Edgar Rich
Marcy Powers
Sue Brownly
and many others

Paul said to the man at the hardware store: I need a new awl. What size awl do you have in mind? the man asked. One about this size, Paul said, showing the man with his hands. Oh Hilda!

What is his little name? Charles and Irene asked Hubert. His name, Hubert said, is Paul. A small one, isn't he? Charles remarked. But well made, Hubert noted.

Can I buy you a drink? Howard asked Hilda. Have you had any grappa yet? It's one of the favorite drinks of this country. Your time is up Howard, Hilda said ruthlessly. Get out of this cafe. Now wait a minute, Howard said. This is a free country isn't it? No, Hilda said. No buddy, a free country is precisely what this is not insofar as your sitting at this table is concerned. Besides, I've decided to go to Denmark on the next plane.

The mailman (Rosemarie's mailman) persisted in his irritating habit of doing the other side of the street before he did her side of the street. Rosemarie ate a bowl of Three-Minute Oats.

Eric cut his nails with one of those 25¢ nail cutters.

The bomb Henry Jackson threw at his father failed to detonate. Why did you throw this Schlitz can at me Henry? Henry's father asked, and why is it ticking like a bomb?

Hilda appeared in Paul's cellar. Paul, she asked, can I borrow an axe? or a saw?

Hubert touched Irene's breast. You have beautiful breasts, he said to Irene. I like them. Do you think they're too mature? Irene asked anxiously.

Mature?

3

Ann the Hyacinth Girl wanted Paul but could not have him. He was sleeping with Inge in Denmark.

From his window Charles watched Hilda. She sat playing under the black pear tree. She bit deeply into a black pear. It tasted bad and Hilda looked at the tree inquiringly. Charles started to cry. He had been reading Bergson. He was surprised by his own weeping, and in a state of surprise, decided to get something to eat. Irene was not home. There was nothing in the refrigerator. What was he going to do for lunch? Go to the drugstore?

Rosemarie looked at Paul. But of course he's far too young for me, she thought.

Edward and Eric met on the street.

Inge wrote the following letter to Ann to explain why Ann could not have Paul:

Dear Ann --

I deeply appreciate the sentiments expressed by you in our recent ship-to-shore telephone conversation. Is the Black Sea pleasant? I hope so and hope too that you are having a nice voyage. The Matson Line is one of my favorite lines. However I must tell you that Paul is at present deeply embedded in a love affair with me, Inge Grote, a very nice girl here in Copenhagen, and therefore cannot respond to your proposals, charming and well stated as they were. You have a very nice prose style on the telephone. Also, I might point out that if Paul loves any girl other than me in the near future it will surely be Hilda, that girl of girls. Hilda! what a remarkable girl! Of course there is also the possibility that he will love some girl he has not met yet -- this is remote, I think. But thank you for the additional hyacinths anyway, and we promise to think of you from time to time.

Your friend,

Inge

Charles lay in bed with his wife, Irene. He touched a breast, one of Irene's. You have beautiful breasts Irene, Charles said. Thank you,

Irene said, Charles.

Howard's wire to Eric was never delivered.

Hubert thought seriously about his Christmas present to Charles and Irene. What can I get for these dear friends that will absolutely shatter them with happiness? he asked himself. I wonder if they'd like a gamelan? a rag rug?

Oh Hilda, Paul said cheerfully, it has been so long since I've been near to you! Why don't the three of us go out for supper?

Hubert had a dinner engagement with the best younger poet now writing in English in Wisconsin.

Charles! Irene exclaimed. You're hungry! And you've been crying! Your gray vest is stained with tears! Let me make you a ham and cheese sandwich. Luckily I have just come from the grocery store, where I bought some ham, cheese, bread, lettuce, mustard and paper napkins. Charles asked: Have you seen or heard from Hubert lately by the way? He regarded his gray tear-stained vest. Not in a long time, Irene said, Hubert's been acting sort of distant lately for some strange reason. Oh Charles, can I have an extra ninety-three dollars a month for the household budget? I need some floor polish and would also like to subscribe to the National Geographic.

Every month?

Ann looked over the ship's rail at the Black Sea. She threw hyacinths into it, not just one but a dozen or more. They floated upon the black surface of the water.

"But I can't stand the pain. Oh, why doesn't God help me?"

"Can you give me a urine sample?" asked the nurse.

Paul placed his new awl in the toolbox. Was that a shotgun Eric had been looking at in the hardware store?

Irene, Hubert said, I love you. I've always hesitated to mention it though because I was inhibited by the fact that you are married to my close friend, Charles. Now I feel close to you here in this newsreel theater, for almost the first time. I feel intimate. I feel like there might be some love in you for me, too. Then, Irene said, your giving me Paul for a Christmas present was symbolic?

Inge smiled.

Rosemarie smiled.

Ann smiled.

Goodbye, Inge, Paul said. Your wonderful blondness has been wonderful and I shall always remember you that way. Goodbye! Goodbye!

The newsreel articulated the fall of Ethiopia.

Howard cashed a check at American Express. What shall I do with this money? he wondered. Nothing financial has meaning any more now that Hilda has gone to Denmark. He returned to the cafe in the hope that Hilda had not really meant it.

Charles put some more wine on to mull.

Henry Jackson's father thought candidly: Henry is awfully young to be an anarchist isn't he?

Put those empty Schlitz cans over there in the corner by the furnace Harry, Paul said. And thank you for lending me your pickup truck in this cold weather. I think you had better get some snow tires pretty soon though, as I hear that snow is predicted for the entire region shortly. Deep snow.

Howard to Hilda: If you don't understand me, that's okay, but I am afraid you do understand me. In that case, I think I will have dreams.

Where are you going Eric with that shotgun? Hubert asked.

It is virtually impossible to read one of Joel S. Goldsmith's books on the oneness of life without becoming a better person Eric, Rosemarie said.

Eric, take that shotgun out of your mouth! Irene shouted.

Eric!

4

Oh Hubert, why did you give me that damn baby? Paul I mean? Didn't you know he was going to grow?

The French countryside (the countryside of France) was covered with golden grass. I'm looking for a bar, they said, called the Cow on the Roof or something like that.

Inge stretched her right and left arms luxuriously. You have brought me so much marvelous happiness Paul that although I know you will go away soon to consort once more with Hilda, that all-time all-timer

girl, it still pleases me to be here in this good Dansk bed with you. Do you want to talk about phenomenological reduction now? or do you want a muffin?

Edward counted his Pard.

From the bank? Rosemarie asked herself.

I have decided Charles to go to the Virgin Islands with Hubert. Do you mind? Since Hubert's position in the market has improved radically I feel he is entitled to a little relaxation in the golden sun. Okay?

The Black Sea patrol boat captain said: Hyacinths?

The new black pear tree reached sturdily for the sky on the grave, the very place, of the old black pear tree.

He wondered whether to wrap it as a gift, or simply take it over to Charles and Irene's in the box. He couldn't decide. He decided to have a drink. While Hubert was drinking his vodka martini it started to cry. I wonder if I'm making these drinks too strong?

The snow of Montreal banked itself against the red Rambler. Paul and Hilda embraced. What is wonderful? they thought. They thought the answer might be in their eyes, or in their mingled breath, but they couldn't be sure. It might be illusory.

I wonder how I might become slightly more pleasing to the eye? Rosemarie asked. Perhaps I should tattoo myself attractively?

-- Hilda I do think it's possible now for us to be together, to stay together even, even to live together if that is your wish. I feel that we have come to the end of a very trying time, a time in which we were tried see? and that from this day forward everything will be fine. We will have a house and so on, et cetera et cetera, and even children of our own perhaps. I'll get a job.

-- That sounds wonderful, Aaron.

Eric?

For I'm the boy whose only joy is loving you

ON THE TRIP BACK from the aerodrome Huber who was driving said: Still I don't see why we were required. You weren't required Bloomsbury said explicitly, you were invited. Invited then Huber said, I don't see what we were invited for. As friends of the family Bloomsbury said. You are both friends of the family. A tissue of truths he thought, delicate as the negotiations leading to the surrender. It was not enough Bloomsbury felt, to say that his friends Huber and Whittle were as men not what he wished them to be. For it was very possible he was aware, that he was not what they wished him to be. Nevertheless there were times when he felt like crying aloud, that it was not right!

She was I thought quite calm Bloomsbury said. You also Huber said turning his head almost completely around. Of course she has been trained to weep in private Bloomsbury said looking out of the window. Training he thought, that's the great thing. Behind them aircraft rose and fell at intervals, he wondered if they should have waited for "the takeoff," if it would have been more respectful, or on the other hand less respectful, to have done so. Still I thought there'd certainly be weeping Whittle said from the front seat. I have observed that in

situations involving birth, bereavement or parting forever there is usually some quantity of weeping. But he provided a crowd Huber said, precluding privacy. And thus weeping Whittle agreed. Yes Bloomsbury said.

Ah Pelly where do you be goin'? T' grandmather's, bein' it please yer lardship. An' what a fine young soft young warm young thing ya have there Pelly on yer bicycle seat. Ooo yer lardship ye've an evil head on yer, I'll bet yer sez that t'all us guls. Naw Pelly an' the truth of the matter is, there's nivver a gul come down my street wi' such a fine one as yers. Yer a bold one yer worship if ye doon cock a minnow. Lemme just feel of her a trifle Pelly, there's a good gul. Ooo Mishtar Bloomsbury I likes a bit o' fun as good as the next 'un but me husbing's watchin' from the porch wi' 'is field telescope. Pother Pelly it won't be leavin' any marks, we'll just slither behind this tree. Ring me bicycle bell yer lardship he'll think yer after sellin' the Eskimo Pies. That I will Pelly I'll give 'er a ring like she nivver had before. Ooo yer grace be keerful of me abdominal belt what's holdin' up me pedal pushers. Never fear Pelly I dealt wi' worse than that in my time I have.

Of course it's inaccurate to say that we are friends of the family Huber said. There no longer being any family. The family exists still I believe Whittle said, as a legal entity. Were you married? it would affect the legal question, whether or not the family qua family endures beyond the physical separation of the partners, which we have just witnessed. Bloomsbury understood that Whittle did not wish to be thought prying and understood also, or recalled rather, that Whittle's wife or former wife had flown away in an aircraft very similar to if not identical with the one in which Martha his own wife had elected to fly away. But as he considered the question a tiresome one, holding little interest in view of the physical separation already alluded to, which now aimed his attention to the exclusion of all other claims, he decided not to answer. Instead he said: She looked I thought quite pretty. Lovely Whittle acknowledged and Huber said: Stunning in fact.

Ah Martha coom now to bed there's a darlin' gul. Hump off blatherer I've no yet read me Mallarmá for this evenin'. Ooo Martha dear canna we noo let the dear lad rest this night? when th' telly's already shut doon an' th' man o' the hoose 'as a 'ard on? Don't be comin' round

wit yer lewd proposals on a Tuesday night when ye know better. But Martha dear where is yer love for me that we talked about in 19 and 38? in the cemetary by the sea? Pish Mishtar Hard On ye'd better be lookin' after the Disposal! what's got itself plogged up. Ding the Disposall! Martha me gul it's yer sweet hide I'm after havin'. Get yer hands from out of me Playtex viper, I'm dreadful bored wit' yer silly old tool. But Marthy dear what of th' poetry we read i' th' book, aboot th' curlew's cry an' th' white giant's thigh, in 19 and 38? that we consecrated our union wit'? That was then an' this is now, ye can be runnin' after that bicycle gul wi' th' tight pants if yer wants a bit o' the auld shiver an' shake. Ah Marthy it's no bicycle gul that's brakin' me heart but yer sweet self. Keep yer paws off me derriere dear yer makin' me lose me page i' th' book.

Rich girls always look pretty Whittle said factually and Huber said: I've heard that. Did she take the money with her? Whittle asked. Oh yes Bloomsbury said modestly (for had he not after all relinquished, at the same time he had relinquished Martha, a not inconsiderable fortune, amounting to thousands, if not more?). You could hardly have done otherwise I suppose Huber said. His eyes which fortunately remained on the road during this passage were "steely-bright." And yet. . . Whittle began. Something for your trouble Huber suggested, a tidy bit, to put in the Postal Savings. It would have gone against the grain no doubt Whittle said. But there was trouble was there not? for which little or no compensation has been offered? Outrage Bloomsbury noted stiffened Whittle's neck which had always been inordinately long and thin, and stiff. The money he thought, there had been in truth a great deal. More than one person could easily dispose of. But just right as fate would have it for two.

A BEER WINE LIQUOR ICE sign appeared by the roadside. Huber stopped the car which was a Pontiac Chieftain and entering the store purchased, for $27.00, a bottle of 98-year-old brandy sealed on the top with a wax seal. The bottle was old and dirty but the brandy when Huber returned with it was tasty in the extreme. For the celebration Huber said generously offering the bottle first to Bloomsbury who had in their view recently suffered pain and thus deserved every courtesy, insofar as possible. Bloomsbury did not overlook this

great-hearted attitude on the part of his friend. Although he has many faults Bloomsbury reflected, he has many virtues also. But the faults engaged his attention and sipping the old brandy he began to review them seriously, and those of Whittle also. One fault of Huber's which Bloomsbury considered and reconsidered was that of not keeping his eye on the ball. In the matter of the road for instance Bloomsbury said to himself, any Texaco Gasoline sign is enough to distract him from his clear duty, that of operating the vehicle. And there were other faults both mortal and venial which Bloomsbury thought about just as seriously as this. Eventually his thinking was interrupted by these words of Whittle's: Good old money!

It would have been wrong Bloomsbury said austerely, to have kept it. Cows flew by the windows in both directions. That during the years of our cohabitation it had been our money to cultivate and be proud of does not alter the fact that originally it was her money rather than my money he finished. You could have bought a boat Whittle said, or a horse or a house. Presents for your friends who have sustained you in the accomplishment of this difficult and if I may say so rather unpleasant task Huber added pushing the accelerator pedal to the floor so that the vehicle "leaped ahead." While these things were being said Bloomsbury occupied himself by thinking of one of his favorite expressions, which was: Everything will be revealed at the proper time. He remembered too the several occasions on which Huber and Whittle had dined at his house. They had admired he recalled not only the tuck but also the wife of the house whose aspect both frontside and backside was scrutinized and commented upon by them. To the point that the whole enterprise (friendship) had become, for him, quite insupportable, and defeating. Huber had in one instance even reached out his hand to touch it, when it was near, and bent over, and sticking out, and Bloomsbury as host had been forced, by the logic of the situation, to rap his wrist with a soup spoon. Golden days Bloomsbury thought, in the sunshine of our happy youth.

It's idiotic Huber said, that we know nothing more of the circumstances surrounding the extinguishment of your union than you have chosen to tell us. What do you want to know? Bloomsbury asked, aware however that they would want everything. It would be interesting I

think as well as instructive Whittle said casually, to know for instance at what point the situation of living together became untenable, whether she wept when you told her, whether you wept when she told you, whether you were the instigator or she was the instigator, whether there were physical fights involving bodily blows or merely objects thrown on your part and on her part, if there were mental cruelties, cruelties of what order and on whose part, whether she had a lover or did not have a lover, whether you did or did not, whether you kept the television or she kept the television, the disposition of the balance of the furnishings including tableware, linens, light bulbs, beds and baskets, who got the baby if there was a baby, what food remains in the pantry at this time, what happened to the medicine bottles including Mercurochrome, rubbing alcohol, aspirin, celery tonic, milk of magnesia, No-Doze and Nembutal, was it a fun divorce or not a fun divorce, whether she paid the lawyers or you paid the lawyers, what the judge said if there was a judge, whether you asked her for a "date" after the granting of the decree or did not so ask, whether she was touched or not touched by this gesture if there was such a gesture, whether the date if there was such a date was a fun thing or not a fun thing -- in short we'd like to get the feel of the event he said. We'd be pepped to know, Huber said. I remember how it was when my old wife Eleanor flew away Whittle said, but only dimly because of the years. Bloomsbury however was thinking.

Have ye heard the news Pelly, that Martha me wife has left me in a yareplane? on th' bloody Champagne Flight? O yer wonderfulness, wot a cheeky lot to be pullin' the plog on a lovely man like yerself. Well that's how the cock curls Pelly, there's naught left of 'er but a bottle of Drene Shampoo in th' boodwar. She was a bitch that she was to commit this act of lese majesty against th' sovereign person of yer mightiness. She locked 'erself i' th' john Pelly toward th' last an' wouldn't come out not even for Flag Day. Incredible Mishtar Bloomsbury to think that such as that coexist wi' us good guls side by side in the twentieth century. An' no more lovey-kindness than a stick, an' no more gratitude than a glass o' milk of magnesia. What bought her clothes at the Salvation Army by th' look of her, on the Revolving Credit Plan. I fingerprinted her fingerpaintings she said and wallowed in sex what is more. Coo,

Mishtar Bloomsbury me husbing Jack brings th' telly right into th' bed wi' 'im, it's bumpin' me back all night long. I' th' bed? I' th' bed. It's been a weary long time Pelly since love 'as touched my hart. Ooo your elegance, there's not a young gul in the Western Hemisphere as could withstand the grandeur of such a swell person as you. It's marriage Pelly what has ruined me for love. It's a hard notion me Bloomie boy but tragically true nonetheless. I don't want pity Pelly there's little enough rapport between adults wi'out clouding th' issue wi' sentiment. I couldn't agree more yer gorgeousness damme if I haven't told Jack a thousand times, that rapport is the only thing.

Although customarily of a lively and even ribald disposition the friends of the family nevertheless maintained during these thoughts of Bloomsbury's attitudes of the most rigorous and complete solemnity, as were of course appropriate. However Whittle at length said: I remember from my own experience that the pain of parting was shall I say exquisite? Exquisite Huber said, what a stupid word. How would you know? Whittle asked, you've never been married. I may not know about marriage Huber said stoutly, but I know about words. Exquisite he pronounced giggling. You have no delicacy Whittle said, that is clear. Delicacy Huber said, you get better and better. He began weaving the car left and right on the highway, in delight. The brandy Whittle said, has been too much for you. Crud Huber said assuming a reliable look. You've suffered an insult to the brain Whittle said, better let me drive. You drive! Huber exclaimed, your ugly old wife Eleanor left you precisely because you were a mechanical idiot, she confided in me on the day of the hearing. A mechanical idiot! Whittle said in surprise, I wonder what she meant by that? Huber and Whittle then struggled for the wheel for a brief space but in a friendly way. The Pontiac Chieftain behaved very poorly during this struggle, zigging and zagging, but Bloomsbury who was preoccupied did not notice. It was interesting he thought that after so many years one could still be surprised by a flyaway wife. Surprise he thought, that's the great thing, it keeps the old tissues tense.

Well Whittle said how does it feel? It? Bloomsbury said, what is it?

The physical separation mentioned earlier Whittle said. We want to know how it feels. The question is not what is the feeling but what

is the meaning? Bloomsbury said reasonably. Christ Huber said, I'll tell you about my affair. What about it? Bloomsbury asked. It was a Red Cross girl Huber said, named Buck Rogers. Of what did it consist? Whittle asked. It consisted Huber said, of going to the top of the Chrysler Building and looking out over the city. Not much meat there Whittle said disparagingly, how did it end? Badly Huber said. Did she jump? Whittle asked. I jumped Huber said. You were always a jumper Whittle said. Yes Huber said angrily, I had taken precautions. Did your chute open? Whittle asked. With a sound like timber falling Huber said, but she never knew. The end of the affair Whittle said sadly. But what a wonderful view of the city Huber commented. So now, Whittle said to Bloomsbury, give us the feeling.

We can discuss Bloomsbury said, the meaning but not the feeling. If there is emotion it is only just that you share it with your friends Whittle said. Who are no doubt all you have left in the world said Huber. Whittle had placed upon Huber's brow, which was large and red, handkerchiefs dampened in brandy, with a view toward calming him. But Huber would not be calmed. Possibly there are relatives Whittle pointed out, of one kind or another. Hardly likely Huber said, considering his circumstances, now that there is no more money I would hazard that there are no more relatives either. Emotion! Whittle exclaimed, when was the last time we had any? The war I expect Huber replied, all those chaps going West. I'll give you a hundred dollars Whittle said, for the feeling. No Bloomsbury said, I have decided not. We are fine enough to be a crowd at the airport so that your wife will not weep but not fine enough to be taken into your confidence I suppose Huber said "bitterly." Not a matter of fine enough Bloomsbury said reflecting meanwhile upon the proposition that the friends of the family were all he had left, which was he felt quite a disagreeable notion. But probably true. Good what manner of man is this! Whittle exclaimed and Huber said: Prick!

Once in a movie house Bloomsbury recalled Tuesday Weld had suddenly turned on the screen, looked him full in the face, and said: You are a good man. You are good, good, good. He had immediately gotten up and walked out of the theater, gratification singing in his heart. But that situation dear to him as it was helped him not a bit in this

situation. And that memory memorable as it was did not prevent the friends of the family from stopping the car under a tree, and beating Bloomsbury in the face first with the brandy bottle, then with the tire iron, until at length the hidden feeling emerged, in the form of salt from his eyes and black blood from his ears, and from his mouth, all sorts of words.

The big broadcast of 1938

HAVING REQUIRED IN EXCHANGE for an old house that had been theirs, his and hers, a radio or more properly radio station, Bloomsbury could now play "The Star-Spangled Banner," which he had always admired immoderately, on account of its finality, as often as he liked. It meant, to him, that everything was finished. Therefore he played it daily, 60 times between 6 and 10 a.m., 120 times between 12 noon and 7 p.m., and the whole night long except when, as was sometimes the case, he was talking.

Bloomsbury's radio talks were of two kinds, called the first kind and the second kind. The first consisted of singling out, for special notice, from among all the others, some particular word in the English language, and repeating it in a monotonous voice for as much as fifteen minutes, or a quarter-hour. The word thus singled out might be any word, the word nevertheless for example. "Nevertheless," Bloomsbury said into the microphone, "nevertheless, nevertheless, nevertheless, nevertheless, nevertheless, nevertheless, nevertheless." After this exposure to the glare of public inspection the word would frequently disclose new properties, unsuspected qualities, although that was far from

Bloomsbury's intention. His intention, insofar as he may be said to have had one, was simply to put something "on the air."

The second kind of radio talk which Bloomsbury provided was the commercial announcement.

The Bloomsbury announcements were perhaps not too similar to other announcements broadcast during this period by other broadcasters. They were dissimilar chiefly in that they were addressed not to the mass of men but of course to her, she with whom he had lived in the house that was gone (traded for the radio). Frequently he would begin somewhat in this vein:

"Well, old girl" (he began), "here we are, me speaking into the tube, you lying on your back most likely, giving an ear, I don't doubt. Swell of you to tune me in. I remember the time you went walking without your shoes, what an evening! You were wearing, I recall, your dove-gray silk, with a flower hat, and you picked your way down the boulevard as daintily as a real lady. There were chestnuts on the ground, I believe; you complained that they felt like rocks under your feet. I got down on my hands and knees and crawled in front of you, sweeping the chestnuts into the gutter with my hand. What an evening! You said I looked absurd, and a gentleman who was passing in the other direction, I remember he wore yellow spats with yellow shoes, smiled. The lady accompanying him reached out to pat me on my head, but he grasped her arm and prevented her, and the knees of my trousers tore on a broken place in the pavement.

"Afterwards you treated me to a raspberry ice, calling for a saucer, which you placed, daintily, at your feet. I still recall the coolness, after the hot work on the boulevard, and the way the raspberry stained my muzzle. I put my face in your hand, and your little glove came away pink and sticky, sticky and pink. We were comfortable there, in the ice cream parlor, we were pretty as a picture! Man and wife!

"When we got home, that evening, the street lights were just coming on, the insects were just coming out. And you said that next time, if there were a next time, you would wear your shoes. Even if it killed you, you said. And I said I would always be there to sweep away the chestnuts, whatever happened, even if nothing happened. And you said most likely that was right. I always had been there, you said. Swell

of you to notice that. I thought at the time that there was probably no one more swell than you in the whole world, anywhere. And I wanted to tell you, but did not.

"And then, when it was dark, we had our evening quarrel. A very ordinary one, I believe. The subject, which had been announced by you at breakfast and posted on the notice board, was Smallness in the Human Male. You argued that it was willfulness on my part, whereas I argued that it was lack of proper nourishment during my young years. I lost, as was right of course, and you said I couldn't have any supper. I had, you said, already gorged myself on raspberry ice. I had, you said, ruined a good glove with my ardor, and a decent pair of trousers too. And I said, but it was for the love of you! and you said, hush! or there'll be no breakfast either. And I said, but love makes the world go! and you said, or lunch tomorrow either. And I said, but we were everything to each other once! and you said, or supper tomorrow night.

"But perhaps, I said, a little toffee? Ruin your teeth then for all I care, you said, and put some pieces of toffee in my bed. And thus we went happily to sleep. Man and wife! Was there ever anything, old skin, like the old days?"

Immediately following this commercial announcement, or an announcement much like this, Bloomsbury would play "The Star-Spangled Banner" 80 or 100 times, for the finality of it.

When he interrogated himself about the matter, about how it felt to operate a radio of his own, Bloomsbury told himself the absolute truth, that it felt fine. He broadcast during this period not only some of his favorite words, such as the words assimilate, alleviate, authenticate, ameliorate, and quantities of his favorite music (he was particularly fond of that part, toward the end, that went: da-da, da da da da da da da-a), but also a series of commercial announcements of great power and poignancy, and persuasiveness. Nevertheless he felt, although he managed to conceal it from himself for a space, somewhat futile. For there had been no response from her (she who figured, as both subject and object, in the commercial announcements, and had once, before it had been traded for the radio, lived in the house).

A commercial announcement of the period of this feeling was:

"On that remarkable day, that day unlike any other, that day, if you

will pardon me, of days, on that old day from the old days when we were, as they say, young, we walked if you will forgive the extravagance hand in hand into a theater where there was a film playing. Do you remember? We sat in the upper balcony and smoke from below, where there were people smoking, rose and we, if you will excuse the digression, smelled of it. It smelled, and I or we thought it remarkable at the time, like the twentieth century. Which was after all our century, none other.

"We were there you and I because we hadn't rooms and there were no parks and we hadn't automobiles and there were no beaches, for making love or anything else. Ergo, if you will condone the anachronism, we were forced into the balcony, to the topmost row, from which we had a tilty view of the silver screen. Or would have had had we not you and I been engaged in pawing and pushing, pushing and pawing. On my part at least, if not on yours.

"The first thing I knew I was inside your shirt with my hand and I found there something very lovely and, as they say, desirable. It belonged to you. I did not know, then, what to do with it, therefore I simply (simply!) held it in my hand, it was, as the saying goes, soft and warm. If you can believe it. Meanwhile down below in the pit events were taking place, whether these were such as the people in the pit had paid for, I did not and do not know. Nor did or do, wherever you are, you. After a time I was in fact distracted, I still held it in my hand but I was looking elsewhere.

"You then said into my ear, get on with it, can't you?

"I then said into your ear, I'm watching the picture.

"At this speech of mine you were moved to withdraw it from my hand, I understood, it was a punishment. Having withdrawn it you began, for lack of anything better, to watch the picture also. We watched the picture together, and although this was a kind of intimacy, the other kind had been lost. Nevertheless it had been there once, I consoled myself with that. But I felt, I felt, I felt (I think) that you were, as they say, angry. And to that row of the balcony we, you and I, never returned."

After this announcement was broadcast Bloomsbury himself felt called upon to weep a little, and did, but not "on the air."

He was in fact weeping quietly in the control room, where were kept the microphone, the console, the turntables and the hotplate, with "The Star-Spangled Banner" playing bravely and a piece of buttered toast in his hand, when he saw in the glass that connected the control room with the other room, which had been a reception room or foyer, a girl or woman of indeterminate age dressed in a long bright red linen duster.

The girl or woman removed her duster, underneath she was wearing black toreador pants, an orange sweater, and harlequin glasses. Bloomsbury immediately stepped out into the reception room or foyer in order to view her more closely, he regarded her, she regarded him, after a time there was a conversation.

"You're looking at me!" she said.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Right. I certainly am."

"Why?"

"It's something I do," he said. "It's my you might say metier."

"Milieu," she said.

"Metier," Bloomsbury said. "If you don't mind."

"I don't often get looked at as a matter of fact."

"Because you're not very good-looking," Bloomsbury said.

"Oh I say."

"Glasses are discouraging," he said.

"Even harlequin glasses?"

"Especially harlequin glasses."

"Oh," she said.

"But you have a grand behind," he said.

"Also a lively sense of humor," she said.

"Lively," he said. "Whatever possessed you to use that word?"

"I thought you might like it," she said.

"No," he said. "Definitely not."

"Do you think you ought to stand around and look at girls?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," Bloomsbury said. "I think it's indicated."

"Indicated," she cried. "What do you mean, indicated?"

"Tell me about your early life," Bloomsbury said.

"To begin with I was president of the Conrad Veidt fan club," she

began. "That was in, oh, I don't remember the year. His magnetism and personality got me. His voice and gestures fascinated me. I hated him, feared him, loved him. When he died it seemed to me a vital part of my imagination died too."

"I didn't mean necessarily in such detail," he said.

"My world of dreams was bare!"

"Fan club prexies are invariably homely," Bloomsbury said.

"Plain," she suggested. "I prefer the word plain. Do you want to see a picture of Conrad Veidt?"

"I would be greatly interested," Bloomsbury said (although this was not the truth).

The girl or woman then retrieved from her purse, where it had apparently remained for some time, perhaps even years, a page from a magazine. It bore a photograph of Conrad Veidt who looked at one and the same instant handsome and sinister. There was moreover printing on the photograph which said: If CONRAD VEIDT offered you a cigarette, it would be a DE REZKE -- of course!

"Very affecting," Bloomsbury said.

"I never actually met Mr. Veidt," the girl (or woman) said. "It wasn't that sort of club. I mean we weren't in actual communication with the star. There was a Joan Crawford fan club, and those people now, they were in actual communication. When they wanted a remembrance. . ."

"A remembrance?"

"Such as Kleenex that had been used by the star, for instance, with lipstick on it, or fingernail clippings, or a stocking, or a hair from the star's horse's tail or mane. . ."

"Tail or mane?"

"The star naturally, noblesse oblige, forwarded that object to them."

"I see," Bloomsbury said.

"Do you look at a lot of girls?"

"Not a lot," he said, "but quite a number."

"Is it fun?"

"Not fun," he said, "but better than nothing."

"Do you have affairs?"

"Not affairs," he said, "but sometimes a little flutter."

"Well," she said, "I have feelings too."

"I think it's very possible," he said. "A great big girl like you."

This remark however seemed to offend her, she turned on her heel and left the room. Bloomsbury himself felt moved by this meeting, which was in fact the first contact he had enjoyed with a human being, of any description, since the beginning of the period of his proprietorship of the radio, and even before. He immediately returned to the control room and introduced a new commercial announcement.

"I remember" (he enunciated), "the quarrel about the ice cubes, that was a beauty! That was one worth. . . remembering. You had posted on the notice board the subject Refrigeration, and I worried about it all day long, and wondered. Clever minx! I recalled at length that I had complained, once, because the ice cubes were not frozen. But were in fact unfrozen! watery! useless! I had said that there weren't enough ice cubes, whereas you had said there were more than enough.

"You said that I was a fool, an idiot, an imbecile, a stupid!, that the machine in your kitchen which you had procured and caused to be placed there was without doubt and on immaculate authority the most accomplished machine of its kind known to those who knew about machines of its kind, that among its attributes was the attribute of conceiving containing and at the moment of need whelping a fine number of ice cubes so that no matter how grave the demand, how vast the occasion, how indifferent or even hostile the climate, how inept or even treacherous the operator, how brief or even nonexistent the lapse between genesis and parturition, between the wish and the fact, ice cubes in multiples of sufficient would present themselves. Well, I said, perhaps.

"Oh! how you boggled at that word perhaps. How you sweated, old girl, and cursed. Your chest heaved, if I may say so, and your eyes (your eyes!) flashed. You said we would, by damn, count the by damn ice cubes. As we, subsequently, did.

"How I enjoyed, although I concealed it from you, the counting! You were, as they say, magisterial. There were I observed twelve rows of three, or three of twelve, in each of four trays. But this way of counting was not your way of counting. You chose, and I admired your choice, the explicitness and implicitness of it, to run water over the trays so that the cubes, loosened, fell into the salad bowl, having previously

turned the trays, and thus the cubes, bottoms up, so that the latter would fall, when water was run upon the former, in the proper direction. That these matters were so commendably arranged I took to be, and even now take to be, a demonstration of your fundamental decency, and good sense.

"But you reckoned wrong, when it came to that. You were never a reckoner. You reckoned that there were in the bowl one hundred forty-four cubes, taking each cube, individually, from the bowl and placing it, individually, in the sink, bearing in mind meanwhile the total that could be obtained by simple multiplication of the spaces in the trays. Thus having it, in this as in other matters, both ways! However you failed on this as on other occasions to consider the imponderables, in this instance the fact that I, unobserved by you, had put three of the cubes into my drink! Which I then drank! And that one had missed the bowl entirely and fallen into the sink! And melted once and for all! These events precluded sadly enough the number of cubes in the bowl adding up to a number corresponding to the number of spaces in the trays, proving also that there is no justice!

"What a defeat for you! What a victory for me! It was my first victory, I fear I went quite out of my head. I dragged you to the floor, among the ice cubes, which you had flung there in pique and chagrin, and forced you, with results that I considered then, and consider now, to have been 'first rate.' I thought I detected in you. . ."

But he could not continue this announcement, from a surfeit of emotion.

The girl or woman, who had become a sort of camp follower of the radio, made a practice during this period of sleeping in the former reception room underneath the piano, which being a grand provided ample shelter. When she wished to traffic with Bloomsbury she would tap on the glass separating them with one finger, at other times she would, with her hands, make motions.

A typical conversation of the period when the girl (or woman) was sleeping in the foyer was this:

"Tell me about your early life," she said.

"I was, in a sense, an All-American boy," Bloomsbury replied.

"In what sense?"

"In the sense that I married," he said.

"Was it love?"

"It was love but it was only temporary."

"It didn't go on forever?"

"For less than a decade. As a matter of fact."

"But while it did go on. . ."

"It filled me with a somber and paradoxical joy."

"Coo!" she said. "It doesn't sound very American to me."

"Coo," he said. "What kind of an expression is that?"

"I heard it in a movie," she said. "A Conrad Veidt movie."

"Well," he said, "it's distracting."

This conversation was felt by Bloomsbury to be not very satisfactory, however he bided his time, having if the truth were known no alternative. The word matriculate had engaged his attention, he pronounced it into the microphone for what seemed to him a period longer than normal, that is to say, in excess of a quarter-hour. He wondered whether or not to regard this as significant.

It was a fact that Bloomsbury, who had thought himself dispassionate (thus the words, the music, the slow turning over in his brain of events in the lives of him and her), was beginning to feel, at this time, disturbed. This was attributable perhaps to the effect, on him, of his radio talks, and also perhaps to the presence of the "fan," or listener, in the reception room. Or possibly it was something else entirely. In any case this disturbance was reflected, beyond a doubt, in the announcements made by him in the days that, inevitably, followed.

One of these was:

"The details of our housekeeping, yours and mine. The scuff under the bed, the fug in the corners. I would, if I could, sigh to remember them. You planted prickly pear in the parlor floor, and when guests came. . . Oh, you were a one! You veiled yourself from me, there were parts I could have and parts I couldn't have. And the rules would change, I remember, in the middle of the game, I could never be sure which parts were allowed and which not. Some days I couldn't have anything at all. Is it remarkable, then, that there has never been another? Except for a few? Who don't count?

"There has, I don't doubt, never been anything like it. The bed, your mother's bed, brought to our union with your mother in it, she lay like a sword between us. I had the gall to ask what you were thinking. It was one of those wonderful days of impenetrable silence. Well, I said, and the child? Up the child, you said, 'twasn't what I wanted anyway. What then did you want? I asked, and the child cried, its worst forebodings confirmed. Pish, you said, nothing you could supply. Maybe, I said. Not bloody likely, you said. And where is it (the child) now? Gone, I don't doubt, away.

"Are you with me, old bush?

"Are you tuned in?

"A man came, in a hat. In the hat was a little feather, and in addition to the hat and the feather there was a satchel. Jack, this is my husband, you said. And took him into the bedroom, and turned the key in the lock. What are you doing in there? I said, the door being locked, you and he together on the inside, me alone on the outside. Go away and mind your own silly business, you said, from behind the door. Yes, Jack said (from behind the door), go away and don't be bothering people with things on their minds. Insensitive brute! you said, and Jack said, filthy cad! Some people, you said, and Jack said, the cheek of the thing. I watched at the door until nightfall, but could hear no more words, only sounds of a curious nature, such as grunts and moans, and sighs. Upon hearing these (through the door which was, as I say, locked), I immediately rushed to the attic to obtain our copy of Ideal Marriage, by Th. H. Van De Velde, M.D., to determine whether this situation was treated of therein. But it was not. I therefore abandoned the book and returned to my station outside the door, which remained (and indeed why not?) shut.

"At length the door opened, your mother emerged, looking as they say 'put out.' But she had always taken your part as opposed to my part, therefore she said only that I was a common sneak. But, I said, what of those who even now sit in the bed? laughing and joking? Don't try to teach thy grandmother to chew coal, she said. I then became, if you can believe it, melancholy. Could not we two skins, you and me, climb and cling for all the days that were left? Which were not, after all, so very

many days? Without the interpolation of such as Jack? And, no doubt, others yet to come?"

After completing this announcement and placing "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the turntable, and a cup of soup on the hotplate, Bloomsbury observed that the girl in the reception room was making motions with her hands, the burden of which was, that she wanted to speak to him.

"Next to Mr. Veidt my favorite star was Carmen Lambrosa," she said. "What is more, I am said to resemble her in some aspects."

"Which?" Bloomsbury asked with interest. "Which aspects?"

"It was said of Carmen Lambrosa that had she just lived a little longer, and not died from alcohol, she would have been the top box office money-maker in the British Cameroons. Where such as she and me are appreciated."

"The top box office money-maker for what year?"

"The year is not important," she said. "What is important is the appreciation."

"I would say you favored her," Bloomsbury observed, "had I some knowledge of her peculiarities."

"Do I impress you?"

"In what way?"

"As a possible partner? Sexually I mean?"

"I haven't considered it," he said, "heretofore."

"They say I'm sexy," she noted.

"I don't doubt it," he said. "I mean it's plausible."

"I am yours," she said, "if you want me."

"Yes," he said, "there's the difficulty, making up my mind."

"You have only," she said, "to make the slightest gesture of acquiescence, such as a nod, a word, a cough, a cry, a kick, a crook, a giggle, a grin."

"Probably I would not enjoy it," he said, "now."

"Shall I take off my clothes?" she asked, making motions as if to do so.

With a single stride, such as he had often seen practiced in the films, Bloomsbury was "at her side."

"Martha," he said, "old skin, why can't you let the old days die? That

were then days of anger, passion, and dignity, but are now, in the light of present standards, practices, and attitudes, days that are done?"

Upon these words from him, she began to weep. "You looked interested at first," she said (through her tears).

"It was kind of you to try it," he said. "Thoughtful. As a matter of fact, you were most appealing. Tempting, even. I was fooled for whole moments at a time. You look well in bullfighter pants."

"Thank you," she said. "You said I had a grand behind. You said that at least."

"And so you do."

"You can't forget," she asked, "about Dudley?"

"Dudley?"

"Dudley who was my possible lover," she said.

"Before or after Jack?"

"Dudley who in fact broke up our menage," she said, looking at him expectantly.

"Well," he said, "I suppose."

"Tell me about the joy again."

"There was some joy," Bloomsbury said. "I can't deny it."

"Was it really like you said? Somber and paradoxical?"

"It was all of that," he said gallantly, "then."

"Then!" she said.

There was a moment of silence during which they listened, thoughtfully, to "The Star-Spangled Banner" playing softly in the other room behind them.

"Then we are, as they say, through?" she asked. "There is no hope for us?"

"None," he said. "That I know of."

"You've found somebody you like better?"

"It's not that," he said. "That has nothing to do with it."

"Balls," she said. "I know you and your letchy ways."

"Goodbye," Bloomsbury said, and returned to the control room, locking the door behind him.

He then resumed broadcasting, with perhaps a tremor but no slackening in his resolve not to flog, as the expression runs, a dead horse. However the electric company, which had not been paid from the first

to the last, refused at length to supply further current for the radio, in consequence of which the broadcasts, both words and music, ceased. That was the end of this period of Bloomsbury's, as they say, life.

The Viennese opera ball

I DO NOT LIKE to see an elegant pair of forceps! Blundell stated. Let the instrument look what it is, a formidable weapon! Arte, non vi (art, not strength) may be usefully engraved upon one blade; and Care perineo (take care of the perineum) on the other. His companion replied: The test of a doctor's prognostic acumen is to determine the time to give up medicinal and dietetic measures and empty the uterus, and overhesitancy to do this is condemnable, even though honorable. . . I do not mean that we should perform therapeutic abortion with a light spirit. On the contrary, I am slow to adopt it and always have proper consultation. If on the other hand a bear kills a man, someone said, the Croches immediately organize a hunt, capture a bear, loll it, eat its heart, and throw out the rest of the meat; they save the skin, which with the head of the beast serves as a shroud for the dead man. Among the Voguls the nearest relative was required to seek revenge. The Goldi have the same custom in regard to the tiger; they kill him and bury him with this little speech: Now we are even, you have killed one of ours, we have killed one of yours. Now let us live in peace. Don't disturb us again, or we will kill you. Carola Mitt, brown-haired, brown-eyed and

just nineteen, was born in Berlin (real name: Mittenstein), left Germany five years ago. In her senior year at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich, Conn., Carola went to the Viennese Opera Ball at the Waldorf-Astoria, was spotted by a Glamour editor.

I mean, the doctor resumed, we should study each patient thoroughly and empty the uterus before she has retinitis; before jaundice has shown that there is marked liver damage; before she has polyneuritis; before she has toxic myocarditis; before her brain is degenerated, et al. -- and it can be done. Meyer Davis played for the Viennese Opera Ball. Copperplate printers, said a man, deliver Society Printing in neat, stylish boxes. They are compelled to slipsheet the work with tissue paper, an expense the letterpress printer may avoid, if careful. Boxes, covered with enameled paper for cards and all lands of Society Printing, are on sale to carry the correct sizes. No matter how excellent your work and quality may be, women who know the correct practice will not be satisfied unless the packages are as neat as those sent out by the copperplate printers. The devil is not as wicked as people believe, and neither is an Albanian. (Carola Mitt soon dropped her plans to be a painter, made $60 an hour under the lights, appeared on the covers of Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle and Glamour, shared a Greenwich Village apartment with another girl, yearned to get married and live in California. But that was later.)

The Glamour editor said: Take Dolores Wettach. Dolores Wettach is lush, Lorenesque, and doubly foreign (her father is Swiss, her mother Swedish); she moved at the age of five from Switzerland to Flushing, N.Y., where her father set up a mink ranch. Now about twenty-four ("You learn not to be too accurate"), Dolores was elected Miss Vermont in the 1956 Miss Universe contest, graduated in 1957 from the University of Vermont with a B.S. in nursing. Now makes $60 an hour. While Dolores Wettach was working as a nurse at Manhattan's Doctors Hospital, a sharp-eyed photographer saw beyond her heavy Oxfords, asked her to pose. Dying remarks: Oliver Goldsmith, 1728-74, British poet, playwright and novelist, was asked: Is your mind at ease? He replied: No, it is not, and died. Hegel: Only one man ever understood me. And he didn't understand me. Hart Crane, 1899-1932, poet, as he jumped into the sea: Goodbye, everybody! Tons of people came to

the Viennese Opera Ball. At noon, the first doctor said, on January 31, 1943, while walking, the patient was seized with sudden severe abdominal pain and profuse vaginal bleeding. She was admitted to the hospital at 1 P.M. in a state of exsanguination. She presented a tender, rigid abdomen and uterus. Blood pressure 110/60. Pulse rate 110 -- thready. Fetal heart not heard. Patient was given intravenous blood at once. The membranes were ruptured artificially and a Spanish windlass was applied. Labor progressed rapidly. At 6 P.M., a 5-pound stillborn infant was delivered by low forceps. Hemorrhage persisted following delivery in spite of hypodermic Pituitrin, intravenous ergotrate, and firm uterine packing. Blood transfusion had been maintained continuously. At 9 P.M. a laparotomy was done, and a Couvelaire uterus with tubes and ovaries was removed by supracervical hysterectomy. The close adherence of the tubes and ovaries to the fundus necessitated their removal. Patient stood surgery well. A total of 2000 c.c. of whole blood and 1500 c.c. of whole plasma had been administered. Convalescence was satisfactory, and the patient was dismissed on the fourteenth postoperative day. Waiters with drinks circulated among the ball-goers.

Carola Mitt met Isabella Albonico at the Viennese Opera Ball. Isabella Albonico, Italian by temperament as well as by birth (twenty-four years ago, in Florence), began modeling in Europe when she was fifteen, arrived in New York four years ago. Brown-haired and brown-eyed, she has had covers on Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and Life, makes $60 an hour, and has won, she says, "a reputation for being allergic to being pummeled around under the lights. Nobody touches me." I entirely endorse these opinions, said a man standing nearby, and would only add that the wife can do much to avert that fatal marital ennui by independent interests which she persuades him to share. For instance, an interesting book, or journey, or lecture or concert, experienced, enjoyed and described by her, with sympathy and humor, may often be a talisman to divert his mind from work and worry, and all the irritations arising therefrom. But, of course, he, on his side, must be able to appreciate her appreciation and her conversation. The stimuli to the penile nerves may differ in degrees of intensity and shades of quality; and there are corresponding diversities in the sensations of pleasure they bestow. It is of much importance in determining these sensations

whether the stimuli are localized mainly in the frenulum preputti or the posterior rim of the glans. Art rather than sheer force should prevail. (There is an authentic case on record in which the attendant braced himself and pulled so hard that, when the forceps slipped off, he fell out of an open window onto the street below and sustained a skull fracture, while the patient remained undelivered.) The Jumbo Tree, 254 feet high, is named from the odd-shaped growths at the base resembling the heads of an elephant, a monkey and a bison. Isabella told Carola that she "would like most of all to be a movie star," had just returned from Hollywood, where she played a small part ("but opposite Gary Grant") in That Touch of Mink and a larger one in an all-Italian film, Smog. Besides English and Italian, Isabella speaks French and Spanish, hates big groups. What kind of big groups? Carola asked. This kind, Isabella said, waving her hand to indicate the Viennese Opera Ball.

Smog is an interesting name Carola said. In the empty expanses of Islamabad, the new capital that Pakistan plans to erect in the cool foothills of the Himalayas, the first buildings scheduled to go up are a cluster of airy structures designed by famed U.S. architect Edward Stone. Set in a cloistered water garden, the biggest of Stone's buildings will house Pakistan's first nuclear reactor -- one of the largest sales made by New York's American Machine & Foundry Co. Fifteen years ago, AMF was a company with only a handful of products (cigarette, baking and stitching machines) and annual sales of about $12,000,000. Today, with 42 plants and 19 research facilities scattered across 17 countries, AMF turns out products ranging from remote-controlled toy airplanes to ICBM launching systems. Thanks to AMF's determined pursuit of diversification and growth products, its 1960 sales were $361 million, its earnings $24 million. And in the glum opening months of 1961, the company's sales and earnings hit new first-quarter highs. AMF's expansion is the work of slow-spoken, low-pressured Chairman Morehead Patterson, 64, who took over the company in 1943 from his father, Rufus L. Patterson, inventor of the first automated tobacco machine. After World War II, Morehead Patterson decided that the company had to grow or die. Searching for new products, he turned up a crude prototype of an automatic bowling-pin setter. To get the

necessary cash to develop the intricate gadget, Patterson swapped off AMF stock to acquire eight small companies with fast-selling products. The Pinspotter, perfected and put on the market in 1951, helped to turn bowling into the most popular U.S. competitive sport. Despite keen competition from the Brunswick Corp., AMF has remained the world's largest maker of automatic pin setters. With 68,000 machines already on lease in the U.S. (for an average annual gross of $68 million), AMF last week got a $3,000,000 contract to equip a new chain of bowling centers in the East. Is there another Pinspotter in AMF's future? Chairman Patterson cautiously admits to the hope that perhaps the firm's intensive research into purifying brackish and fouled water might produce another product breakthrough. "Companies, like people," says Patterson, "get arteriosclerosis. My job is to see that AMF doesn't." Morehead Patterson did not attend the Viennese Opera Ball.

Carola Mitt said: Among other things, I means the ego; it is also the symbol, in astronomy, for the inclination of an orbit to the ecliptic; in chemistry, for iodine; in physics, for the density of current, the intensity of magnetization, or the moment of inertia; in logic, for a particular affirmative proposition. Lester Lannin also played for the Viennese Opera Ball. Nonsense! said a huge man wearing the Double Eagle of St. Puce, what about sailing, salesmen, salt, sanitation, Santa Claus, saws, scales, schools, screws, sealing wax, secretaries, sects, selling, the Seven Wonders, sewerage, sewing machines, sheep, sheet metal, shells, shipbuilding, shipwrecks, shoemaking, shopping, shower baths, sieges, signboards, silverware, sinning, skating, skeletons, skeleton keys, sketching, skiing, skulls, skyscrapers, sleep, smoking, smugglers, Socialism, soft drinks, soothsaying, sorcery, space travel, spectacles, spelling, sports, squirrels, steamboats, steel, stereopticans, the Stock Exchange, stomachs, stores, storms, stoves, streetcars, strikes, submarines, subways, suicide, sundials, sunstroke, superstition, surgery, surveying, sweat and syphilis! It is one of McCormack's proudest boasts, Carola heard over her lovely white shoulder, that he has never once missed having dinner with his wife in their forty-one years of married life. She remembered Knocko at the Evacuation Day parade, and Baudelaire's famous remark. Mortality is the final evaluator of methods. An important goal is an intact sphincter. The greater the prematurity, the more generous

should be the episiotomy. Yes said Leon Jaroff, Detroit Bureau Chief for Time, at the Thomas Elementary School on warm spring afternoons I could look from my classroom into the open doors of the Packard plant. Ideal foster parents are mature people who are not necessarily well off, but who have a good marriage and who love and understand children. The ninth day of the ninth month is the festival of the chrysanthemum (Kiku No Sekku), when sake made from the chrysanthemum is drunk. Kiku Jido, a court youth, having inadvertently touched with his foot the pillow of the emperor, was banished to a distant isle, where, it is said, he was nourished by the dew of the chrysanthemums which abounded there. Becoming a hermit, he lived for a thousand years. Husbands have been known to look at their wives with new eyes, Laura La Plante thought to herself. Within the plane of each individual work -- experienced apart from a series -- he presents one with a similar set of one-at-a-time experiences each contained within its own compartment, and read in a certain order, up or down or across. Far off at Barlow Ranger Station, as the dawn was breaking, Bart slept dreamlessly at last. Peridermium coloradense on spruce (Picea) has long been considered conspecific with Melampsorella caryophyllacearum Schroet., which alternates between fir (Abies) and Caryophyllacee. Evidence that these rusts are identical consists largely of inoculation results of Weit and Hubert (1,2), but these have never been fully confirmed. Take Dorothea McGowan the Glamour editor said. Dorothea McGowan is the exception in the new crop: she speaks only English and was born in Brooklyn. Her premodeling life took her as far from home as Staten Island, where she finished her freshman year at Notre Dame College before taking a summer job modeling $2.98 house dresses. A few months later, her first photographic try at a cover made Vogue; this year she set some kind of a record by appearing on four Vogue covers in a row (nobody but her mother or agent could have told that it was the same girl). Twenty-year-old Dorothea ("My middle initial is E, and Dorothy sounded so ordinary") makes $60 an hour, has her own apartment in New York, studies French at Manhattan's French Institute twice a week ("so that when my dream of living in Paris comes true, I'll be ready for it"). Dorothea has been sent, all expenses paid, to be photographed in front of the great

architectural monuments of Europe, among Middle East bazaars and under Caribbean palms. She is absolutely infatuated with the idea of being paid to travel. I never saw so many autumn flowers as grow in the woods and sheep-walks of Maryland. But I confess, I scarcely knew a single name. Let no one visit America without first having studied botany.

Carola was thrilled by all the interesting conversations at the Viennese Opera Ball. The Foundation is undertaking a comprehensive analytical study of the economic and social positions of the artist and of his institutions in the United States. In part this will serve as a basis for future policy decisions and program activities. The contemplated study will also be important outside the Foundation. The climate of the arts today, discussion in the field reveals, is complex and various. Pack my box with Title Shaded Litho. Pack my box with Boston Breton Extra Condensed. Pack my box with Clearface Heavy. (C) Brasol, 261-285; Buck, 212-221; Carr, D, 281-301; Collins, 76-82; Curie, 176-224; A. G. Dostoevsky, D Portrayed by His Wife, 268-269; F. Dostoevsky, Letters and Reminiscences, 241-242, 247, 251-252; F. Dostoevsky, New D Letters, 79-102; Freud, passim; Gibian, "D's Use of Russian Folklore," passim; Hesse -- see; Hromadka, 45-50; Ivanov, 142-166 and passim; King, 22-29; Lavrin, D and His Creation, 114-142; Lavrin, D: A Study, 119-146; Lavrin, "D and Tolstoy," 189-195; Lloyd, 275-290; McCune, passim; Mackiewicz, 183-191; Matiaw, 221-225; Maugham, 203-208; Maurina, 147-153, 198-203, 205-210, 218-221; Meier-Graefe, 288-377; Muchnic, Intro. . . , 165-172; Mueller, 193-200; Murry, 203-259; Passage, 162-174; Roe, 20-25, 41-51. 68-91, 100-110; Roubiczek, 237-244, 252-260, 266-271; Sachs, 241-246; Scott, 204-209; Simmons, 263-279 and passim; Slonim, Epic. . . , 289-293 and passim; Soloviev, 195-202; Strakosch, passim; Troyat, 395-416; Tymms, 99-103; Warner, 80-101; Colin Wilson, 178-201; Yarmolinsky, D, His Life and Art, 355-361 and passim; Zander, 15-30, 63-95, 119-137. Carola said: What a wonderful ball! The width of the black band varies according to relationship. For a widow's card a band of about one-third inch (No. 5) during the first year of widowhood, diminishing about one-sixteenth inch each six months thereafter. On a widower's card one-quarter inch (No. 3) is the widest, diminishing gradually from time to time. For other relatives,

the band may vary from the thickness of No. 3 to that of the "Italian." No. 5 band is now considered excessive, but among the Latin races is held to be moderate, and if preferred, is entirely correct. To administer the agreement and facilitate the attainment of its ends, a Committee on Trade Policy and Payments will be set up with all member countries represented. The judicial form contemplated in the agreement is that of a free trade zone to be transformed gradually into a customs union. As Emile Myerson has said, "L'homme fait de la metaphysique comme il respire, sans le vouloir et surtout sans s'en douter la plupart du temps." No woman is worth more than 24 cattle, Pamela Odede B.A.'s father said. With this album Abbey Lincoln's stature as one of the great jazz singers of our time is confirmed, Laura La Plante said. Widely used for motors, power tools, lighting, TV, etc. Generator output: 3500 watts, 115/230 volt, 60 cy., AC, continuous duty. Max. 230 V capacitor motor, loaded on starting -- ½ hp; unloaded on starting -- 2 hp. Control box mounts starting switch, duplex 115 V receptacle for standard or 3-conductor grounding plugs, tandem 230 V grounding receptacles, and wing nut battery terminals. More than six hundred different kinds of forceps have been invented. Let's not talk about the lion, she said. Wilson looked over at her without smiling and now she smiled at him. This process uses a Lincoln submerged arc welding head to run both inside and outside beads automatically. The rate of progress during the first stage will determine the program to be followed in the second stage. The Glamour editor whose name was Tutti Beale "moved in." What's your name girl? she said coolly. Carola Mitt, Carola Mitt said. The Viennese Opera Ball continued.

Me and Miss Mandible

13 SEPTEMBER

Miss Mandible wants to make love to me but she hesitates because I am officially a child; I am, according to the records, according to the gradebook on her desk, according to the card index in the principal's office, eleven years old. There is a misconception here, one that I haven't quite managed to get cleared up yet. I am in fact thirty-five, I've been in the Army, I am six feet one, I have hair in the appropriate places, my voice is a baritone, I know very well what to do with Miss Mandible if she ever makes up her mind.

In the meantime we are studying common fractions. I could, of course, answer all the questions, or at least most of them (there are things I don't remember). But I prefer to sit in this too-small seat with the desktop cramping my thighs and examine the life around me. There are thirty-two in the class, which is launched every morning with the pledge of allegiance to the flag. My own allegiance, at the moment, is divided between Miss Mandible and Sue Ann Brownly, who sits across the aisle from me all day long and is, like Miss Mandible, a fool for love. Of the two I prefer, today, Sue Ann; although between eleven

and eleven and a half (she refuses to reveal her exact age) she is clearly a woman, with a woman's disguised aggression and a woman's peculiar contradictions. Strangely neither she nor any of the other children seem to see any incongruity in my presence here.

15 September

Happily our geography text, which contains maps of all the principal land-masses of the world, is large enough to conceal my clandestine journal-keeping, accomplished in an ordinary black composition book. Every day I must wait until Geography to put down such thoughts as I may have had during the morning about my situation and my fellows. I have tried writing at other times and it does not work. Either the teacher is walking up and down the aisles (during this period, luckily, she sticks close to the map rack in the front of the room) or Bobby Vanderbilt, who sits behind me, is punching me in the kidneys and wanting to know what I am doing. Vanderbilt, I have found out from certain desultory conversations on the playground, is hung up on sports cars, a veteran consumer of Road & Track. This explains the continual roaring sounds which seem to emanate from his desk; he is reproducing a record album called Sounds of Sebring.

19 September

Only I, at times (only at times), understand that somehow a mistake has been made, that I am in a place where I don't belong. It may be that Miss Mandible also knows this, at some level, but for reasons not fully understood by me she is going along with the game. When I was first assigned to this room I wanted to protest, the error seemed obvious, the stupidest principal could have seen it; but I have come to believe it was deliberate, that I have been betrayed again.

Now it seems to make little difference. This life-role is as interesting as my former life-role, which was that of a claims adjuster for the Great Northern Insurance Company, a position which compelled me to spend my time amid the debris of our civilization: rumpled fenders, roofless sheds, gutted warehouses, smashed arms and legs. After ten years of this one has a tendency to see the world as a vast junkyard, looking at a man and seeing only his (potentially) mangled parts,

entering a house only to trace the path of the inevitable fire. Therefore when I was installed here, although I knew an error had been made, I countenanced it, I was shrewd; I was aware that there might well be some kind of advantage to be gained from what seemed a disaster. The role of The Adjuster teaches one much.

22 September

I am being solicited for the volleyball team. I decline, refusing to take unfair profit from my height.

23 September

Every morning the roll is called: Bestvina, Bokenfohr, Broan, Brownly, Cone, Coyle, Crecelius, Darin, Durbin, Geiger, Guiswite, Heckler, Jacobs, Kleinschmidt, Lay, Logan, Masei, Mitgang, Pfeilsticker. It is like the litany chanted in the dim miserable dawns of Texas by the cadre sergeant of our basic training company.

In the Army, too, I was ever so slightly awry. It took me a fantastically long time to realize what the others grasped almost at once: that much of what we were doing was absolutely pointless, to no purpose. I kept wondering why. Then something happened that proposed a new question. One day we were commanded to whitewash, from the ground to the topmost leaves, all of the trees in our training area. The corporal who relayed the order was nervous and apologetic. Later an off-duty captain sauntered by and watched us, white-splashed and totally weary, strung out among the freakish shapes we had created. He walked away swearing. I understood the principle (orders are orders), but I wondered: Who decides?

29 September

Sue Ann is a wonder. Yesterday she viciously kicked my ankle for not paying attention when she was attempting to pass me a note during History. It is swollen still. But Miss Mandible was watching me, there was nothing I could do. Oddly enough Sue Ann reminds me of the wife I had in my former role, while Miss Mandible seems to be a child. She watches me constantly, trying to keep sexual significance out of her look; I am afraid the other children have noticed. I have already heard,

on that ghostly frequency that is the medium of classroom communication, the words "Teacher's pet!"

2 October

Sometimes I speculate on the exact nature of the conspiracy which brought me here. At times I believe it was instigated by my wife of former days, whose name was. . . I am only pretending to forget. I know her name very well, as well as I know the name of my former motor oil (Quaker State) or my old Army serial number (US 54109268). Her name was Brenda, and the conversation I recall best, the one which makes me suspicious now, took place on the day we parted. "You have the soul of a whore," I said on that occasion, stating nothing less than literal, unvarnished fact. "You," she replied, "are a pimp, a poop, and a child. I am leaving you forever and I trust that without me you will perish of your own inadequacies. Which are considerable."

I squirm in my seat at the memory of this conversation, and Sue Ann watches me with malign compassion. She has noticed the discrepancy between the size of my desk and my own size, but apparently sees it only as a token of my glamour, my dark man-of-the-world-ness.

7 October

Once I tiptoed up to Miss Mandible's desk (when there was no one else in the room) and examined its surface. Miss Mandible is a clean-desk teacher, I discovered. There was nothing except her gradebook (the one in which I exist as a sixth-grader) and a text, which was open at a page headed Making the Processes Meaningful. I read: "Many pupils enjoy working fractions when they understand what they are doing. They have confidence in their ability to take the right steps and to obtain correct answers. However, to give the subject full social significance, it is necessary that many realistic situations requiring the processes be found. Many interesting and lifelike problems involving the use of fractions should be solved. . ."

8 October

I am not irritated by the feeling of having been through all this before. Things are done differently now. The children, moreover, are in

some ways different from those who accompanied me on my first voyage through the elementary schools: "They have confidence in their ability to take the right steps and to obtain correct answers." This is surely true. When Bobby Vanderbilt, who sits behind me and has the great tactical advantage of being able to maneuver in my disproportionate shadow, wishes to bust a classmate in the mouth he first asks Miss Mandible to lower the blind, saying that the sun hurts his eyes. When she does so, bip! My generation would never have been able to con authority so easily.

13 October

It may be that on my first trip through the schools I was too much under the impression that what the authorities (who decides?) had ordained for me was right and proper, that I confused authority with life itself. My path was not particularly of my own choosing. My career stretched out in front of me like a paper chase, and my role was to pick up the clues. When I got out of school, the first time, I felt that this estimate was substantially correct, and eagerly entered the hunt. I found clues abundant: diplomas, membership cards, campaign buttons, a marriage license, insurance forms, discharge papers, tax returns, Certificates of Merit. They seemed to prove, at the very least, that I was in the running. But that was before my tragic mistake on the Mrs. Anton Bichek claim.

I misread a clue. Do not misunderstand me: it was a tragedy only from the point of view of the authorities. I conceived that it was my duty to obtain satisfaction for the injured, for this elderly lady (not even one of our policyholders, but a claimant against Big Ben Transfer & Storage, Inc.) from the company. The settlement was $165,000; the claim, I still believe, was just. But without my encouragement Mrs. Bichek would never have had the self-love to prize her injury so highly. The company paid, but its faith in me, in my efficacy in the role, was broken. Henry Goodykind, the district manager, expressed this thought in a few not altogether unsympathetic words, and told me at the same time that I was to have a new role. The next thing I knew I was here, at Horace Greeley Elementary, under the lubricious eye of Miss Mandible.

17 October

Today we are to have a fire drill. I know this because I am a Fire Marshal, not only for our room but for the entire right wing of the second floor. This distinction, which was awarded shortly after my arrival, is interpreted by some as another mark of my somewhat dubious relations with our teacher. My armband, which is red and decorated with white felt letters reading FIRE, sits on the little shelf under my desk, next to the brown paper bag containing the lunch I carefully make for myself each morning. One of the advantages of packing my own lunch (I have no one to pack it for me) is that I am able to fill it with things I enjoy. The peanut butter sandwiches that my mother made in my former existence, many years ago, have been banished in favor of ham and cheese. I have found that my diet has mysteriously adjusted to my new situation; I no longer drink, for instance, and when I smoke, it is in the boys' john, like everybody else. When school is out I hardly smoke at all. It is only in the matter of sex that I feel my own true age; this is apparently something that, once learned, can never be forgotten. I live in fear that Miss Mandible will one day keep me after school, and when we are alone, create a compromising situation. To avoid this I have become a model pupil: another reason for the pronounced dislike I have encountered in certain quarters. But I cannot deny that I am singed by those long glances from the vicinity of the chalkboard; Miss Mandible is in many ways, notably about the bust, a very tasty piece.

24 October

There are isolated challenges to my largeness, to my dimly realized position in the class as Gulliver. Most of my classmates are polite about this matter, as they would be if I had only one eye, or wasted, metal-wrapped legs. I am viewed as a mutation of some sort but essentially a peer. However Harry Broan, whose father has made himself rich manufacturing the Broan Bathroom Vent (with which Harry is frequently reproached; he is always being asked how things are in Ventsville), today inquired if I wanted to fight. An interested group of his followers had gathered to observe this suicidal undertaking. I replied that I didn't feel quite up to it, for which he was obviously

grateful. We are now friends forever. He has given me to understand privately that he can get me all the bathroom vents I will ever need, at a ridiculously modest figure.

25 October

"Many interesting and lifelike problems involving the use of fractions should be solved. . ." The theorists fail to realize that everything that is either interesting or lifelike in the classroom proceeds from what they would probably call interpersonal relations: Sue Ann Brownly kicking me in the ankle. How lifelike, how womanlike, is her tender solicitude after the deed! Her pride in my newly acquired limp is transparent; everyone knows that she has set her mark upon me, that it is a victory in her unequal struggle with Miss Mandible for my great, overgrown heart. Even Miss Mandible knows, and counters in perhaps the only way she can, with sarcasm. "Are you wounded, Joseph?" Conflagrations smolder behind her eyelids, yearning for the Fire Marshal clouds her eyes. I mumble that I have bumped my leg.

30 October

I return again and again to the problem of my future.

4 November

The underground circulating library has brought me a copy of Movie-TV Secrets, the multicolor cover blazoned with the headline "Debbie's Date Insults Liz!" It is a gift from Frankie Randolph, a rather plain girl who until today has had not one word for me, passed on via Bobby Vanderbilt. I nod and smile over my shoulder in acknowledgment; Frankie hides her head under her desk. I have seen these magazines being passed around among the girls (sometimes one of the boys will condescend to inspect a particularly lurid cover). Miss Mandible confiscates them whenever she finds one. I leaf through Movie-TV Secrets and get an eyeful. "The exclusive picture on these pages isn't what it seems. We know how it looks and we know what the gossipers will do. So in the interests of a nice guy, we're publishing the facts first. Here's what really happened!" The picture shows a rising young movie idol in bed, pajama-ed and bleary-eyed, while an equally blowzy young

woman looks startled beside him. I am happy to know that the picture is not really what it seems; it seems to be nothing less than divorce evidence.

What do these hipless eleven-year-olds think when they come across, in the same magazine, the full-page ad for Maurice de Paree, which features "Hip Helpers" or what appear to be padded rumps? ("A real undercover agent that adds appeal to those hips and derriere, both!") If they cannot decipher the language the illustrations leave nothing to the imagination. "Drive him frantic. . ." the copy continues. Perhaps this explains Bobby Vanderbilt's preoccupation with Lancias and Maseratis; it is a defense against being driven frantic.

Sue Ann has observed Frankie Randolph's overture, and catching my eye, she pulls from her satchel no less than seventeen of these magazines, thrusting them at me as if to prove that anything any of her rivals has to offer, she can top. I shuffle through them quickly, noting the broad editorial perspective:

"Debbie's Kids Are Crying"
"Eddie Asks Debbie: Will You. . . ?"
"The Nightmares Liz Has About Eddie!"
"The Things Debbie Can Tell About Eddie"
"The Private Life of Eddie and Liz"
"Debbie Gets Her Man Back?"
"A New Life for Liz"
"Love Is a Tricky Affair"
"Eddie's Taylor-Made Love Nest"
"How Liz Made a Man of Eddie"
"Are They Planning to Live Together?"
"Isn't It Time to Stop Kicking Debbie Around?"
"Debbie's Dilemma"
"Eddie Becomes a Father Again"
"Is Debbie Planning to Re-wed?"
"Can Liz Fulfill Herself?"
"Why Debbie Is Sick of Hollywood"

Who are these people, Debbie, Eddie, Liz, and how did they get themselves in such a terrible predicament? Sue Ann knows, I am sure; it is obvious that she has been studying their history as a guide to what

she may expect when she is suddenly freed from this drab, flat classroom.

I am angry and I shove the magazines back at her with not even a whisper of thanks.

5 November

The sixth grade at Horace Greeley Elementary is a furnace of love, love, love. Today it is raining, but inside the air is heavy and tense with passion. Sue Ann is absent; I suspect that yesterday's exchange has driven her to her bed. Guilt hangs about me. She is not responsible, I know, for what she reads, for the models proposed to her by a venal publishing industry; I should not have been so harsh. Perhaps it is only the flu.

Nowhere have I encountered an atmosphere as charged with aborted sexuality as this. Miss Mandible is helpless; nothing goes right today. Amos Darin has been found drawing a dirty picture in the cloakroom. Sad and inaccurate, it was offered not as a sign of something else but as an act of love in itself. It has excited even those who have not seen it, even those who saw but understood only that it was dirty. The room buzzes with imperfectly comprehended titillation. Amos stands by the door, waiting to be taken to the principal's office. He wavers between fear and enjoyment of his temporary celebrity. From time to time Miss Mandible looks at me reproachfully, as if blaming me for the uproar. But I did not create this atmosphere, I am caught in it like all the others.

8 November

Everything is promised my classmates and I, most of all the future. We accept the outrageous assurances without blinking.

9 November

I have finally found the nerve to petition for a larger desk. At recess I can hardly walk; my legs do not wish to uncoil themselves. Miss Mandible says she will take it up with the custodian. She is worried about the excellence of my themes. Have I, she asks, been receiving help? For an instant I am on the brink of telling her my story.

Something, however, warns me not to attempt it. Here I am safe, I have a place; I do not wish to entrust myself once more to the whimsy of authority. I resolve to make my themes less excellent in the future.

11 November

A ruined marriage, a ruined adjusting career, a grim interlude in the Army when I was almost not a person. This is the sum of my existence to date, a dismal total. Small wonder that re-education seemed my only hope. It is clear even to me that I need reworking in some fundamental way. How efficient is the society that provides thus for the salvage of its clinkers!

Plucked from my unexamined life among other pleasant, desperate, money-making young Americans, thrown backward in space and time, I am beginning to understand how I went wrong, how we all go wrong. (Although this was far from the intention of those who sent me here; they require only that I get right.)

14 November

The distinction between children and adults, while probably useful for some purposes, is at bottom a specious one, I feel. There are only individual egos, crazy for love.

15 November

The custodian has informed Miss Mandible that our desks are all the correct size for sixth-graders, as specified by the Board of Estimate and furnished the schools by the Nu-Art Educational Supply Corporation of Englewood, California. He has pointed out that if the desk size is correct, then the pupil size must be incorrect. Miss Mandible, who has already arrived at this conclusion, refuses to press the matter further. I think I know why. An appeal to the administration might result in my removal from the class, in a transfer to some sort of setup for "exceptional children." This would be a disaster of the first magnitude. To sit in a room with child geniuses (or, more likely, children who are "retarded") would shrivel me in a week. Let my experience here be that of the common run, I say; let me be, please God, typical.

20 November

We read signs as promises. Miss Mandible understands by my great height, by my resonant vowels, that I will one day carry her off to bed. Sue Ann interprets these same signs to mean that I am unique among her male acquaintances, therefore most desirable, therefore her special property as is everything that is Most Desirable. If neither of these propositions work out then life has broken faith with them.

I myself, in my former existence, read the company motto ("Here to Help in Time of Need") as a description of the duty of the adjuster, drastically mislocating the company's deepest concerns. I believed that because I had obtained a wife who was made up of wife-signs (beauty, charm, softness, perfume, cookery) I had found love. Brenda, reading the same signs that have now misled Miss Mandible and Sue Ann Brownly, felt she had been promised that she would never be bored again. All of us, Miss Mandible, Sue Ann, myself, Brenda, Mr. Goodykind, still believe that the American flag betokens a kind of general righteousness.

But I say, looking about me in this incubator of future citizens, that signs are signs, and that some of them are lies. This is the great discovery of my time here.

23 November

It may be that my experience as a child will save me after all. If only I can remain quietly in this classroom, making my notes while Napoleon plods through Russia in the droning voice of Harry Broan, reading aloud from our History text. All of the mysteries that perplexed me as an adult have their origins here, and one by one I am numbering them, exposing their roots.

2 December

Miss Mandible will refuse to permit me to remain ungrown. Her hands rest on my shoulders too warmly, and for too long.

7 December

It is the pledges that this place makes to me, pledges that cannot be redeemed, that confuse me later and make me feel I am not getting

anywhere. Everything is presented as the result of some knowable process; if I wish to arrive at four I get there by way of two and two. If I wish to burn Moscow the route I must travel has already been marked out by another visitor. If, like Bobby Vanderbilt, I yearn for the wheel of the Lancia 2.4-liter coupe,1 have only to go through the appropriate process, that is, get the money. And if it is money itself that I desire, I have only to make it. All of these goals are equally beautiful in the sight of the Board of Estimate; the proof is all around us, in the no-nonsense ugliness of this steel and glass building, in the straight-line matter-of-factness with which Miss Mandible handles some of our less reputable wars. Who points out that arrangements sometimes slip, that errors are made, that signs are misread? "They have confidence in their ability to take the right steps and to obtain correct answers." I take the right steps, obtain correct answers, and my wife leaves me for another man.

8 December

My enlightenment is proceeding wonderfully.

9 December

Disaster once again. Tomorrow I am to be sent to a doctor, for observation. Sue Ann Brownly caught Miss Mandible and me in the cloakroom, during recess, and immediately threw a fit. For a moment I thought she was actually going to choke. She ran out of the room weeping, straight for the principal's office, certain now which of us was Debbie, which Eddie, which Liz. I am sorry to be the cause of her disillusionment, but I know that she will recover. Miss Mandible is ruined but fulfilled. Although she will be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, she seems at peace; her promise has been kept. She knows now that everything she has been told about life, about America, is true.

I have tried to convince the school authorities that I am a minor only in a very special sense, that I am in fact mostly to blame -- but it does no good. They are as dense as ever. My contemporaries are astounded that I present myself as anything other than an innocent victim. Like the Old Guard marching through the Russian drifts, the class marches

to the conclusion that truth is punishment.

Bobby Vanderbilt has given me his copy of Sounds of Sebring, in farewell.

Marie, Marie, hold on tight

HENRY MACKIE, EDWARD ASHER and Howard Ettle braved a rainstorm to demonstrate against the human condition on Wednesday, April 26 (and Marie, you should have used waterproof paint; the signs were a mess after half an hour). They began at St. John the Precursor on 69th Street at 1:30 p.m. picketing with signs bearing the slogans MAN DIES! / THE BODY IS DISGUST! / COGITO ERGO NOTHING! / ABANDON LOVE! and handing out announcements of Henry Mackie's lecture at the Playmor Lanes the next evening. There was much interest among bystanders in the vicinity of the church. A man who said his name was William Rochester came up to give encouragement: "That's the way!" he said. At about 1:50 a fat, richly dressed beadle emerged from the church to dispute our right to picket. He had dewlaps which shook unpleasantly and, I am sorry to say, did not look like a good man.

"All right," he said, "now move on, you have to move along, you can't picket us!" He said that the church had never been picketed, that it could not be picketed without its permission, that it owned

the sidewalk, and that he was going to call the police. Henry Mackie, Edward Asher and Howard Ettle had already obtained police permission for the demonstration through a fortunate bit of foresight; and we confirmed this by showing him our slip that we had obtained at Police Headquarters. The beadle was intensely irritated at this and stormed back inside the church to report to someone higher up. Henry Mackie said, "Well, get ready for the lightning bolt," and Edward Asher and Howard Ettle laughed.

Interest in the demonstration among walkers on 69th Street increased and a number of people accepted our leaflet and began to ask the pickets questions such as "What do you mean?" and "Were you young men raised in the church?" The pickets replied to these questions quietly but firmly and in as much detail as casual passersby could be expected to be interested in. Some of the walkers made taunting remarks -- "Cogito ergo your ass" is one I remember -- but the demeanor of the pickets was exemplary at all times, even later when things began, as Henry Mackie put it, "to get a little rough." (Marie, you would have been proud of us.) People who care about the rights of pickets should realize that these rights are threatened mostly not by the police, who generally do not molest you if you go through the appropriate bureaucratic procedures such as getting a permit, but by individuals who come up to you and try to pull your sign out of your hands or, in one case, spit at you. The man who did the latter was, surprisingly, very well dressed. What could be happening within an individual like that? He didn't even ask questions as to the nature or purpose of the demonstration, just spat and walked away. He didn't say a word. We wondered about him.

At about 2 P.M. a very high-up official in a black clerical suit emerged from the church and asked us if we had ever heard of Kierkegaard. It was raining on him just as it was on the pickets but he didn't seem to mind. "This demonstration displays a Kierkegaardian spirit which I understand," he said, and then requested that we transfer our operations to some other place. Henry Mackie had a very interesting discussion of about ten minutes' duration with this official during which photographs were taken by the New York Post, Newsweek and CBS Television whom Henry Mackie had alerted prior to the

demonstration. The photographers made the churchman a little nervous but you have to hand it to him, he maintained his phony attitude of polite interest almost to the last. He said several rather bromidic things like "The human condition is the given, it's what we do with it that counts" and "The body is simply the temple wherein the soul dwells" which Henry Mackie countered with his famous question "Why does it have to be that way?" which has dumbfounded so many orthodox religionists and thinkers and with which he first won us (the other pickets) to his banner in the first place.

"Why?" the churchman exclaimed. It was clear that he was radically taken aback. "Because it is that way. You have to deal with what is. With reality."

"But why does it have to be that way?" Henry Mackie repeated, which is the technique of the question, which used in this way is unanswerable. A blush of anger and frustration crossed the churchman's features (it probably didn't register on your TV screen, Marie, but I was there, I saw it -- it was beautiful).

"The human condition is a fundamental datum," the cleric stated. "It is immutable, fixed and changeless. To say otherwise. . ."

"Precisely," Henry Mackie said, "why it must be challenged."

"But," the cleric said, "it is God's will."

"Yes," Henry Mackie said significantly.

The churchman then retired into his church, muttering and shaking his head. The rain had damaged our signs somewhat but the slogans were still legible and we had extra signs cached in Edward Asher's car anyway. A number of innocents crossed the picket line to worship including several who looked as if they might be from the FBI. The pickets had realized in laying their plans the danger that they might be taken for Communists. This eventuality was provided for by the mimeographed leaflets which carefully explained that the pickets were not Communists and cited Edward Asher's and Howard Ettle's Army service including Asher's Commendation Ribbon. "We, as you, are law-abiding American citizens who support the Constitution and pay taxes," the leaflet says. "We are simply opposed to the ruthless way in which the human condition has been imposed on organisms which have done nothing to deserve it and are unable to escape it. Why does

it have to be that way?" The leaflet goes on to discuss, in simple language, the various unfortunate aspects of the human condition including death, unseemly and degrading bodily functions, limitations on human understanding, and the chimera of love. The leaflet concludes with the section headed "What Is To Be Done?" which Henry Mackie says is a famous revolutionary catchword and which outlines, in clear, simple language, Henry Mackie's program for the reification of the human condition from the ground up.

A Negro lady came up, took one of the leaflets, read it carefully and then said: "They look like Communists to me!" Edward Asher commented that no matter how clearly things were explained to the people, the people always wanted to believe you were a Communist. He said that when he demonstrated once in Miami against vivisection of helpless animals he was accused of being a Nazi Communist which was, he explained, a contradiction in terms. He said ladies were usually the worst.

By then the large crowd that had gathered when the television men came had drifted away. The pickets therefore shifted the site of the demonstration to Rockefeller Plaza in Rockefeller Center via Edward Asher's car. Here were many people loafing, digesting lunch etc. and we used the spare signs which had new messages including

WHY ARE YOU STANDING
WHERE YOU ARE STANDING?

THE SOUL IS NOT!

NO MORE
ART
CULTURE
LOVE

REMEMBER YOU ARE DUST!

The rain had stopped and the flowers smelled marvelously fine. The pickets took up positions near a restaurant (I wish you'd been there,

Marie, because it reminded me of something, something you said that night we went to Bloomingdale's and bought your new cerise-colored bathing suit: "The color a new baby has," you said, and the flowers were like that, some of them). People with cameras hanging around their necks took pictures of us as if they had never seen a demonstration before. The pickets remarked among themselves that it was funny to think of the tourists with pictures of us demonstrating in their scrapbooks in California, Iowa, Michigan, people we didn't know and who didn't know us or care anything about the demonstration or, for that matter, the human condition itself, in which they were so steeped that they couldn't stand off and look at it and know it for what it was. "It's a paradigmatic situation," Henry Mackie said, "exemplifying the distance between the potential knowers holding a commonsense view of the world and what is to be known, which escapes them as they pursue their mundane existences."

At this time (2:45 P.M.) the demonstrators were approached by a group of youths between the ages I would say of sixteen and twenty-one. They were dressed in hood jackets, T-shirts, tight pants etc. and were very obviously delinquents from bad environments and broken homes where they had received no love. They ringed the pickets in a threatening manner. There were about seven of them. The leader (and Marie, he wasn't the oldest; he was younger than some of them, tall, with a peculiar face, blank and intelligent at the same time) walked around looking at our signs with exaggerated curiosity. "What are you guys," he said finally, "some kind of creeps or something?"

Henry Mackie replied quietly that the pickets were American citizens pursuing their right to demonstrate peaceably under the Constitution.

The leader looked at Henry Mackie. "You're flits, you guys, huh?" he said. He then snatched a handful of leaflets out of Edward Asher's hands, and when Edward Asher attempted to recover them, danced away out of reach while two others stood in Asher's way. "What do you flits think you're doin'?" he said. "What is this shit?"

"You haven't got any right. . ." Henry Mackie started to say, but the leader of the youths moved very close to him then.

"What do you mean, you don't believe in God?" he said. The other ones moved in closer too.

"That is not the question," Henry Mackie said. "Belief or nonbelief is not at issue. The situation remains the same whether you believe or not. The human condition is. . ."

"Listen," the leader said, "I thought all you guys went to church every day. Now you tell me that flits don't believe in God. You putting me on?"

Henry Mackie repeated that belief was not involved, and said that it was, rather, a question of man helpless in the grip of a definition of himself that he had not drawn, that could not be altered by human action, and that was in fundamental conflict with every human notion of what should obtain. The pickets were simply subjecting this state of affairs to a radical questioning, he said.

"You're putting me on," the youth said, and attempted to kick Henry Mackie in the groin, but Mackie turned away in time. However the other youths then jumped the pickets, right in the middle of Rockefeller Center. Henry Mackie was thrown to the pavement and kicked repeatedly in the head, Edward Asher's coat was ripped off his back and he sustained many blows in the kidneys and elsewhere, and Howard Ettle was given a broken rib by a youth called "Cutter" who shoved him against a wall and smashed him viciously even though bystanders tried to interfere (a few of them). All this happened in a very short space of time. The pickets' signs were broken and smashed and their leaflets scattered everywhere. A policeman summoned by bystanders tried to catch the youths but they got away through the lobby of the Associated Press building and he returned empty-handed. Medical aid was summoned for the pickets. Photos were taken.

"Senseless violence," Edward Asher said later. "They didn't understand that. . ."

"On the contrary," Henry Mackie said, "they understand everything better than anybody."

The next evening, at 8 P.M. Henry Mackie delivered his lecture in the upstairs meeting room at the Playmor Lanes, as had been announced in the leaflet. The crowd was very small but attentive and interested. Henry Mackie had his head bandaged in a white bandage. He delivered his lecture titled "What Is To Be Done?" with good diction

and enunciation and in a strong voice. He was very eloquent. And eloquence, Henry Mackie says, is really all any of us can hope for.

Up, aloft in the air

BUCK SAW NOW THAT the situation between Nancy and himself was considerably more serious than he had imagined. She exhibited unmistakable signs of a leaning in his direction. The leaning was acute, sometimes he thought she would fall, sometimes he thought she would not fall, sometimes he didn't care, and in every way tried to prove himself the man that he was. It meant dressing in unusual clothes and the breaking of old habits. But how could he shatter her dreams after all they had endured together? after all they had jointly seen and done since first identifying Cleveland as Cleveland? "Nancy," he said, "I'm too old. I'm not nice. There is my son to consider, Peter." Her hand touched the area between her breasts where hung a decoration, dating he estimated from the World War I period -- that famous period!

The turbojet, their "ship," landed on its wheels. Buck wondered about the wheels. Why didn't they shear off when the aircraft landed so hard with a sound like thunder? Many had wondered before him. Wondering was part of the history of lighter-than-air-ness, you fool. It was Nancy herself, standing behind him in the exit line, who had suggested that they dance on the landing strip. "To establish rapport

with the terrain," she said with her distant coolness, made more intense by the hot glare of the Edward pie vendors and customs trees. They danced the comb, the meringue, the dolce far niente. It was glorious there on the strip, amid air rich with the incredible vitality of jet fuel and the sensate music of exhaust. Twilight was lowered onto the landing pattern, a twilight such as has never graced Cleveland before, or since. Then broken, heartless laughter and the hurried trip to the hotel.

"I understand," Nancy said. And looking at her dispassionately, Buck conjectured that she did understand, unscrupulous as that may sound. Probably, he considered, I convinced her against my will. The man from Southern Rhodesia cornered him in the dangerous hotel elevator. "Do you think you have the right to hold opinions which differ from those of President Kennedy?" he asked. "The President of your land?" But the party made up for all that, or most of it, in a curious way. The baby on the floor, Saul, seemed enjoyable, perhaps more than his wont. Or my wont, Buck thought, who knows? A Ray Charles record spun in the gigantic salad bowl. Buck danced the frisson with the painter's wife Perpetua (although Nancy was alone, back at the hotel). "I am named," Perpetua said, "after the famous typeface designed by the famous English designer, Eric Gill, in an earlier part of our century." "Yes," Buck said calmly, "I know that face." She told him softly the history of her affair with her husband, Saul Senior. Sensuously, they covered the ground. And then two ruly police gentlemen entered the room, with the guests blanching, and lettuce and romaine and radishes too flying for the exits, which were choked with grass.

Bravery was everywhere, but not here tonight, for the gods were whistling up their mandarin sleeves in the yellow realms where such matters are decided, for good or ill. Pathetic in his servile graciousness, Saul explained what he could while the guests played telephone games in crimson anterooms. The policemen, the flower of the Cleveland Force, accepted a drink and danced ancient police dances of custody and enforcement. Magically the music crept back under the perforated Guam doors; it was a scene to make your heart cry. "That Perpetua," Saul complained, "why is she treating me like this? Why are the lamps turned low and why have the notes I sent her been returned

unopened, covered with red Postage Due stamps?" But Buck had, in all seriousness, hurried away.

The aircraft were calling him, their indelible flight plans whispered his name. He laid his cheek against the riveted flank of a bold 707. "In case of orange and blue flames," he wrote on a wing, "disengage yourself from the aircraft by chopping a hole in its bottom if necessary. Do not be swayed by the carpet; it is camel and very thin. I suggest that you be alarmed, because the situation is very alarming. You are up in the air perhaps 35,000 feet, with orange and blue flames on the outside and a ragged hole in the floorboards. What will you do?" And now, Nancy. He held out his arms. She came to him.

"Yes."

"Aren't we?"

"Yes."

"It doesn't matter."

"Not to you. But to me. . ."

"I'm wasting our time."

"The others?"

"I felt ashamed."

"It's being here, in Cleveland."

They returned together in a hired automobile. Three parking lots were filled with overflow crowds in an ugly mood. I am tired, so very tired. The man from Southern Rhodesia addressed the bellmen, who listened to his hateful words and thought of other things. "But, then," Buck said, but then Nancy laid a finger on his lips.

"You appear to me so superior, so elevated above all other men," she said, "I contemplate you with such a strange mixture of humility, admiration, revenge, love and pride that very little superstition would be necessary to make me worship you as a superior being."

"Yes," Buck said, for a foreign sculptor, a Bavarian doubtless, was singing "You Can Take Your Love and Shove It Up Your Heart," covered though he was with stone dust and grog. The crowd roared at the accompanists plying the exotic instruments of Cleveland, the dolor, the mangle, the bim. Strum swiftly, fingers! The butlers did not hesitate for a minute. "History will absolve me," Buck reflected, and he took the hand offered him with its enormous sapphires glowing like a garage.

Then Perpetua danced up to him, her great amazing brown eyelashes beckoning. "Where is Nancy?" she asked, and before he could reply, continued her account of the great love of her existence, her relationship with her husband, Saul. "He's funny and fine," she said, "and good and evil. In fact there is so much of him to tell you about, I can hardly get it all out before curfew. Do you mind?"

The din of dancing in Cleveland was now such that many people who did not know the plan were affronted. "This is an affront to Cleveland, this damn din!" one man said; and grog flowed ever more fiercely. The Secretary of State for Erotic Affairs flew in from Washington, the nation's capital, to see for himself at first hand, and the man from Southern Rhodesia had no recourse. He lurked into the Cleveland Air Terminal. "Can I have a ticket for Miami?" he asked the dancing ticket clerk at the Delta Airlines counter hopelessly. "Nothing to Miami this year," the clerk countered. "How can I talk to him in this madness?" Nancy asked herself. "How can the white bird of hope bless our clouded past and future with all this noise? How? How? How? How? How?"

But Saul waved in time, from the porch of Parking Lot Two. He was wearing his belt dangerously low on his hips. "There is copulation everywhere," he shouted, fanning his neck, "because of the dancing! Yes, it's true!" And so it was, incredibly enough. Affection was running riot under the reprehensible scarlet sky. We were all afraid. "Incredible, incredible," Buck said to himself. "Even by those of whom you would not have expected it!" Perpetua glimmered at his ear. "Even by those," she insinuated, "of whom you would have expected. . . nothing." For a moment. . .

"Nancy," Buck exclaimed, "you are just about the nicest damn girl in Cleveland!"

"What about your wife in Texas?" Nancy asked.

"She is very nice too," Buck said, "as a matter of fact the more I think of it, the more I believe that nice girls like you and Hárodiade are what make life worth living. I wish there were more of them in America so that every man could have at least five."

"Five?"

"Yes, five."

"We will never agree on this figure," Nancy said.

2

The rubbery smell of Akron, sister city of Lahore, Pakistan, lay like the flameout of all our hopes over the plateau that evening.

When his aircraft was forced down at the Akron Airpark by the lapse of the port engines, which of course he had been expecting, Buck said: "But this, this. . . is Akron!" And it was Akron, sultry, molecular, crowded with inhabitants who held tiny transistor radios next to their tiny ears. A wave of ingratitude overcame him. "Bum, bum," he said. He plumbed its heart. The citizens of Akron, after their hours at the plant, wrapped themselves in ill-designed love triangles which never contained less than four persons of varying degrees of birth, high and low and mediocre. Beautiful Ohio! with your transistorized citizens and contempt for geometry, we loved you in the evening by the fireside waiting for our wife to nap so we could slip out and see our two girls, Manfred and Bella!

The first telephone call he received in his rum raisin hotel room, Charles, was from the Akron Welcome Service.

"Welcome! new human being! to Akron! Hello?"

"Hello."

"Are you in love with any of the inhabitants of Akron yet?"

"I just came from the airport."

"If not, or even if so, we want to invite you to the big get-acquainted party of the College Graduates' Club tonight at 8:30 p.m."

"Do I have to be a college graduate?"

"No but you have to wear a coat and tie. Of course they are available at the door. What color pants are you wearing?"

Buck walked the resilient streets of Akron. His head was aflame with conflicting ideas. Suddenly he was arrested by a shrill cry. From the top of the Zimmer Building, one of the noblest buildings in Akron, a group of Akron lovers consummated a four-handed suicide leap. The

air! Buck thought as he watched the tiny figures falling, this is certainly an air-minded country, America! But I must make myself useful. He entered a bunshop and purchased a sweet green bun, and dallied with the sweet green girl there, calling her "poppet" and "funicular." Then out into the street again to lean against the warm green facade of the Zimmer Building and watch the workmen scrubbing the crimson sidewalk.

"Can you point me the way to the Akron slums, workman?"

"My name is not 'workman.' My name is 'Pat.' "

"Well 'Pat' which way?"

"I would be most happy to orient you, slumwise, were it not for the fact that slumlife in Akron has been dealt away with by municipal progressiveness. The municipality has caused to be erected, where slumlife once flourished, immense quadratic inventions which now house former slum-wife and former slumspouse alike. These incredibly beautiful structures are over that way."

"Thanks, 'Pat.' "

At the housing development, which was gauche and grand, Buck came upon a man urinating in the elevator, next to a man breaking windows in the broom closet. "What are you fellows doing there!" Buck cried aloud. "We are expressing our rage at this fine new building!" the men exclaimed. "Oh that this day had never formulated! We are going to call it Ruesday, that's how we feel about it, by gar!" Buck stood in a wash of incomprehension and doubt. "You mean there is rage in Akron, the home of quadratic love?" "There is quadratic rage also," the men said, "Akron is rage from a certain point of view." Angel food covered the floor in neat squares. And what could be wrong with that? Everything?

"What is that point of view there, to which you refer?" Buck asked dumbly. "The point of view of the poor peopte of Akron," those honest yeoman chanted, "or, as the city fathers prefer it, the underdeveloped people of Akron." And in their eyes, there was a strange light. "Do you know what the name of this housing development is?" "What?" Buck asked. "Sherwood Forest," the men said, "isn't that disgusting?"

The men invited Buck to sup with their girls, Heidi, Eleanor, George, Purple, Ann-Marie, and Los. In the tree, starlings fretted and died, but

below everything was glass. Harold poured the wine of the region, a light Cheer, into the forgotten napery. And the great horse of evening trod over the immense scene once and for all. We examined our consciences. Many a tiny sin was rooted out that night, to make room for a greater one. It was "hello" and "yes" and "yes, yes" through the sacerdotal hours, from one to eight. Heidi held a pencil between her teeth. "Do you like pencil games?" she asked. Something lurked behind the veil of her eyes. "Not. . . especially," Buck said, "I. . ."

But a parade headed by a battalion of warm and lovely girls from the Akron Welcome Service elected this tense moment to come dancing by, with bands blazing and hideous floats in praise of rubber goods expanding in every direction. The rubber batons of the girls bent in the afterglow of events. "It is impossible to discuss serious ideas during a parade," the Akron Communists said to Buck, and they slipped away to continue expressing their rage in another part of the Forest.

"Goodbye!" Buck said. "Goodbye! I won't forget. . ."

The Welcome Service girls looked very bravura in their brief white-and-gold Welcome Service uniforms which displayed a fine amount of "leg." Look at all that "leg" glittering there! Buck said to himself, and followed the parade all the way to Toledo.

3

"Ingarden dear," Buck said to the pretty wife of the mayor of Toledo, who was reading a copy of Infrequent Love magazine, "where are the poets of Toledo? Where do they hang out?" He showered her with gifts. She rose and moved mysteriously into the bedroom, to see if Henry were sleeping. "There is only one," she said, "the old poet of the city Constantine Cavity." A frost of emotion clouded her fuzz-colored lenses. "He operates a juju drugstore in the oldest section of the city and never goes anywhere except to make one of his rare and beautiful appearances." "Constantino Cavity!" Buck exclaimed, "even in Texas where I come from we have heard of this fine poet. You must take me to see him at once." Abandoning Henry to his fate (and it was a bitter one!) Buck and Ingarden rushed off hysterically to the drugstore of

Constantine Cavity, Buck inventing as they rolled something graceful to say to this old poet, the forerunner so to speak of poetry in America.

Was there fondness in our eyes? We could not tell. Cadenzas of documents stained the Western Alliance, already, perhaps, prejudiced beyond the power of prayer to redeem it. "Do you think there is too much hair on my neck? here?" Ingarden asked Buck. But before he could answer she said: "Oh shut up!" She knew that Mrs. Lutch, whose interest in the pastor was only feigned, would find the American way if anyone could.

At Constantine Cavity's drugstore a meeting of the Toledo Medical Society was being held, in consequence of which Buck did not get to utter his opening words which were to have been: "Cavity, we are here!" A pity, but call the roll! See, or rather hear, who is present, and who is not! Present were

Dr. Caligari
Dr. Frank
Dr. Pepper
Dr. Scholl
Dr. Frankenthaler
Dr. Mabuse
Dr. Grabow
Dr. Melmoth
Dr. Weil
Dr. Modesto
Dr. Fu Manchu
Dr. Wellington
Dr. Watson
Dr. Brown
Dr. Rococo
Dr. Dolittle
Dr. Alvarez
Dr. Spoke
Dr. Hutch
Dr. Spain
Dr. Malone

Dr. Kline
Dr. Casey
Dr. No
Dr. Regatta
Dr. Il y a
Dr. Baderman
Dr. Aveni

and other doctors. The air was stuffy here, comrades, for the doctors were considering (yes!) a resolution of censure against the beloved old poet. An end to this badinage and wit! Let us be grave. It was claimed that Cavity had dispensed. . . but who can quarrel with Love Root, rightly used? It has saved many a lip. The prosecution was in the able hands of Dr. Kline, who invented the heart, and Dr. Spain, after whom Spain is named some believe. Their godlike figures towered over the tiny poet.

Kline advances.
Cavity rises to his height, which is not great.
Ingarden holds her breath.
Spain fades, back, back. . .
A handout from Spain to Kline.
Buck is down.
A luau?
The poet opens. . .
No! No! Get back!

". . . and if that way is long, and leads around by the reactor, and down in the valley, and up the garden path, leave her, I say, to heaven. For science has its reasons that reason knows not of," Cavity finished. And it was done.

"Hell!" said one doctor, and the others shuffled morosely around the drugstore inspecting the strange wares that were being vended there. It was clear that no resolution of censure could possibly. . . But of course not! What were we thinking of?

Cavity himself seemed pleased at the outcome of the proceedings.

He recited to Buck and Ingarden his long love poems entitled "In the Blue of Evening," "Long Ago and Far Away," "Who?" and "Homage to W. C. Williams." The feet of the visitors danced against the sawdust floor of the juju drugstore to the compelling rhythms of the poet's poems. A rime of happiness whitened on the surface of their two faces. "Even in Texas," Buck whispered, "where things are very exciting, there is nothing like the old face of Constantino Cavity. Are you true?"

"Oh I wish things were other."

"You do?"

"There are such a lot of fine people in the world I wish I was one of them!"

"You are, you are!"

"Not essentially. Not inwardly."

"You're very authentic I think."

"That's all right in Cleveland, where authenticity is the thing, but here. . ."

"Kiss me please."

"Again?"

4

The parachutes of the other passengers snapped and crackled in the darkness all around him. There had been a malfunction in the afterburner and the pilot decided to "ditch." The whole thing was very unfortunate. "What is your life-style, Cincinnati?" Buck asked the recumbent jewel glittering below him like an old bucket of industrial diamonds. "Have you the boldness of Cleveland? the anguish of Akron? the torpor of Toledo? What is your posture, Cincinnati?" Frostily the silent city approached his feet.

Upon making contact with Cincinnati Buck and such of the other passengers of the ill-fated flight 309 as had survived the "drop" proceeded to a hotel.

"Is that a flask of grog you have there?"

"Yes it is grog as it happens."

"That's wonderful."

Warmed by the grog which set his blood racing, Buck went to his room and threw himself on his bed. "Oh!" he said suddenly, "I must be in the wrong room!" The girl in the bed stirred sleepily. "Is that you Harvey?" she asked. "Where have you been all this time?" "No, it's Buck," Buck said to the girl, who looked very pretty in her blue flannel nightshirt drawn up about her kneecaps on which there were red lines. "I must be in the wrong room I'm afraid," he repeated. "Buck, get out of this room immediately!" the girl said coldly. "My name is Stephanie and if my friend Harvey finds you here there'll be an unpleasant scene."

"What are you doing tomorrow?" Buck asked.

Having made a "date" with Stephanie for the morning at 10 A.M., Buck slipped off to an innocent sleep in his own bed.

Morning in Cincinnati! The glorious cold Cincinnati sunlight fell indiscriminately around the city, here and there, warming almost no one. Stephanie de Moulpied was wearing an ice-blue wool suit in which she looked very cold and beautiful and starved. "Tell me about your Cincinnati life," Buck said, "the quality of it, that's what I'm interested in." "My life here is very aristocratic," Stephanie said, "polo, canned peaches, liaisons dangereuses, and so on, because I am a member of an old Cincinnati family. However it's not much 'fun' which is why I made this 10 A.M. date with you, exciting stranger from the sky!" "I'm really from Texas," Buck said, "but I've been having a little trouble with airplanes on this trip. I don't really trust them too much. I'm not sure they're trustworthy." "Who is trustworthy after all?" Stephanie said with a cold sigh, looking blue. "Are you blue Stephanie?" Buck asked. "Am I blue?" Stephanie wondered. In the silence that followed, she counted her friends and relationships.

"Is there any noteworthy artistic activity in this town?"

"Like what do you mean?"

Buck then kissed Stephanie in a taxicab as a way of dissipating the blueness that was such a feature of her face. "Are all the girls in Cincinnati like you?" "All the first-class girls are like me," Stephanie said, "but there are some other girls whom I won't mention."

A faint sound of. . . A wave of. . . Dense clouds of. . . Heavily the immense weight of. . . Thin strands of. . .

Dr. Hesperidian had fallen into the little pool in vanPelt Ryan's garden (of course!) and everyone was pulling him out. Strangers met and fell in love over the problem of getting a grip on Dr. Hesperidian. A steel band played arias from Wozzeck. He lay just below the surface, a rime of algae whitening his cheekbones. He seemed to be. . . "Not that way," Buck said reaching for the belt buckle. "This way." The crowd fell back among the pines.

"You seem to be a nice young man, young man," vanPelt Ryan said, "although we have many of these of our own now since the General Electric plant came to town. Are you in computerization?"

Buck remembered the endearing red lines on Stephanie de Moulpied's knees.

"I'd rather not answer that question," he said honestly, "but if there's some other question you'd like me to answer. . ."

vanPelt turned away sadly. The steel band played "Red Boy Blues," "That's All," "Gigantic Blues," "Muggles," "Coolin'," and "Edward." Although each player was maimed in a different way. . . but the affair becomes, one fears, too personal. The band got a nice sound. Hookers of grog thickened on the table placed there for that purpose. "I grow less, rather than more, intimately involved with human beings as I move through world life," Buck thought, "is that my fault? Is it a fault?" The musicians rendered the extremely romantic ballads "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," "Scratch Me," and "Misty." The grim forever adumbrated in recent issues of Mind pressed down, down. . . Where is Stephanie de Moulpied? No one could tell him, and in truth, he did not want to know. It is not he who asks this question, it is Mrs. Lutch. She glides down her glide path, sinuously, she is falling, she bursts into flame, her last words: "Tell them. . . when they crash. . . turn off. . .the ignition."

Margins

EDWARD WAS EXPLAINING TO Carl about margins. "The width of the margin shows culture, aestheticism and a sense of values or the lack of them," he said. "A very wide left margin shows an impractical person of culture and refinement with a deep appreciation for the best in art and music. Whereas," Edward said, quoting his handwriting analysis book, "whereas, narrow left margins show the opposite. No left margin at all shows a practical nature, a wholesome economy and a general lack of good taste in the arts. A very wide right margin shows a person afraid to face reality, oversensitive to the future and generally a poor mixer."

"I don't believe in it," Carl said.

"Now," Edward continued, "with reference to your sign there, you have an all-around wide margin which shows a person of extremely delicate sensibilities with love of color and form, one who holds aloof from the multitude and lives in his own dream world of beauty and good taste."

"Are you sure you got that right?"

"I'm communicating with you," Edward said, "across a vast gulf of ignorance and darkness."

"I brought the darkness, is that the idea?" Carl asked.

"You brought the darkness, you black mother," Edward said. "Funky, man."

"Edward," Carl said, "for God's sake."

"Why did you write all that jazz on your sign, Carl? Why? It's not true, is it? Is it?"

"It's kind of true," Carl said. He looked down at his brown sandwich boards, which said: I Was Put In Jail in Selby County Alabama For Five Years For Stealing A Dollar and A Half Which I Did Not Do. While I Was In Jail My Brother Was Killed & My Mother Ran Away When I Was Little. In Jail I Began Preaching & I Preach to People Wherever I Can Bearing the Witness of Eschatological Love. I Have Filled Out Papers for Jobs But Nobody Will Give Me a Job Because I Have Been In Jail & The Whole Scene Is Very Dreary, Pepsi Cola. I Need Your Offerings to Get Food. Patent Applied For & Deliver Us From Evil. "It's true," Carl said, "with a kind of merde-y inner truth which shines forth as the objective correlative of what actually did happen, back home."

"Now, look at the way you made that 'm' and that 'n' there," Edward said. "The tops are pointed rather than rounded. That indicates aggressiveness and energy. The fact that they're also pointed rather than rounded at the bottom indicates a sarcastic, stubborn and irritable nature. See what I mean?"

"If you say so," Carl said.

"Your capitals are very small," Edward said, "indicating humility."

"My mother would be pleased," Carl said, "if she knew."

"On the other hand, the excessive size of the loops in your 'y' and your 'g' display exaggeration and egoism."

"That's always been one of my problems," Carl answered.

"What's your whole name?" Edward asked, leaning against a building. They were on Fourteenth Street, near Broadway.

"Carl Maria von Weber," Carl said.

"Are you a drug addict?"

"Edward," Carl said, "you are a swinger."

"Are you a Muslim?"

Carl felt his long hair. "Have you read The Mystery of Being, by Gabriel Marcel? I really liked that one. I thought that one was fine."

"No, c'mon Carl, answer the question," Edward insisted. "There's got to be frankness and honesty between the races. Are you one?"

"I think an accommodation can be reached and the government is doing all it can at the moment," Carl said. "I think there's something to be said on all sides of the question. This is not such a good place to hustle, you know that? I haven't got but two offerings all morning."

"People like people who look neat," Edward said. "You look kind of crummy, if you don't mind my saying so."

"You really think it's too long?" Carl asked, feeling his hair again.

"Do you think I'm a pretty color?" Edward asked. "Are you envious?"

"No," Carl said. "Not envious."

"See? Exaggeration and egoism. Just like I said."

"You're kind of boring, Edward. To tell the truth."

Edward thought about this for a moment. Then he said: "But I'm white."

"It's the color of choice," Carl said. "I'm tired of talking about color, though. Let's talk about values or something."

"Carl, I'm a fool," Edward said suddenly.

"Yes," Carl said.

"But I'm a white fool," Edward said. "That's what's so lovely about me."

"You are lovely, Edward," Carl said. "It's true. You have a nice look. Your aspect is good."

"Oh, hell," Edward said despondently. "You're very well-spoken," he said. "I noticed that."

"The reason for that is," Carl said, "I read. Did you read The Cannibal by John Hawkes? I thought that was a hell of a book."

"Get a haircut, Carl," Edward said. "Get a new suit. Maybe one of those new Italian suits with the tight coats. You could be upwardly mobile, you know, if you just put your back into it."

"Why are you worried, Edward? Why does my situation distress you? Why don't you just walk away and talk to somebody else?"

"You bother me," Edward confessed. "I keep trying to penetrate your inner reality, to find out what it is. Isn't that curious?"

"John Hawkes also wrote The Beetle Leg and a couple of other books whose titles escape me at the moment," Carl said. "I think he's

one of the best of our younger American writers."

"Carl," Edward said, "what is your inner reality? Blurt it out, baby."

"It's mine," Carl said quietly. He gazed down at his shoes, which resembled a pair of large dead brownish birds.

"Are you sure you didn't steal that dollar and a half mentioned on your sign?"

"Edward, I told you I didn't steal that dollar and a half." Carl stamped up and down in his sandwich boards. "It sure is cold here on Fourteenth Street."

"That's your imagination, Carl," Edward said. "This street isn't any colder than Fifth, or Lex. Your feeling that it's colder here probably just arises from your marginal status as a despised person in our society."

"Probably," Carl said. There was a look on his face. "You know I went to the government, and asked them to give me a job in the Marine Band, and they wouldn't do it?"

"Do you blow good, man? Where's your axe?"

"They wouldn't give me that cotton-pickin' job," Carl said. "What do you think of that?"

"This eschatological love," Edward said, "what land of love is that?"

"That is later love," Carl said. "That's what I call it, anyhow. That's love on the other side of the Jordan. The term refers to a set of conditions which. . . It's kind of a story we black people tell to ourselves to make ourselves happy."

"Oh me," Edward said. "Ignorance and darkness."

"Edward," Carl said, "you don't like me."

"I do too like you, Carl," Edward said. "Where do you steal your books, mostly?"

"Mostly in drugstores," Carl said. "I find them good because mostly they're long and narrow and the clerks tend to stay near the prescription counters at the back of the store, whereas the books are usually in those little revolving racks near the front of the store. It's normally pretty easy to slip a couple in your overcoat pocket, if you're wearing an overcoat."

"But. . ."

"Yes," Carl said, "I know what you're thinking. If I'll steal books I'll steal other things. But stealing books is metaphysically different from

stealing like money. Villon has something pretty good to say on the subject I believe."

"Is that in 'If I Were King'?"

"Besides," Carl added, "haven't you ever stolen anything? At some point in your life?"

"My life," Edward said. "Why do you remind me of it?"

"Edward, you're not satisfied with your life! I thought white lives were nice!" Carl said, surprised. "I love that word 'nice.' It makes me so happy."

"Listen Carl," Edward said, "why don't you just concentrate on improving your handwriting."

"My character, you mean."

"No," Edward said, "don't bother improving your character. Just improve your handwriting. Make larger capitals. Make smaller loops in your 'y' and your 'g.' Watch your word-spacing so as not to display disorientation. Watch your margins."

"It's an idea. But isn't that kind of a superficial approach to the problem?"

"Be careful about the spaces between the lines," Edward went on. "Spacing of lines shows clearness of thought. Pay attention to your finals. There are twenty-two different kinds of finals and each one tells a lot about a person. I'll lend you the book. Good handwriting is the key to advancement, or if not the key, at least a key. You could be the first man of your race to be Vice-President."

"That's something to shoot for, all right."

"Would you like me to go get the book?"

"I don't think so," Carl said, "no thanks. It's not that I don't have any faith in your solution. What I would like is to take a leak. Would you mind holding my sandwich boards for a minute?"

"Not at all," Edward said, and in a moment had slipped Carl's sandwich boards over his own slight shoulders. "Boy, they're kind of heavy, aren't they?"

"They cut you a bit," Carl said with a malicious smile. "I'll just go into this men's store here."

When Carl returned the two men slapped each other sharply in the

face with the back of the hand, that beautiful part of the hand where the knuckles grow.

The joker's greatest triumph

FREDERIC WENT OVER TO his friend Bruce Wayne's house about every Tuesday night. Bruce would be typically sitting in his study drinking a glass of something. Fredric would come in and sit down and look around the study in which there were many trophies of past exploits.

"Well Fredric what have you been doing? Anything?"

"No Bruce things have been just sort of rocking along."

"Well this is Tuesday night and usually there's some action on Tuesday night."

"I know Bruce or otherwise I wouldn't pick Tuesday night to come over."

"You want me to turn on the radio Fredric? Usually there's something interesting on the radio or maybe you'd like a little music from my hi-fi?"

Bruce Wayne's radio was a special short-wave model with many extra features. When Bruce turned it on there was a squealing noise and then they were listening to Tokyo or somewhere. Above the radio on the wall hung a trophy from an exploit: a long African spear with a spearhead made of tin.

"Tell me Bruce what is it you're drinking there?" Fredric asked.

"I'm sorry Fredric it's tomato juice. Can I get you a glass?"

"Does it have anything in it or is it just plain tomato juice?"

"It's tomato juice with a little vodka."

"Yes I wouldn't mind a glass," Fredric said. "Not too heavy on the vodka please."

While Bruce went out to the kitchen to make the drink Fredric got up and went over to examine the African spear more closely. It was he saw tipped with a rusty darkish substance, probably some rare exotic poison he thought.

"What is this stuff on the end of this African spear?" he asked when Bruce came back into the room.

"I must have left the other bottle of vodka in the Batmobile," Bruce said. "Oh that's curare, deadliest of the South American poisons," he affirmed. "It attacks the motor nerves. Be careful there and don't scratch yourself."

"That's okay I'll just drink this tomato juice straight," Fredric said settling himself in his chair and looking out of the window. "Oh-oh there's the bat symbol spotlighted against the sky. This must mean a call from Commissioner Gordon at headquarters."

Bruce looked out of the window. A long beam of yellowish light culminating in a perfect bat symbol lanced the evening sky.

"I told you Tuesday night was usually a good night," Bruce Wayne said. He put his vodka-and-tomato-juice down on the piano. "Hold on a minute while I change will you?"

"Sure, take your time," Fredric said. "By the way is Robin still at Andover?"

"Yes," Bruce said. "He'll be home for Thanksgiving, I think. He's having a little trouble with his French."

"Well I didn't mean to interrupt you," Fredric said. "Go ahead and change. I'll just look at this magazine."

After Bruce had changed they both went out to the garage where the Batmobile and the Batplane waited.

Batman was humming a tune which Fredric recognized as being the "Warsaw Concerto." "Which one shall we take?" he said. "It's always

hard to decide on a vague and indeterminate kind of assignment like this."

"Let's flip," Fredric suggested.

"Do you have a quarter?" Batman asked.

"No but I have a dime. That should be okay," Fredric said. They flipped, heads for the Batmobile, tails for the Batplane. The coin came up heads.

"Well," Batman said as they climbed into the comfortable Batmobile, "at least you can have some vodka now. It's under the seat."

"I hate to drink it straight," Fredric said.

"Press that button there on the dashboard," Batman said. Fredric pressed the button and a panel on the dashboard slid back to reveal a little bar, with ice, glasses, water, soda, quinine, lemons, limes etc.

"Thanks," Fredric said. "Can I mix you one?"

"Not while I'm working," Batman said. "Is there enough quinine water? I forgot to get some when I went to the liquor store last night."

"Plenty," Fredric said. He enjoyed his vodka tonic as Batman wheeled the great Batmobile expertly through the dark streets of Gotham City.

In Commissioner Gordon's office at Police Headquarters the Commissioner said: "Glad you finally got here Batman. Who is this with you?"

"This is my friend Fredric Brown," Batman said. "Fredric, Commissioner Gordon." The two men shook hands and Batman said: "Now Commissioner, what is this all about?"

"This!" Commissioner Gordon said. He placed a small ship model on the desk before him. "The package came by messenger, addressed to you, Batman! I'm afraid your old enemy, The Joker, is on the loose again!"

Batman hummed a peculiar melody which Fredric recognized as the "Cornish Rhapsody" which is on the other side of the "Warsaw Concerto." "Hmmmmm!" Batman said. "This sounds to me like another one of The Joker's challenges to a duel of wits!"

"Flying Dutchman!" Fredric exclaimed, reading the name painted on the bow of the model ship. "The name of a famous old ghost vessel? What can it mean!"

"A cleverly disguised clue!" Batman said. "The 'Flying Dutchman'

meant here is probably the Dutch jewel merchant Hendrik van Voort who is flying to Gotham City tonight with a delivery of precious gems!"

"Good thinking Batman!" Commissioner Gordon said. "I probably never would have figured it out in a thousand years!"

"Well we'll have to hurry to get out to the airport!" Batman said. "What's the best way to get there from here Commissioner?"

"Well if I were you I'd go out 34th Street until you hit the War Memorial, then take a right on Memorial Drive until it connects with Gotham Parkway! After you're on the Parkway it's clear sailing!" he indicated.

"Wait a minute!" Batman said. "Wouldn't it be quicker to get on the Dugan Expressway where it comes in there at 11th Street and then take the North Loop out to the Richardson Freeway? Don't you think that would save time?"

"Well I come to work that way!" the Commissioner said. "But they're putting in another two lanes on the North Loop, so that you have to detour down Strand, then cut over to 99th to get back on the Expressway! Takes you about two miles out of your way!" he said.

"Okay!" Batman said, "we'll go out 34th! Thanks Commissioner and don't worry about anything! Come on Fredric!"

"Oh by the way," Commissioner Gordon said. "How's Robin doing at Exeter?"

"It's not Exeter it's Andover," Batman said. "He's doing very well. Having a little trouble with his French."

"I had a little trouble with it myself," the Commissioner said jovially. "Ou est man livre?"

"Ou est ton livre?" Batman said.

"Ou est son livre?" the Commissioner said pointing at Fredric.

"Tout cela s'est passe en dix-neuf cent vingt-quatre," Fredric said.

"Well we'd better creep Commissioner," Batman said. "The Joker as you know is a pretty slippery customer. Come on Fredric."

"Glad to have met you Commissioner," Fredric said.

"Me too," the Commissioner said, shaking Fredric's hand. "This is a fine-appearing young man Batman. Where did you find him?"

"He's just a friend," Batman said smiling under his mask.

"We get together usually on Tuesday nights and have a few."

"What do you do Fredric? I mean how do you make your living?"

"I sell Grit, a newspaper which has most of its circulation concentrated in rural areas," Fredric said. "However I sell it right here in Gotham City. Many of today's leaders sold Grit during their boyhoods."

"Okay," said Commissioner Gordon, ushering them out of his office. "Good luck. Telephonez-moi un de ces jours."

"Righto," Batman said, and they hurried down the street to the Batmobile, which was parked in a truck zone.

"Can we stop for a minute on the way?" Fredric asked. "I'm out of cigarettes."

"There are some Viceroys in the glove compartment," Batman said pushing a button. A panel on the dashboard slid back to reveal a fresh carton of Viceroys.

"I usually prefer Kents," Fredric said, "but Viceroys are tasty too."

"They're all about the same I find," Batman said. "Most of the alleged differences in cigarettes are just advertising as far as I'm concerned."

"I wouldn't be surprised if you were right about that," Fredric said. The Batmobile sped down the dark streets of Gotham City toward Gotham Airport.

"Turn on the radio," Batman suggested. "Maybe we can catch the news or something."

Fredric turned on the radio but there was nothing unusual on it.

At Gotham Airport the jewel merchant Hendrik van Voort was just dismounting from his KLM jet when the Batmobile wheeled onto the landing strip, waved through the gates by respectful airport police in gray uniforms.

"Well everything seems to be okay," Batman said. "There's the armored car waiting to take Mr. van Voort to his destination."

"That's a new kind of armored car isn't it?" Fredric asked.

Without a word Batman leaped through the open door of the armored car and grappled with the shadowy figure inside.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

"That's The Joker's laugh!" Fredric reflected. "The man inside the armored car must be the grinning clown of crime himself!"

"Batman! I thought that clue I sent you would leave you completely at sea!"

"No, Joker! I'm afraid this leaves your plans up in the air!"

"But not for long Batman! I'm going to bring you down to earth!"

With a swift movement, The Joker crashed the armored car into the side of the Terminal Building!

CRASH!

"Great Scott!" Fredric said to himself. "Batman is stunned! He's helpless!"

"You foiled my plans Batman," The Joker said, "but before the police get here, I'm going to lift that mask of yours and find out who you really are! HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!"

Fredric watched, horror-stricken. "Great Scott! The Joker has unmasked Batman! Now he knows that Batman is really Bruce Wayne!"

At this moment Robin, who was supposed to be at Andover, many miles away, landed the Batplane on the airstrip and came racing toward the wrecked armored car! But The Joker, alerted, grasped a cable lowered by a hovering helicopter and was quickly lifted skyward! Robin paused at the armored car and put the mask back on Batman's face!

"Hello Robin!" Fredric called. "I thought you were at Andover!"

"I was but I got a sudden feeling Barman needed me so I flew here in the Batplane," Robin said. "How've you been?"

"Fine," Fredric said. "But we left the Batplane in the garage, back at the Bat-Cave. I don't understand."

"We have two of everything," Robin explained. "Although it's not generally known."

With Fredric's aid Robin carried the stunned Batman to the waiting Batmobile. "You drive the Batmobile back to the Bat-Cave and I'll follow in the Batplane," Robin said. "All right?"

"Check," Fredric said. Don't you think we ought to give him a little brandy or something?"

"That's a good idea," Robin said. "Press that button there on the dashboard. That's the brandy button."

Fredric pressed the button and a panel slid back, revealing a bottle of B & B and the appropriate number of glasses.

"This is pretty tasty," Fredric said, tasting the B & B. "How much is it a fifth?"

"Around eight dollars," Robin said. "There, that seems to be restoring him to his senses."

"Great Scott," Batman said, "what happened?"

"The Joker crashed the armored car and you were stunned," Fredric explained.

"Hi Robin what are you doing here? I thought you were up at school," Batman said.

"I was," Robin said. "Are you okay now? Can you drive home okay?"

"I think so," Batman said. "What happened to The Joker?"

"He got away," Fredric said, "but not before lifting your mask while you lay stunned in the wreckage of the wrecked armored car."

"Yes Batman," Robin said seriously, "I think he learned your real identity."

"Great Scott!" Batman said. "If he reveals it to the whole world it will mean the end of my career as a crime-fighter! Well, it's a problem."

They drove seriously back to the Bat-Cave, thinking about the problem. Later, in Bruce Wayne's study, Bruce Wayne, Fredric, and Robin, who was now dressed in the conservative Andover clothes of Dick Grayson, Bruce Wayne's ward, mulled the whole thing over between them.

"What makes The Joker tick I wonder?" Fredric said. "I mean what are his real motivations?"

"Consider him at any level of conduct," Bruce said slowly, "in the home, on the street, in interpersonal relations, in jail -- always there is an extraordinary contradiction. He is dirty and compulsively neat, aloof and desperately gregarious, enthusiastic and sullen, generous and stingy, a snappy dresser and a scarecrow, a gentleman and a boor, given to extremes of happiness and despair, singularly well able to apply himself and capable of frittering away a lifetime in trivial pursuits, decorous and unseemly, land and cruel, tolerant yet open to the most outrageous varieties of bigotry, a great friend and an implacable enemy, a lover and an abominator of women, sweet-spoken and foul-mouthed, a rake and a puritan, swelling with hubris and haunted by inferiority, outcast and social climber, felon and philanthropist, barbarian

and patron of the arts, enamored of novelty and solidly conservative, philosopher and fool, Republican and Democrat, large of soul and unbearably petty, distant and brimming with friendly impulses, an inveterate liar and astonishingly strict with petty cash, adventurous and timid, imaginative and stolid, malignly destructive and a planter of trees on Arbor Day -- I tell you frankly, the man is a mess."

"That's extremely well said Bruce," Fredric stated. "I think you've given really a very thoughtful analysis."

"I was paraphrasing what Mark Schorer said about Sinclair Lewis," Bruce replied.

"Well it's very brilliant just the same," Fredric noted. "I guess I'd better go home now."

"We could all use a little sleep," Bruce Wayne said. "By the way Fredric how are the Grit sales coming along? Are you getting many subscriptions?"

"Yes quite a few Bruce," Fredric said. "I've been doing particularly well in the wealthier sections of Gotham City although the strength of Grit is usually found in rural areas. By the way Dick if you want to borrow my language records to help you with your French you can come by Saturday."

"Thanks Fredric I'll do that," Dick said.

"Okay Bruce," Fredric said, "I'll see you next Tuesday night probably unless something comes up."

To London and Rome

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I want more than anything else? Alison asked.

THERE WAS A BRIEF PAUSE

What? I said.
A sewing-machine Alison said, with buttonhole-making attachments.

THERE WAS A LONG PAUSE

There are so many things I could do with it for instance fixing up last year's fall dresses and lots of other things.

THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS PAUSE DURING WHICH I BOUGHT HER A NECCHI SEWING-MACHINE

Wonderful! Alison said sitting at the controls of the Necchi and making buttonholes in a copy of the New York Times Sunday Magazine.

Her eyes glistened. I had also bought a two-year subscription to Necchi News because I could not be sure that her interest would not be held for that long at least.

THERE WAS A PAUSE BROKEN ONLY BY THE HUMMING OF THE NECCHI

Then I bought her a purple Rolls which we decided to park on the street because our apartment building had no garage. Alison said she absolutely loved the Rolls! and gave me an enthusiastic kiss. I paid for the car with a check drawn on the First City Bank.

THERE WAS AN INTERVAL

Peter Alison said, what do you want to do now?
Oh I don't know I said.

THERE WAS A LONG INTERVAL

Well we can't simply sit around the apartment Alison said so we went to the races at Aqueduct where I bought a race horse that was running well out in front of the others. What a handsome race horse! Alison said delightedly. I paid for the horse with a check on the Capital National Bank.

THERE WAS AN INTERMISSION BETWEEN RACES SO WE WENT AROUND TO THE STABLES AND BOUGHT A HORSE TRAILER

The trailer was attached by means of a trailer hitch, which I bought when it became clear that the trailer could not be hitched up without one, to the back of our new Rolls. The horse's name was Dan and I bought a horse blanket, which he was already wearing but which did not come with him, to keep him warm.
He is beautiful Alison said.
A front-runner too I said.

THERE WAS AN INTERVAL OF SEVERAL DAYS. THEN ALISON AND I DROVE THE CAR WITH THE TRAILER UP THE RAMP INTO THE PLANE AND WE FLEW BACK TO MILWAUKEE

After stopping for lunch at Howard Johnson's where we fed Dan some fried clams which he seemed to like very much Alison said: Do you know what we've completely forgotten? I knew that there was something but although I thought hard I could not imagine what it was.

There's no place to keep him in our apartment building! Alison said triumphantly, pointing at Dan. She was of course absolutely right and I hastily bought a large three-story house in Milwaukee's best suburb. To make the house more comfortable I bought a concert grand piano.

ON THE DOORSTEP OF THE NEW HOUSE THE PIANO MOVERS PAUSED FOR A GLASS OF COLD WATER

Here are some little matters which you must attend to Alison said, handing me a box of bills. I went through them carefully, noting the amounts and thinking about money.

What in the name of God is this! I cried, holding up a bill for $1600 from the hardware store.

Garden hose Alison said calmly.

THERE WAS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE

It was clear that I would have to remove some money from the State Bank & Trust and place it in the Municipal National and I did so. The pilot of the airplane which I had bought to fly us to Aqueduct, with his friend the pilot of the larger plane I had bought to fly us back, appeared at the door and asked to be paid. The pilots' names were George and Sam. I paid them and also bought from Sam his flight jacket, which was khaki-colored and pleasant-looking. They smiled and saluted as they left.

Well I said looking around the new house, we'd better call a piano

teacher because I understand that without use pianos tend to fall out of tune.

Not only pianos Alison said giving me an exciting look.

A SILENCE FREIGHTED WITH SEXUAL SIGNIFICANCE ENSUED. THEN WE WENT TO BED FIRST HOWEVER ORDERING A PIANO TEACHER AND A PIANO TUNER FOR THE EARLY MORNING

The next day Mr. Washington from the Central National called to report an overdraft of several hundred thousand dollars for which I apologized. Who was that on the telephone? Alison asked. Mr. Washington from the bank I replied. Oh Alison said, what do you want for breakfast? What have you got? I asked. Nothing Alison said, we'll have to go out for breakfast.

So we went down to the drugstore where Alison had eggs sunny side up and I had buckwheat cakes with sausage. When we got back to the house I noticed that there were no trees surrounding it, which depressed me.

Have you noticed I asked, that there are no trees?

A SILENCE

Yes Alison said, I've noticed.

A PROLONGED SILENCE

In fact Alison said, the treelessness of this house almost makes me yearn for our old apartment building.

A TERRIBLE SILENCE

There at least one could look at the large plants in the lobby.

ABSOLUTE SILENCE FOR ONE MINUTE

As soon as we go inside I said, I will call the tree service and buy some trees.

Maples I said.

SHORT SILENCE

Oh Peter what a fine idea Alison said brightly. But who are these people in our livingroom?

SILENTLY WE REGARDED THE TWO MEN WHO SAT ON THE SOFA

Realizing that the men were the piano teacher and the piano tuner we had requested, I said: Well did you try the piano?

Yep the first man said, couldn't make heads or tails out of it.

And you? I asked, turning to the other man.

Beats me he said with a mystified look.

What seems to be the difficulty? I asked.

THERE WAS A SHAMEFACED SILENCE

Frankly the piano teacher said, this isn't my real line of work. Really he said, I'm a jockey.

How about you? I said to this companion.

Oh I'm a bona fide piano tuner all right the tuner said. It's just that I'm not very good at it. Never was and never will be.

WE CONSIDERED THE PROBLEM IN SILENCE

I have a proposition to make I announced. What is your name? I asked, nodding in the direction of the jockey.

Slim he said, and my friend here is Buster.

Well Slim I said, we need a jockey for our race horse, Dan, who will fall out of trim without workouts. And Buster, you can plant the maple trees which I have just ordered for the house.

THERE WAS A JOYFUL SILENCE AS BUSTER AND SLIM TRIED TO DIGEST THE GOOD NEWS

I settled on a salary of $12,000 a year for Slim and a slightly smaller one for Buster. This accomplished I drove the Rolls over to Courtlandt Street to show it to my mistress, Amelia.

When I knocked at the door of Amelia's apartment she refused to open it. Instead she began practicing scales on her flute. I knocked again and called out: Amelia!

THE SOUND OF THE FLUTE FILLED THE SILENT HALLWAY

I knocked again but Amelia continued to play. So I sat down on the steps and began to read the newspaper which was lying on the floor, knocking at intervals and at the same time wondering about the psychology of Amelia.

Montgomery Ward I noticed in the newspaper was at 40½. Was Amelia being adamant I considered, because of Alison?

SILENTLY I WONDERED WHAT TO DO

Amelia I said at length (through the door), I want to give you a nice present of around $5500. Would you like that?

AN INTERMINABLE SILENCE. THEN AMELIA HOLDING THE FLUTE OPENED THE DOOR

Do you mean it? she said.

Certainly I said.

Can you afford it? she asked doubtfully.

I have a new Rolls I told her, and took her outside where she admired the car at great length. Then I gave her a check for $5500 on the Commercial National for which she thanked me. Back in the apartment she gracefully removed her clothes and put the check in a book in the bookcase. She looked very pretty without her clothes, as pretty as ever, and we had a pleasant time for an hour or more. When I left

the apartment Amelia said Peter, I think you're a very pleasant person which made me feel very good and on the way home I bought a new gray Dacron suit.

WHEN I GAVE THE SALESMAN A CHECK ON THE MEDICAL NATIONAL HE PAUSED, FROWNED, AND SAID: "THIS IS A NEW BANK ISN'T IT?"

Where have you been? Alison said, I've been waiting lunch for hours. I bought a new suit I said, how do you like it? Very nice Alison said, but hurry I've got to go shopping after lunch. Shopping! I said, I'll go with you!

So we ate a hasty lunch of vichyssoise and ice cream and had Buster drive us in the Rolls to the Federated Department Store where we bought a great many things for the new house and a new horse blanket for Dan.

Do you think we ought to buy uniforms for Buster and Slim? Alison asked and I replied that I thought not, they didn't seem the sort who would enjoy wearing uniforms.

A FROSTY SILENCE

I think they ought to wear uniforms Alison said firmly.

No I said, I think not.

DEAD SILENCE

Uniforms with something on the pocket Alison said. A crest or something.

No.

THERE WAS AN INTERVAL DURING WHICH I SENT A CHECK FOR $500,000 TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Instead of uniforms I bought Slim a Kaywoodie pipe and some pipe tobacco, and bought Buster a large sterling silver cowboy belt buckle

and a belt to go with it.

Buster was very pleased with his sterling silver belt buckle and said that he thought Slim would be pleased too when he saw the Kaywoodie pipe which had been bought for him. You were right after all Alison whispered to me in the back seat of the Rolls.

Alison decided that she would make a pie for supper, a chocolate pie perhaps, and that we would have Buster and Slim and George and Sam the pilots too if they were in town and not flying. She began looking in her recipe book while I read the Necchi News in my favorite armchair.

Then Slim came in from the garage with a worried look. Dan he said is not well.

A STUNNED PAUSE

Everyone was thrown into a panic by the thought of Dan's illness and I bought some Kaopectate which Slim however did not believe would be appropriate. The Kaopectate was $0.98 and I paid for it with a check on the Principal National. The delivery boy from the drugstore, whose name was Andrew, suggested that Dan needed a doctor. This seemed sensible so I tipped Andrew with a check on the Manufacturers' Trust and asked him to fetch the very best doctor he could find on such short notice.

WE LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER IN WORDLESS FEAR

Dan was lying on his side in the garage, groaning now and then. His face was a rich gray color and it was clear that if he did not have immediate attention, the worst might be expected.

Peter for God's sake do something for this poor horse! Alison cried.

PAUSING ONLY TO WHIP A FRESH CHECKBOOK FROM THE DESK DRAWER, I BOUGHT A LARGE HOSPITAL NEARBY FOR $1.5 MILLION

We sent Dan over in his trailer with strict instructions that he be given the best of everything. Slim and Buster accompanied him and when

Andrew arrived with the doctor I hurried them off to the hospital too. Concern for Dan was uppermost in my mind at that moment.

The telephone rang and Alison answered.

Then she said: It's some girl, for you.

RETURNING TO THE LIVINGROOM, ALISON HESITATED

As I had thought it might be, it was Amelia. I told her about Dan's illness. She was very concerned and asked if I thought it would be appropriate if she went to the hospital.

A MOMENT OF INDECISION FOLLOWED BY A PAINFUL SILENCE

You don't think it would be appropriate Amelia said.

No Amelia I said truthfully, I don't.

Then Amelia said that this indication of her tiny status in all our lives left her with nothing to say.

THE CONVERSATION LAPSED

To cheer her up I said I would visit her again in the near future. This pleased her and the exchange ended on a note of warmth. I knew however that Alison would ask questions and I returned to the livingroom with some anxiety.

AN HIATUS FILLED WITH DOUBT AND SUSPICION

But now the pilots George and Sam rushed in with good news indeed. They had gotten word of Dan's illness over the radio they said, and filled with concern had flown straight to the hospital, where they learned that Dan's stomach had been pumped and all was well. Dan was resting easily George and Sam said, and could come home in about a week.

Oh Peter! Alison exclaimed in a pleased way, our ordeal is over. She kissed me with abandon and George and Sam shook hands with each

other and with Andrew and Buster and Slim, who had just come in from the hospital. To celebrate we decided that we would all fly to London and Rome on a Viscount jet which I bought for an undisclosed sum and which Sam declared he knew how to fly very well.

A shower of gold

BECAUSE HE NEEDED THE money Peterson answered an ad that said "We'll pay you to be on TV if your opinions are strong enough or your personal experiences have a flavor of the unusual." He called the number and was told to come to Room 1551 in the Graybar Building on Lexington. This he did and after spending twenty minutes with a Miss Arbor who asked him if he had ever been in analysis was okayed for a program called Who Am I? "What do you have strong opinions about?" Miss Arbor asked. "Art," Peterson said, "life, money." "For instance?" "I believe," Peterson said, "that the learning ability of mice can be lowered or increased by regulating the amount of serotonin in the brain. I believe that schizophrenics have a high incidence of unusual fingerprints, including lines that make almost complete circles. I believe that the dreamer watches his dream in sleep, by moving his eyes." "That's very interesting!" Miss Arbor cried. "It's all in the World Almanac," Peterson replied.

"I see you're a sculptor," Miss Arbor said, "that's wonderful." "What is the nature of the program?" Peterson asked. "I've never seen it." "Let me answer your question with another question," Miss Arbor said. "Mr.

Peterson, are you absurd?" Her enormous lips were smeared with a glowing white cream. "I beg your pardon?" "I mean," Miss Arbor said earnestly, "do you encounter your own existence as gratuitous? Do you feel de trap? Is there nausea?" "I have an enlarged liver," Peterson offered. "That's excellent!" Miss Arbor exclaimed. "That's a very good beginning! Who Am I? tries, Mr. Peterson, to discover what people really are. People today, we feel, are hidden away inside themselves, alienated, desperate, living in anguish, despair and bad faith. Why have we been thrown here, and abandoned? That's the question we try to answer, Mr. Peterson. Man stands alone in a featureless, anonymous landscape, in fear and trembling and sickness unto death. God is dead. Nothingness everywhere. Dread. Estrangement. Finitude. Who Am I? approaches these problems in a root radical way." "On television?" "We're interested in basics, Mr. Peterson. We don't play around." "I see," Peterson said, wondering about the amount of the fee. "What I want to know now, Mr. Peterson, is this: are you interested in absurdity?" "Miss Arbor," he said, "to tell you the truth, I don't know. I'm not sure I believe in it." "Oh, Mr. Peterson!" Miss Arbor said, shocked. "Don't say that! You'll be. . ." "Punished?" Peterson suggested. "You may not be interested in absurdity," she said firmly, "but absurdity is interested in you." "I have a lot of problems, if that helps," Peterson said. "Existence is problematic for you," Miss Arbor said, relieved. "The fee is two hundred dollars."

"I'm going to be on television," Peterson said to his dealer. "A terrible shame," Jean-Claude responded. "Is it unavoidable?" "It's unavoidable," Peterson said, "if I want to eat." "How much?" Jean-Claude asked and Peterson said: "Two hundred." He looked around the gallery to see if any of his works were on display. "A ridiculous compensation considering the infamy. Are you using your own name?" "You haven't by any chance. . ." "No one is buying," Jean-Claude said. "Undoubtedly it is the weather. People are thinking in terms of -- what do you call those things? -- Chris-Crafts. To boat with. You would not consider again what I spoke to you about before?" "No," Peterson said, "I wouldn't consider it." "Two little ones would move much, much faster than a single huge big one," Jean-Claude said, looking away. "To saw it across the middle would be a very simple matter." "It's supposed to be a work of

art," Peterson said, as calmly as possible. "You don't go around sawing works of art across the middle, remember?" "That place where it saws," Jean-Claude said, "is not very difficult. I can put my two hands around it." He made a circle with his two hands to demonstrate. "Invariably when I look at that piece I see two pieces. Are you absolutely sure you didn't conceive it wrongly in the first instance?" "Absolutely," Peterson said. Not a single piece of his was on view, and his liver expanded in rage and hatred. "You have a very romantic impulse," Jean-Claude said. "I admire, dimly, the posture. You read too much in the history of art. It estranges you from those possibilities for authentic selfhood that inhere in the present century." "I know," Peterson said, "could you let me have twenty until the first?"

Peterson sat in his loft on lower Broadway drinking Rheingold and thinking about the President. He had always felt close to the President but felt now that he had, in agreeing to appear on the television program, done something slightly disgraceful, of which the President would not approve. But I needed the money, he told himself, the telephone is turned off and the kitten is crying for milk. And I'm running out of beer. The President feels that the arts should be encouraged, Peterson reflected, surely he doesn't want me to go without beer? He wondered if what he was feeling was simple guilt at having sold himself to television or something more elegant: nausea? His liver groaned within him and he considered a situation in which his new relationship with the President was announced. He was working in the loft. The piece in hand was to be called Season's Greetings and combined three auto radiators, one from a Chevrolet Tudor, one from a Ford pick-up, one from a 1932 Essex, with part of a former telephone switchboard and other items. The arrangement seemed right and he began welding. After a time the mass was freestanding. A couple of hours had passed. He put down the torch, lifted off the mask. He walked over to the refrigerator and found a sandwich left by a friendly junk dealer. It was a sandwich made hastily and without inspiration: a thin slice of ham between two pieces of bread. He ate it gratefully nevertheless. He stood looking at the work, moving from time to time so as to view it from a new angle. Then the door to the loft burst open and the President ran

in, trailing a sixteen-pound sledge. His first blow cracked the principal weld in Season's Greetings, the two halves parting like lovers, clinging for a moment and then rushing off in opposite directions. Twelve Secret Service men held Peterson in a paralyzing combination of secret grips. He's looking good, Peterson thought, very good, healthy, mature, fit, trustworthy. I like his suit. The President's second and third blows smashed the Essex radiator and the Chevrolet radiator. Then he attacked the welding torch, the plaster sketches on the workbench, the Rodin cast and the Giacometti stickman Peterson had bought in Paris. "But Mr. President!" Peterson shouted. "I thought we were friends!" A Secret Service man bit him in the back of the neck. Then the President lifted the sledge high in the air, turned toward Peterson, and said: "Your liver is diseased? That's a good sign. You're making progress. You're thinking."

"I happen to think that guy in the White House is doing a pretty darn good job." Peterson's barber, a man named Kitchen who was also a lay analyst and the author of four books titled The Decision To Be, was the only person in the world to whom he had confided his former sense of community with the President. "As far as his relationship with you personally goes," the barber continued, "it's essentially a kind of I-Thou relationship, if you know what I mean. You got to handle it with full awareness of the implications. In the end one experiences only oneself, Nietzsche said. When you're angry with the President, what you experience is self-as-angry-with-the-President. When things are okay between you and him, what you experience is self-as-swinging-with-the-President. Well and good. But," Kitchen said, lathering up, "you want the relationship to be such that what you experience is the-President-as-swinging-with-you. You want his reality, get it? So that you can break out of the hell of solipsism. How about a little more off the sides?" "Everybody knows the language but me," Peterson said irritably. "Look," Kitchen said, "when you talk about me to somebody else, you say 'my barber,' don't you? Sure you do. In the same way, I look at you as being 'my customer,' get it? But you don't regard yourself as being 'my' customer and I don't regard myself as 'your' barber. Oh, it's hell all right." The razor moved like a switchblade across the back of Peterson's neck. "Like Pascal said: 'The natural misfortune of

our mortal and feeble condition is so wretched that when we consider it closely, nothing can console us.' The razor rocketed around an ear. "Listen," Peterson said, "what do you think of this television program called Who Am 1? Ever seen it?" "Frankly," the barber said, "it smells of the library. But they do a job on those people, I'll tell you that." "What do you mean?" Peterson said excitedly. "What kind of a job?" The cloth was whisked away and shaken with a sharp popping sound. "It's too horrible even to talk about," Kitchen said. "But it's what they deserve, those crumbs." "Which crumbs?" Peterson asked.

That night a tall foreign-looking man with a switchblade big as a butcherknife open in his hand walked into the loft without knocking and said "Good evening, Mr. Peterson, I am the cat-piano player, is there anything you'd particularly like to hear?" "Cat-piano?" Peterson said, gasping, shrinking from the knife. "What are you talking about? What do you want?" A biography of Nolde slid from his lap to the floor. "The cat-piano," said the visitor, "is an instrument of the devil, a diabolical instrument. You needn't sweat quite so much," he added, sounding aggrieved. Peterson tried to be brave. "I don't understand," he said. "Let me explain," the tall foreign-looking man said graciously. "The keyboard consists of eight cats -- the octave -- encased in the body of the instrument in such a way that only their heads and forepaws protrude. The player presses upon the appropriate paws, and the appropriate cats respond -- with a kind of shriek. There is also provision made for pulling their tails. A tail-puller, or perhaps I should say tail player" (he smiled a disingenuous smile) "is stationed at the rear of the instrument, where the tails are. At the correct moment the tail-puller pulls the correct tail. The tail-note is of course quite different from the paw-note and produces sounds in the upper registers. Have you ever seen such an instrument, Mr. Peterson?" "No, and I don't believe it exists," Peterson said heroically. "There is an excellent early seventeenth-century engraving by Franz van der Wyngaert, Mr. Peterson, in which a cat-piano appears. Played, as it happens, by a man with a wooden leg. You will observe my own leg." The cat-piano player hoisted his trousers and a leglike contraption of wood, metal and plastic appeared. "And now, would you like to make a request? 'The Martyrdom

of St. Sebastian'? The 'Romeo and Juliet' overture? 'Holiday for Strings'?" "But why --" Peterson began. "The kitten is crying for milk, Mr. Peterson. And whenever a kitten cries, the cat-piano plays." "But it's not my kitten," Peterson said reasonably. "It's just a kitten that wished itself on me. I've been trying to give it away. I'm not sure it's still around. I haven't seen it since the day before yesterday." The kitten appeared, looked at Peterson reproachfully, and then rubbed itself against the cat-piano player's mechanical leg. "Wait a minute!" Peterson exclaimed. "This thing is rigged! That cat hasn't been here in two days. What do you want from me? What am I supposed to do?" "Choices, Mr. Peterson, choices. You chose that kitten as a way of encountering that which you are not, that is to say, kitten. An effort on the part of the pour-soi to --" "But it chose me!" Peterson cried, "the door was open and the first thing I knew it was lying in my bed, under the Army blanket. I didn't have anything to do with it!" The cat-piano player repeated his disingenuous smile. "Yes, Mr. Peterson, I know, I know. Things are done to you, it is all a gigantic conspiracy. I've heard the story a hundred times. But the kitten is here, is it not? The kitten is weeping, is it not?" Peterson looked at the kitten, which was crying huge tigerish tears into its empty dish. "Listen Mr. Peterson," the cat-piano player said, "listen!" The blade of his immense knife jumped back into the handle with a thwack! and the hideous music began.

The day after the hideous music began the three girls from California arrived. Peterson opened his door, hesitantly, in response to an insistent ringing, and found himself being stared at by three girls in blue jeans and heavy sweaters, carrying suitcases. "I'm Sherry," the first girl said, "and this is Ann and this is Louise. We're from California and we need a place to stay." They were homely and extremely purposeful. "I'm sorry," Peterson said, "I can't --" "We sleep anywhere," Sherry said, looking past him into the vastness of his loft, "on the floor if we have to. We've done it before." Ann and Louise stood on their toes to get a good look. "What's that funny music?" Sherry asked, "it sounds pretty far-out. We really won't be any trouble at all and it'll just be a little while until we make a connection." "Yes," Peterson said, "but why me?" "You're an artist," Sherry said sternly, "we saw the A.I.R. sign downstairs." Peterson cursed the fire laws which made posting of the signs

obligatory. "Listen," he said, "I can't even feed the cat. I can't even keep myself in beer. This is not the place. You won't be happy here. My work isn't authentic. I'm a minor artist." "The natural misfortune of our mortal and feeble condition is so wretched that when we consider it closely, nothing can console us," Sherry said. "That's Pascal." "I know," Peterson said, weakly. "Where is the john?" Louise asked. Ann marched into the kitchen and began to prepare, from supplies removed from her rucksack, something called veal engagá. "Kiss me," Sherry said, "I need love." Peterson flew to his friendly neighborhood bar, ordered a double brandy, and wedged himself into a telephone booth. "Miss Arbor? This is Hank Peterson. Listen, Miss Arbor, I can't do it. No, I mean really. I'm being punished horribly for even thinking about it. No, I mean it. You can't imagine what's going on around here. Please, get somebody else? I'd regard it as a great personal favor. Miss Arbor? Please?"

The other contestants were a young man in white pajamas named Arthur Pick, a karate expert, and an airline pilot in full uniform, Wallace E. Rice. "Just be natural," Miss Arbor said, "and of course be frank. We score on the basis of the validity of your answers, and of course that's measured by the polygraph." "What's this about a polygraph?" the airline pilot said. "The polygraph measures the validity of your answers," Miss Arbor said, her lips glowing whitely. "How else are we going to know if you're. . ." "Lying?" Wallace E. Rice supplied. The contestants were connected to the machine and the machine to a large illuminated tote board hanging over their heads. The master of ceremonies, Peterson noted without pleasure, resembled the President and did not look at all friendly.

The program began with Arthur Pick. Arthur Pick got up in his white pajamas and gave a karate demonstration in which he broke three half-inch pine boards with a single kick of his naked left foot. Then he told how he had disarmed a bandit, late at night at the A&P where he was an assistant manager, with a maneuver called a "ripchoong" which he demonstrated on the announcer. "How about that?" the announcer caroled. "Isn't that something? Audience?" The audience responded enthusiastically and Arthur Pick stood modestly with his hands behind his back. "Now," the announcer said, 'let's play Who Am I? And here's your host, Bill Lemmon!" No, he doesn't look like

the President, Peterson decided. "Arthur," Bill Lemmon said, "for twenty dollars -- do you love your mother?" "Yes," Arthur Pick said. "Yes, of course." A bell rang, the tote board flashed, and the audience screamed. "He's lying!" the announcer shouted, "lying! lying! lying!" "Arthur," Bill Lemmon said, looking at his index cards, "the polygraph shows that the validity of your answer is. . . questionable. Would you like to try it again? Take another crack at it?" "You're crazy," Arthur Pick said. "Of course I love my mother." He was fishing around inside his pajamas for a handkerchief. "Is your mother watching the show tonight, Arthur?" "Yes, Bill, she is." "How long have you been studying karate?" "Two years, Bill." "And who paid for the lessons?" Arthur Pick hesitated. Then he said: "My mother, Bill." "They were pretty expensive, weren't they, Arthur?" "Yes, Bill, they were." "How expensive?" "Five dollars an hour." "Your mother doesn't make very much money, does she, Arthur?" "No, Bill, she doesn't." "Arthur, what does your mother do for a living?" "She's a garment worker, Bill. In the garment district." "And how long has she worked down there?" "All her life, I guess. Since my old man died." "And she doesn't make very much money, you said." "No. But she wanted to pay for the lessons. She insisted on it." Bill Lemmon said: "She wanted a son who could break boards with his feet?" Peterson's liver leaped and the tote board spelled out, in huge, glowing white letters, the words bad faith. The airline pilot, Wallace E. Rice, was led to reveal that he had been caught, on a flight from Omaha to Miami, with a stewardess sitting on his lap and wearing his captain's cap, that the flight engineer had taken a Polaroid picture, and that he had been given involuntary retirement after nineteen years of faithful service. "It was perfectly safe," Wallace E. Rice said, "you don't understand, the automatic pilot can fly that plane better than I can." He further confessed to a lifelong and intolerable itch after stewardesses which had much to do, he said, with the way their jackets fell just on top of their hips, and his own jacket with the three gold stripes on the sleeve darkened with sweat until it was black.

I was wrong, Peterson thought, the world is absurd. The absurdity is punishing me for not believing in it. I affirm the absurdity. On the other hand, absurdity is itself absurd. Before the emcee could ask the first question, Peterson began to talk. "Yesterday," Peterson said to the

television audience, "in the typewriter in front of the Olivetti showroom on Fifth Avenue, I found a recipe for Ten Ingredient Soup that included a stone from a toad's head. And while I stood there marveling a nice old lady pasted on the elbow of my best Haspel suit a little blue sticker reading THIS INDIVIDUAL IS A PART OF THE COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY FOR GLOBAL DOMINATION OF THE ENTIRE GLOBE. Coming home I passed a sign that said in ten-foot letters COWARD SHOES and heard a man singing "Golden Earrings" in a horrible voice, and last night I dreamed there was a shoot-out at our house on Meat Street and my mother shoved me in a closet to get me out of the line of fire." The emcee waved at the floor manager to turn Peterson off, but Peterson kept talking. "In this kind of a world," Peterson said, "absurd if you will, possibilities nevertheless proliferate and escalate all around us and there are opportunities for beginning again. I am a minor artist and my dealer won't even display my work if he can help it but minor is as minor does and lightning may strike even yet. Don't be reconciled. Turn off your television sets," Peterson said, "cash in your life insurance, indulge in a mindless optimism. Visit girls at dusk. Play the guitar. How can you be alienated without first having been connected? Think back and remember how it was." A man on the floor in front of Peterson was waving a piece of cardboard on which something threatening was written but Peterson ignored him and concentrated on the camera with the little red light. The little red light jumped from camera to camera in an attempt to throw him off balance but Peterson was too smart for it and followed wherever it went. "My mother was a royal virgin," Peterson said, "and my father a shower of gold. My childhood was pastoral and energetic and rich in experiences which developed my character. As a young man I was noble in reason, infinite in faculty, in form express and admirable, and in apprehension. . ." Peterson went on and on and although he was, in a sense, lying, in a sense he was not.