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THE CRUCIBLE

A Publication of the English Club
Lock Haven State Teachers College
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The Passenger

RALPH H. WIKSTROM

"There's nothing like driving a target around and being shot at," mused Ensign Robert C. Culver as he reached the end of the taxistrip and turned for runway two-eight. He taxied his blue single-seat Corsair towards the area where its target tow was to be hooked on.

A group of ordnance men stood by a yellow truck near the runway. One sailor, his shirt revealing the name La Pone in black letters across its back, stood alone beside a white cloth sleeve—the target. Stretching down the runway was a long cable. One end was attached to the target; the other end was lying opposite it. The fifteen hundred feet of cable between formed a long u-shaped figure on the tire-marked concrete. In the warm breeze that blew over the airfield, La Pone stood and watched the Corsair draw near. It was a fine, beautiful day.

The blue fighter braked to a halt near the white target sleeve. Culver waved to the sailor and locked his tailwheel. He eased back the throttle and kept both feet on the brakes. The engine made a rough, irregular sound as it idled; its four-bladed prop windmilled and from the exhaust stacks swept small puffs of blue smoke out over the wing and under the tail.

La Pone ran behind the fuselage and connected the tow-line to a releasable hook on the underside of the plane. The prop-wash blew off his hat and wrapped his dungarees tightly around his legs, flapping the belled bottoms. The hook-up was complete. La Pone walked away, then signaled Culver by a "thumbs-up" that all was well.

Culver locked his brakes and pushed the throttle forward, turning the idling engine into a thundering, straining monster. All the instruments checked-out; everything was in order; he was ready to go.

La Pone still had one small job—to throw the target sleeve into the air just before the tow-line snapped taut.

"Owen Park Tower: This is Navy one-five-four, ready for take-off. Over."

"Tower to one-five-foah. Clear for take-off. Time, three-two. Wind, south-west 10 knots, Altimeter, 3-5-5."

"Roger, Tower. One-five-four. Out."

Culver released his brakes and started to roll. Half way down the runway, he partially lowered his flaps. With added lift, the plane jumped into the air and rose into a steep climb. He had to be high enough at the end of the air-strip to enable his target, trailing fifteen hundred feet behind, to clear any obstacles. "Come on, baby, let's grab some sky," he urged the throbbing plane. He felt a slight jar—the target was airborne. His altimeter indicated three hundred feet.

"Navy one-five-foah—ah—one-five-foah!" an urgent voice broke through Culver's concentration.

"This is one-five-four—Over."

"One-five-four: This is Commander Allen. You have picked up a

member of the ordnance crew on your target—do not reduce power setting—continue your present heading—will advise. Out.”

The words sounded unreal, yet they were true. Fifteen hundred feet behind the plane, a man was speeding through air, a man facing sure death.

“Holy hell!” Culver’s words exploded over the steady roar of the aircraft engine.

“One-five-four to Tower! You know who he is?”

“Tower to one-five-foah: His name is La Pone. We just got the word.”

“Just what I thought,” said Culver; “that’s just what I thought.”

Culver knew La Pone, a first-class petty-officer, as a short, smiling ordnance man. La Pone was always showing pictures, pictures of his wife and his twin “bambinos.” “I got two kids, Mr. Culver—maybe someday you’ll have some too?” They had both laughed when Culver said he’d like his one-at-a-time.

“Tower to one-five-foah.”

“One-five-four—go ahead, Tower.”

“There is a chase plane on its way to look things over—reduce power setting and turn to 1-8-0.”

“Roger, Owen Park: 1-8-0—will maintain 2000 feet.”

“Okay, Culver—now take it easy while we figure some angles. Out.”

A million thoughts raced through Culver’s brain. A guy caught on the end of a fifteen hundred foot towline, a guy with a wife and twin girls. And Culver—he had June to think about. June, the girl with the soft brown hair and sparkling gray-green eyes.

Suddenly a voice interrupted Culver’s thoughts and said, “I’m up beside you.”

Culver looked back and saw another Corsair creep up behind his wing tip and then rock its wings. Both planes seemed to hang in air—unmoving.

“Bob, this is Lee. I’ve come to keep you company. Do you read?”

“Loud and clear, Lee. What’s the scoop? I don’t want to kill that man. What can I do?”

“Now just take it easy and keep her steady, Bob. I’m going to see how close I can get to him.”

A steady “beep-beep” took the place of the voice as the radio picked up the range station. Culver’s thoughts centered on June. June was his wife of six months. She had looked beautiful this morning—as always.

“Come on, sleepy head—wake up,” she said as she bent over him. She ran her hand thru his hair and kissed him. “Come on, wake up. It’s time to get ready for work.”

As on every morning for the last six months, Culver hated to leave his bed. He watched her as she walked over and opened the blinds to the morning light. Her young, slender body was silhouetted in her sheer nightgown. He sat up, propped the pillow behind his back, and teased her. “Come here, sweetheart,” he said, “I don’t have to get up just yet.

I’ll tell you how much I love you.”

“None of your nonsense, Mr. Culver. Make love to me when you get home. Now you go to work.” That was her efficient answer. There was nothing to do but get up, shave, shower, and go out to drive his airplane. He appreciated her. Now, the thought of her love was comforting. It helped.

Lee’s plane had dropped slowly behind, keeping well to one side of the dangling figure.

“He seems to be in no danger of falling off, Bob. He’s nodding his head, “I think—can’t tell. The slip stream is pretty bad—his shirt’s gone, but he doesn’t look ready to fall.”

“You sure he can stay on, Lee?”

“I think so, Bob.”

“Are you sure he can hang on, Lee?”

“Yeah, Bob, he’s twisted into the sleeve. I don’t think he could get out if he wanted to.”

“This is Owen Park radio to Navy one-five-foah, Over.”

“Go ahead, Owen Park.”

“Culver, do you think you can stay airborne for two hours?”

“Ah—yes sir, but my passenger might not like it.”

“He’s not in a position to—here’s the scoop. We’ve got every man and truck available spreading and preparing a fifty-by-two-hundred-foot area of hay. We should have a large, fairly-soft target in two hours. I want you to try to slow your airplane down at 10,000 feet. Don’t stall it! Lee will watch to see what happens. We think we might be able to get your man off your tail without too much hurt if you can slow her down to 75 knots on a low pass and drop him in our haymow. Now, above all, remember—don’t stall, and ah—well, good luck, Culver.”

“Thanks, Commander—I’ll see what we can do. Out.”

The two planes made a slow climbing turn and headed back toward Owen Park. Culver slid in behind and below Lee’s plane.

A problem confronted Culver, a technical problem. In order to drop La Pone and give him some chance to survive, Culver had to slow his plane dangerously near its stalling speed. Culver knew that his Corsair, if stalled, would fall like a stone until it picked up enough air speed to resume flying. At ten-thousand feet, if he stalled, he had plenty of room to recover. At one hundred feet or less, the plane would dive to the ground. Culver could visualize the disintegration of his plane. Of his marriage and his life. Yet, he at least knew what to expect. But poor La Pone, he knew nothing, could do nothing. His fate was in the hands of Culver, and the two of them were in the hands of God.

“Lee? Are you with me?” asked Culver.

“Yeah, Bob, I’m with you,” came the comforting reply.

“I’ve got ten thousand feet, Lee. How about dropping back near La Pone while I try slowing this crate down?”

“Roger, doger, Bob—will do.”

Culver watched as Lee’s plane turned to the left and then dropped

back till both planes were parallel. Lee's plane seemed to stop—rest on its wings, and then slowly back up behind Culver. He watched the morning sun flash off the canopy and dance up the tail to its tip. Culver stared at the large white N-A-V-Y sharply outlined against the other plane's dark-blue fuselage.

"How's my boy look?" he asked.

"Not too good, Bob—I think he's unconscious."

"Maybe he's better off, Lee. I'm ready to slow down."

Culver pulled back the throttle. The airspeed dropped to 120 knots. He lowered his wheels and flaps. The airspeed needle quivered at 90 knots—85 knots—80 knots. The plane started to shudder, a sure warning of an impending stall. Culver added power as he pulled up the flaps and wheels.

"She starts to stall at 80 knots, Lee. That's about the best I can do."

"She'll do better when you've used up more gas, Bob. Try it again."

Eighty knots, and a shudder went thru the airframe. Once more Culver added power.

"Eighty knots is the best she'll do, Lee. Here's what we'll do. You stay behind near La Pone. I'll make a long gradual descent to the field, and when I've cleared all obstructions, you inform me. From there on in you're the chief and I'll fly as you say."

"Okay, Bob. Take your time. I think we can do it."

On the field, a large group of men worked, feverishly piling up a bed of hay. It was now about four feet high and trucks were scouring the area for more hay. A plea had been sent out by radio, and local farmers were adding to what the Naval Station had on hand. They had one-half hour before the test would begin. Two gray ambulances and four crash trucks spread out to one side of the target area. Commander Allen gave directions and kept in contact with the planes while riding back and forth in a gray, radio-equipped jeep.

1145—the time had come for Culver's most skillful bombing run. His bombardier was Lee; his missile, La Pone. Commander Allen picked up the mike on the jeep's radio and said,

"Navy one-five-four: This is Commander Allen—Over."

"This is one-five-four. Go ahead—Over."

"Culver, we've had a bad deal here. We've got your drop area parallel to runway two-eight, but the wind has changed; so you'll have to fight a 20-knot cross-wind on your approach."

"Roger, Commander. I can only slow this flying machine down to 80 knots before she begins to stall. It might be a little rough—have some coffee ready for La Pone, will you?"

"That's my boy, Culver—you'll make it. Just take it easy, and I'll buy you some too."

"Offer should make me feel good, Commander, but no go—Lee and I will make one trial pass at the field before the show goes on. Stand by. Out."

The two planes neared the station. Groups of men with tense, up-

turned faces watched the drama unfold. Culver's Corsair came over the trees; Lee's Corsair seemed to fly through them. In a few seconds the two roared over the airstrip. Lee was low—to assure the clearance between La Pone's trailing figure and ground obstacles. The jeep's radio carried a strained conversation.

"What's your altimeter reading, Bob?"

"250 feet, Lee."

"I'm indicating 50 feet, Bob. I think you can clear your passenger if you descend to 75 feet on your final approach—check?"

"Check, Lee. Can do. Let's go around again."

Culver's plane skimmed over the heads of the on-lookers, followed by Lee's plane and the lonesome figure whose life dangled on the end of the tow-line. They began a gradual climbing turn and grew smaller in the quickly-widening distance. This was it—the real thing.

Culver's helmet was issuing a fine stream of sweat as he lined his plane up with the rapidly approaching runway. Lee was now giving directions as he flew behind and below Culver's plane.

"Come on down, Bob—easy—just a little more."

Culver lowered his landing gear—it would slow him down 20 knots. The airspeed indicator showed 120 knots—too fast. He lowered his flaps—the plane started to sink as the indicator dropped to 90 knots.

"Steady, Bob—steady," Lee said in a reassuring voice.

Culver's hands were clammy. The altimeter stopped at 80 feet.

"We've passed the obstructions, Bob, okay, come on down easy."

Ahead, speeding toward the spinning prop, lay the target. Just a few more seconds. Culver controlled the plane with a wary grip. He could feel the buffeting action of the 20-knot cross-wind. His hand nervously reached for the handle marked "Tow Release." The airspeed indicator slowed to 80 knots—altimeter 60 feet.

"Now—Bob! Now!" Lee's voice echoed in Culver's helmet—Culver jerked the "Tow Release." The plane started to shudder. Culver quickly pulled up the landing gear and flaps. He automatically applied full power. The engine burst into a staccato whine that reverberated over the field as the plane pulled away—The tow had not released.

"Did it work, Lee? Did it work?"

"No! No, he's still on your tail, Bob—he's still on!"

"Good God—no! I pulled the release. He's liable to fall off any minute."

"One-five-four! One-five-four! This is Allen. What happened?"

"I pulled the release. I felt it give. But he's still on."

"He's probably hanging on the tip of the hook, Culver—try again. That's all you can do. Pray he stays on and try again."

Once more the planes got into position, with the tow hanging on the half-disengaged hook. Again, Culver gingerly eased into his descent path. The propellor framed the fast approaching target.

"Okay, Bob—this will be the good one! Just take it easy. Come on down—you're clear of obstructions."

The altimeter vibrated at 60 feet as the lowered flaps and gear slowed the fighter to 70 knots.

"Now, Bob!"

Again Culver pulled the handle—the plane shook—air-speed 72 knots.

"You're free, Bob! You're free!"

Culver's plane shuddered to a stop, then slid over on its port wing.

Culver thought of his wife. The plane hit the ground. A sound of crushing metal penetrated his ears. The Corsair's engine ripped out and bounced away. The remaining part of the plane flipped over on its back spewing pieces of metal, dirt, and fabric. Flames spread over a detached wing.

"June! June!" Culver cried as he struggled to free himself.

"It's all right, darling. It's all right," she said. "You're safe—I'm here and everything's okay."

He saw the white room and his beautiful wife. All was quiet, the blinds were drawn. He began to rise.

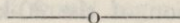
"No, darling—no. Lie still, you don't have to get up this time—the boss gave you the day off."

"Oh June,—sweetheart, I'd thought I'd never tease you again."

"I know—I know, but lie still. Everything's okay."

Culver saw the flight surgeon standing at the foot of the bed. "What about La Pone?" Culver asked him.

"Why, he's got his whole family outside waiting to see you. It's a good thing you woke up—those twins shouldn't be here, and they're getting mighty restless."



As a Nightmare Out of the Past

JAMES ZEIGLER

We had not been at sea more than six hours when the nightmare began. I was dizzy. Standing, sitting, walking, lying—it was all the same, everything and everybody was going round and round. Then my stomach suddenly decided to take leave of me. It rose in my throat like an uncaged tiger, and, finding no avenue of escape, only with brooding reluctance returned to its allotted compartment. There it resisted most violently any urge to carry on any legitimate activities. For two days I gripped the edge of my bunk, a helpless victim in a swirling, dizzy maze.

Upon the advice of those whom heretofore I had called my friends, I summoned, with supreme will, all my remaining particles of strength and propelled up to the deck that almost helpless mass of protoplasm to which my soul was fettered. With each step I found the floor elevated first to the front and then to the rear. It was like walking up and down steps at the same time—and on eggs, yet.

At last I was free of the fetid, sour-smelling enclosure below deck and out in the cool, salty breeze. I headed for the rail and with an almost

effortless gesture cleared away all those who were standing down wind of me. Then my attention went to speculations. I just couldn't comprehend; I knew that what went down was liable to come up, but nothing had gone down for almost three days. My friends, from the middle background, advised me that I was now in the state of sea-sickness known as the "dry-heaves." For the education of the uninitiated, I might explain that "dry-heaves" might most aptly describe that state in which the stomach outdoes itself in ejecting that which it has never received—ad nauseam. At this point I was informed that the wisest course of action would be to get on the friendly side of my stomach by giving the rebellious organ something to throw around. The result was the much less painful "wet-heaves."

I maintained an oscillating condition between the wet and dry extremes of heaving for approximately five days. I must concede that during this time I found one kind of comfort for my misery—companionship. Practically all my time was spent in a pose of contemplation at-and-over the rail, where I daily waged a losing reconciliation with my still recalcitrant innards. While at my customary post one day, I happened to look to my side; there stood the most courageous man on the boat. He dared to stand down wind of me! What a man! I had taken a few stumbling steps in his direction to find out, if I could, the source of this unbelievable, unmatched courage when suddenly his cheeks inflated and his head bent to the water. Then the wind shifted, and I received a tangible answer for my curious mind. At the same moment my stomach, quick to recognize a confrere, leapt into the spirit of the game.

In a moment of calm we succeeded in making ourselves acquainted and continued to spend the short-lived moments of action conversing. We quickly established the fact that we both were suffering from the same illness. He told me in no uncertain terms that he was about to give up—he was going to end it all. At first, I was not inclined to believe that he would resort to such a permanent cure, but at last he convinced me beyond a shadow of a doubt that his intentions were in earnest. He touchingly offered to give me his life-sized Marilyn Monroe calendar.

I was greatly alarmed. When he argued that he was living a life worse than death, I had to agree. Yet, seeing some one who shared my misery had in some way given me a determination to reach terra firma. I must persuade my friend to give up his idea of taking the easy way out. My fogged mind had to think of something before it was too late. I had it! If he had to cross the River Styx—even death held no escape.

Well, I was able to convince my friend that he had nothing to gain in carrying out his plan, and after two more days our ship reached its destination. There we were delivered of our affliction. Of course, we had the trip back to think of, but there was always the chance that we might be done-in on the island—or take out citizenship papers and go native.

Vacation

NONA EVANS

Mrs. Chase noticed a steady heaviness in her eyelids, and she had to strain the muscles in her face a little in order to be sure about the lock on the front door. She fumbled with the key, unaccustomed to the dimness of the light on the front porch and the rising fog of midnight. She kept thinking determinedly that she had been enjoying herself. This was her vacation. It had been a pleasant way to spend the evening—visiting friends and viewing the changes in her home town.

She turned the key and pushed against the door. It opened wider than she had intended, bumping the radiator in the hallway. She stumbled on the threshold. Those drinks Bill Peterson had mixed for her seemed to have had quite an effect. Bill had never had an ounce of respect for conventional beverages. Still, Bill and Emma Peterson had been friends of hers since high school days. She slipped off her shoes and started upstairs. She mustn't waken her parents. They might think it strange that their married daughter had remained out so late. She found it advisable to lean rather strongly on the railing as she ascended.

Tomorrow Dick would be coming downstairs—seven hundred miles away—to prepare breakfast for their three children. Mrs. Chase wondered if he had been finding it difficult to keep house, to send the children off to school—along with his work. She would like to call him, but he had told her that she wasn't to think of her responsibilities this week. She was just to visit her family and her old friends. It was strange how visiting other homes made her think so much about her own.

The bedroom was not arranged now as it had been before she was married. She tripped on the edge of the carpet, recovered herself, and bumped her leg on the suitcase she'd left standing near the door. She floundered about several minutes before she found the small lamp on the dressing table.

She decided to open the window. She raised it slightly, but it didn't hold. It came down with a bang, and somehow she hadn't got her thumb out of the way. She thought that she must call Dick tomorrow. He needed her, and she'd had enough vacation.

The Generous Type

GEORGE ZAKEM

Quincy, the fry cook, sometimes felt he would scream if Horace, the counterman, didn't shut up about human nature. Tonight Quincy felt like that. He pulled his chef's hat down with an angry jerk as if to shut out Horace's voice, Horace's hobby. Quincy was getting to the point where he couldn't stand Horace's hobby. Horace judged people. Every time a customer came into the Chicago Star Diner, located at the

extreme edge of the Windy City's stockyards, Horace would judge him. Quincy frowned at Horace, who was cleaning the counter and humming. That was another thing. Horace hummed.

Then in came this customer and Horace took the order and hollered, "Scramble two easy. Toast and milk." Edging close to Quincy then, Horace whispered from the corner of his mouth, "The particular type. See those close-set little eyes? Those thin slightly-open lips?" Quincy smashed two eggs open and growled, "Oh, shut up."

"Two bits to a dime he complains about something. You want to bet?" Horace challenged.

"You're on," Quincy said angrily. The reason Quincy was angry was that Horace had been winning all the bets; but now he figured the luck had to change. But the customer said the toast was burned; and after he left, Horace pocketed Quincy's dime and chuckled, slapping his thigh. That was another thing about Horace, he was a thigh-slapper.

It was a slow night and Quincy sipped black coffee and thought his bitter thoughts while Horace read Volume Two of a series of books on personalities. Then about eleven o'clock this well-dressed fellow walked in, sat down, smiled politely, and asked for a ham-on-rye-with-mustard, please.

"Here's one," Horace whispered excitedly to Quincy, as the cook made the sandwich. "Here's a perfect example of the generous type!"

"For Pete's sake!" Quincy sputtered. "Will you please lay off? Nobody can just look at somebody and say what kind of a person he is." Horace was offended. "You're blind, Quincy. Facts are facts. Look at his frank, open face and the full mouth. Generous, I tell you."

The customer ate his sandwich while Horace, from the end of the counter, peered at him sidelong and occasionally nodded to himself with great satisfaction. The customer finished and Horace walked up and asked, "Anything else tonight, sir?"

"Yes," said the customer, pulling out a blue-steel gun. "Empty the cash register and don't give me no funny stuff."

Horace, after a single piercing gaze at the pistol, which seemed to be the size of a small cannon, did as he was told. Quincy stood with his hands thrust as high as they would go without dislocating his shoulders. The man with the pistol pocketed the cash and hurried out.

Quincy started to laugh so hard that it was all he could do to dial for the police. Hanging up the phone, he laughed and he shouted and he roared. "Generous," he choked. "That's a good one!"

Numbly, automatically, Horace began to clear the counter where the man had sat. That was when Quincy stopped laughing. Abruptly, he stopped laughing, took off his chef's hat and apron, walked around the counter and climbed onto one of the stools. The police investigation would not take long, and San Francisco would be nice this time of year, he mused in what was left of his shattered mind.

And Quincy did not look again at Horace, who, flashing a smile

brighter than the brightest star in the sky, was picking up his tip, the dollar bill, the largest tip ever left in the Chicago Star Diner.

The Good Dream

THOMAS SAIERS

The poet tells us that the troubles of our proud and angry dust are from eternity. The historian tells us that the web of history is woven without a void. They are saying the same thing. They are reminding us of a truth the modern world has done its best to forget.

Too many smart advertisements have suggested that there are no woes which cannot be cured by buying the right soap or the right scent or the right girdle. The reader may be sane enough to remember that a salt which will pour evenly in any weather is not an adequate cure for a broken heart and that cynicism of our world will not be lessened even if all the young women of America smell sweet. But the repeated suggestion of a million displays—in print, on the radio, written against the sky—is that there must always be an answer to every problem and that the answer is something that can be bought with money. If it isn't soap, it may be cigarettes, or perhaps a mouthwash or a new vitamin. If white bread doesn't make you happy, why not try black? All those hilarious faces in the magazines, those happy bodies, reproach us for remembering that life has problems which cannot be cured at any counter. The advertisements reply, in effect, that the only thing wrong is the man who would ask questions and that a radium-treated breakfast food would set him right.

Nobody believes the nonsense in any one advertisement. Everyone is affected by the mist of deception which he constantly breathes. The trouble is that we prefer to breathe that mist. The blame cannot be put on the advertising man. It is the advertising man's job to sell goods to people who want to believe that there is always some escape from trouble. The world's great poetry does not foster such an illusion. Shakespeare breaks a love scene thus:

"In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks, and waft her love
To come to Carthage."

Suddenly we are left alone in a real world, where lovers are forever parting for reasons that cannot be helped. We would rather be told that Dido could have kept her man if she had dressed better. Perhaps that is why poets have not been popular of late.

It is the function of poetry to tell the truth, just as it is the function of advertising to tell what we want to hear. If we wish to improve the quality of advertising copy, we must show that we have immortal longings in us and would like to be served something better than Coca Cola.

It is a fact that all of us would like something better. Perhaps the years ahead will help us act on this knowledge.

The reformer who has a cure for all man's ills lives in the same world as the men and women in the advertisements, that strange race of people who are always grief stricken in the first picture but merry as kings in the last because they have discovered that the trouble was that they didn't wash their underclothes properly. The reformer, like the women whose lives are warped by the wrong toothpaste, lives in a world where everything can be cured. He, too, has forgotten that the web of history is woven without a void, that man is creating his tomorrow by his thoughts and deeds and motives today. He cannot buy new thoughts and motives at the drugstore; he must earn them by a change of heart. He will not make the steady effort which such a change involves until he has taught himself that there are no shortcuts, no sudden new systems which can make the world a happy or stable place.

There has always been among people the willingness to indulge in self-deceit. The deceit has not been vicious, it has been silly. We have lost a great deal, not by crimes, but by small indulgences. We allow ourselves to generalize and say that *life is getting better*. If progress naturally and as a matter of course took place, there would be no need to worry too much, to strain or examine our consciences. Perhaps it is natural for people waiting in stations to dodge the solemnity of great poets, to prefer the funnies and the advertisements. In our hearts we still believe in the good dream; we have forgotten how much work it takes to believe in anything effectively.

Life Unto Death

JAMES ZEIGLER

"How is she?"

"How in the hell should I know? I ain't no vet'narian."

"Yea. Sorry, Durb." Nick knew he shouldn't have asked the question. He knew by the tense, worried expression on his friend's face that Maggie was still the same. God, if they could only do something, anything but just sit here and wait.

"Wanta butt, Durb?"

"Nah. Don't feel like smokin'. Christ, Nick, I never felt so damn helpless. She's been lying down there in that hole on the blanket for two nights now. Won't eat, hardly ever wets her tongue, just lays there with her head down. It ain't right. Mebbe she's only a dog but it ain't right she should die having her pups."

Nick was silent. He looked out over the valley below, slowly letting his eyes travel from far off in the distance back to the steep slopes that formed the hill on which they had been commanded to stay. Nothing. There was absolutely nothing on its barren slopes. Nothing green, nothing moving, nothing alive. Over there, twenty yards down the slope, a

scrub pine tree was the last vestige of life, and it was brown, bare, already in the process of dying. Nothing but the reddish dirt, the barbed wire, the sickening smell of death and decay when the wind blew from the north; not a damn living thing but him and Nick—and Maggie. And she was more dead than alive.

"Nick."

"Yea."

"Think we'll ever get off this hill alive?"

Nick was startled. It was as if his companion had been reading his mind. "Sure, Durb. We've been in close ones before," answered Nick, feigning a sureness that he did not feel.

"You're lyin', Nick. You kinda got that feelin' too, ain'tcha—'bout nothing being alive up here. Even got the smell of the dead. And Maggie. She ain't gonna make it, Nick. She ain't ever gonna see her pups. I know. I can feel it. She's gonna die and we are too."

With a grimy hand Nick pulled off his helmet and wiped away the perspiration on his forehead. He did not speak.

"Guess I'll take a look at her."

Nick watched as his friend hoisted himself out of their foxhole, crawled on his belly, and in an instant disappeared. Nick looked at the sun, which was beginning to hide itself behind the bluish mountains to his right. There was a gnawing in his stomach that made him uncomfortable, and he was cold, almost shivering, yet the sweat ran down the hollow of his back. And in his mind there was only a hopeless bitterness and a fear of death. I wonder if it will be tonight. Maybe Durb was right. Maybe none of them would get off of this God-forsaken hill alive, not even the dog. Why in the hell did they have to stay here? Why didn't the order come to give up the outpost? Why? Nick's thoughts were unanswered questions. Resting his head in his hands, he closed his eyes. God, he wanted to sleep. But he knew the darkness would bring the bursting shells, and his ears would pound endlessly, and with every burst he would sink lower into the hole until he could get control of himself and shake off the actions of instinct. One of those shells would surely find its mark. Sometimes he wished that it would happen; it would be so much easier to have it over with and just sleep.

The sound of falling dirt snapped him out of his momentary drowsiness, and he looked up to find his friend lowering himself down beside him.

"Nick."

The man called Durb spoke in a voice that trembled, a voice that was a hollow, empty whisper. His eyes were vacant, bare of all hope, and Nick knew without question that Maggie was dead. She died trying to bring new life where only death could survive. Not even a dog could bring life to this man-made hell. Now it was their turn. He and Durb. They must stay there, and they too must die.

No Coal to Load

THOMAS SAJERS

The wind swept the long columns of slush banks and tossed a spray of black dust over Coal Hill. Ann Bronski watched the flurry, glad she hadn't washed clothes that day. It was like that every dry spell. Dust storms to blacken her whites on washday. It was hell to be in the path of those dirt banks. Maybe tomorrow there would be no wind. Then she wouldn't have to hang her bed sheets and pillow cases in the attic. She hoped her husband Bill would remember to bring his dirty work clothes from the mines.

It was two o'clock. Without, she could hear a crescendo of men's voices and the sound of car engines moving out of the colliery yard. The Blue Coal Company's day shift was coming out. Bill would be home any minute.

On the porch, Ann reached into the icebox and brought out three bottles of beer and a ring of smoked sausage. She placed the sweating bottles on the kitchen table, then walked over the stove and dropped the kielbosa into a pot of boiling cabbage shreds. Ann never liked the idea of preparing supper so early, but she had no alternative. After six or seven hours with a jack-hammer, Bill didn't like to wait around for a meal. He'd down a beer to quench his thirst, another to pick up his appetite, then dig into a couple of platefuls of cabbage and potatoes, or else a platter of platskis. Bill liked those Old Country foods, but Ann had other tastes. Those Old Country foods were what made so many of the Coal Hill women so big and dumpy.

The voices out on the street had grown still louder. All the miners were up by now. Changing into a clean apron, Ann set the table, then waited for the slam of the dinner bucket on the side porch. That was the trouble with an early supper. She had to put all her work aside. By the time Bill would leave the table and the dishes were washed, there would be little time to start anything else.

By two-thirty the voices outside had thinned away. She could hear only the drone of heavy trucks moving in and out of the breaker area. Picking up the heavy coal bucket from beside the stove, she glanced at the clock again. Bill had never been so late before. She wanted to think that he was working overtime, but he had always been home by two. Sometimes earlier. She stood still for a moment, trying to think what could be delaying him. But she was silly to think about it. He'd be home soon. So, bucket in hand, she went down to the coal bin in the cellar. There wasn't much coal left. She would have to tell Bill to order another ton. Lugging the basket up to the kitchen, she made a silent wish for an electric stove. No coal to carry. No ashes to take out. But as long as she lived in a company house, she knew she would be lugging coal and her wish would remain a wish. The Company would allow nothing but the ugly, black coal stoves like the one she now had.

She washed the dirt from her hands and stepped into the parlor. There she knelt on the couch before the front window. She noticed a few men loafing around the Company's machine shop and a lot of clean faces moving from the shifting-shanty to the mine elevator. Bill was nowhere in sight. Ann knew he shouldn't have taken that job with Mike Batsek. No one liked the drilling crew—or Mike, either. The dust was thick, but worse yet, four of Mike's laborers had been hurt in the past few months. Just last week Jack Koval was caught under a fall of rock while drilling. Maybe it wasn't Mike's fault. But Bill had told her that the old guy never took his turn at the jack-hammer. He'd just sit way back in the chamber and prepare the charges of dynamite.

Ann lowered her head and brushed her fingers over the crocheted roses in the stand-cover at her side. Bill's work was dangerous. She remembered his saying that there were no props supporting the roof above him. Just bare rock. "With the jack-hammer going, you can't hear the roof give way," Bill had said. Jack Koval got hurt that way. The roof cracked wide open right over his head, but he didn't even hear it.

Turning away from the window, Ann walked into the kitchen. The boiling cabbage shreds and kielbosa were gurgling loudly and she moved the pot to one side and dampened the fire. Back in the parlor, she looked out the window again, then sat down and listened to the painful moaning of the heavy machinery. It was like sandpaper on her nerves. She watched the Company locomotive racing down the length of the colliery yard, coughing up steam, and letting out short wails as it neared the highway at the far end. A few trucks moved up in turn to the coal chute beside the breaker while another pulled out and crept up to the weighing platform. Beyond the breaker she saw men moving from the shifting-shanty and the foreman's shack, but no one turned down the road. They all headed for the mine elevator.

If only she could be sure that Bill was working late! But he hadn't even said that he might. He was usually home before the other workers. All he had to do was get the holes drilled for the night shift, fire, then take off. When he had worked for Joe Lesko, he'd often come home late if they hadn't loaded their cars before quitting time. But now he had no cars to load.

When the three o'clock whistle blew, Ann stepped out onto the porch and looked over at Poleckis'. She wondered if John was back yet. It didn't look that way. John always dropped his dinner bucket and clothes bag near the side door, but they weren't there now. Maybe some of the other men were working late too. Wanting to be reassured, she walked over to the iron fence that separated the two houses. Helen must have seen her coming, for she was out on the porch before Ann had a chance to call.

"Isn't John back from work either?" Ann asked.

"Oh, he's not working days anymore. The foreman put him on night shift this week. Why? Isn't Bill home yet?"

Ann shook her head, then turned her attention urgently to a vehicle sputtering down the street. Bill was hurt! She knew he was hurt! She stood there, stiffly, watching the dingy, black ambulance turn a corner and lumber along the road that led to the mine elevator.

Turning to Helen, she gasped, "It's Bill!"

"Don't be silly. Di'n'cha ever see an ambulance before?"

Ann ran to the gate, and after pausing there for a brief moment, she started down the road towards the mine elevator. Helen called to her, but she was running, only slowing down occasionally to catch her breath.

Reaching the far end of the breaker, she stopped for the locomotive as it chugged and wobbled down the narrow-gauge tracks with a chain of empty cars. Tensely, she waited for the cars to rattle by. Ahead, across the cars, she saw the men eddy around the rear doors of the ambulance. But before the last cars went by, the ambulance doors closed and two men got into the cab. It was too late for her to see who was in the ambulance.

Breathing heavily, she ran forward, then stood to one side to allow the ambulance to pass. With fearful eyes she strained to see who was lying on the low stretcher inside the ambulance, but the rear windows were too small. She could see only a blackened miner and the Company doctor peering down at him. Nervously, she watched the vehicle putt down the road past the breaker. "Bill," she whispered. Then, wheeling about, she shouted, "Bill! Was it Bill?"

No one heard her. Some of the men walked over to the mine cage. Others filed into the shifting-shanty. Ann stood still, her hand covering her mouth.

Just then the elevator clanged to a halt, and a load of miners emptied through the gate of the low wooden fence that boxed the elevator shaft. They looked at Ann and laughed. One of them yelled, "I wish my wife'd come to wash my back!"

Another shouted, "Hey, Ann, your old man don't get paid till tomorrow."

They laughed again, but Ann didn't look at them. When she saw Bill break away from the group, the rigid feeling left her. She sighed in deep relief and ran up to him. "Bill!"

Bill stopped and tightened his lips. "You certainly can make a damn fool out of me. Now go on home!"

"But, Bill, I thought—"

"Go on, get goin'!"

She gaped at him a moment, then lowered her head. "Don't forget to bring your dirty clothes home. I'm going to—" She turned her head aside quickly and walked slowly down the road.

The Last of the Hunt

LEROY BROWN

The prospects for the last day of hunting season were bright. There was enough snow to freeze the feet, drop from the trees onto the back of the neck, and keep the chainless tires from reaching the top of the mountain. Sixteen in all, counting boys and old men, the crew trudged up the hill. Armed with all types of heavy-caliber rifles, they arrived at a pre-designated spot and prepared to start a drive. Then silence for full five minutes: No one volunteered to chase; they all wanted to watch. The asylum would have done a booming business if someone had seen those men sitting in a huddle waiting for a deer to come their way. Oh, hell, why not start a card club!

Finally the bridge tournament ended as one of the more alert members proudly announced his discovery. "Time to eat, men. Twelve o'clock!" It seemed that the old men had gathered all the green wood to build the fire. The smoke and the men's coughing had probably driven all the deer into the next county—all but one, that is. That one was a big old buck, naturally the biggest one any of the men had ever seen, and some of them had been hunting for forty years. He must have smelled the toasting sandwiches and the bubbling Nescafe as our heroes went about practicing their backwoodsman ingenuity. At any rate, he was practically looking over Nate Mayes's shoulder when he was discovered. Nate was so startled when he turned his head and saw the rack of horns above and behind him that he lost his balance and almost fell to the ground. The buck, surprised at all the commotion, took one last sniff of the play-party refreshments and moved away.

About half of the men picked up guns—it didn't matter whose—and started out to make a drive. Of course, they were all bunched up on the old logging road like a family of ducks trying to catch one fish in a wash basin when the buck poked his head through the brush no more than thirty feet away. "There he goes!" screamed the wide-eyed boy in the front. "Don't shoot!" yelled an old man in the back. The bewildered buck just cocked his head to one side trying to interpret the scrambled antics of the men as they fell all over each other. At his leisure the buck trotted away—still wearing his trophy. Not a shot had been fired.

Then came the usual passing of the bull, with everyone blaming everyone else. "What do you think we are doing out here, just taking the damn guns for a walk?" one of the blameless souls retorted. "Somebody goofed."

The sight of the deer had injected some life into the gang. "We'll get him on the next drive," was the battle cry. "What! and drag it clear into town from here?" said a voice of experience. "Send someone for the car and bring two of the cases off the back porch. Better bring some chains for the car, too! We'll try to drive him part way down over the slope."

By the time the car arrived the chase had been completed, and not

even a squirrel had been scared past the watchers. The afternoon with its resounding whoops and yells, shots, and swearing netted one big, fat zero. Who says it's a shame to hunt these poor defenseless animals? It's a crime for the animals to make the hunters go so far back into God's country to find them.

The time for the last chase arrived, and the men were as ambitious as old cats after an all-night spree. One last drive until they would reach the road that led into town—would they get one now? You guessed it; the watchers were in the wrong place. The buck ran out and stood on the road where some church-goin' fellow stopped his car, jumped out, and shot the deer. That does it for this year.

The final picture shows sixteen weary men piled in and on an old coupe crawling down the mountain. The only murder they had committed was killing the soldiers of Ye Olde Reading. The fat man on the right fender gave the parting thought, "I wonder if we'll get one next year."

A Thought, Anyway

ROBERT JACOBS

Why not caress a hound
For howling at the moon
And sit upon a mound
Beside the hairy goon?
He'll slowly roll his eyes
And gaze into the . . . heavens,
If you don't soon ask some questions
How can I tell any more lies?

Cinquain

ROBERT JACOBS

The bunk
Is just the place
To spend some leisure time
And write a different cinquain—
With rhyme.

Observation

ROBERT JACOBS

Socks
Will fit
Either foot
But feet still take
A pair.

I Don't Know Where to Begin

ELAINE TOBY KAPLAN

Most things are easy to put in
Order.

Take a room, for instance.
The tables or beds need little attention.
The chairs have their places
Against the walls
Or near the lamp
Or next to the TV.

*My dearest Grace,
The day is warm and balmy and I miss you very
much.*

Or take a drawer . . .
Pins; a pin here,
A pin in the corner.
Bobby, hair, straight, safety,
They would fit perfectly in an
Earring-box.
Bills, bottles, creams,
A thousand dreams of beauty and love . . .

*Grace, my Only,
The day is slightly damp. How I wish I could
see you!*

Now, a desk-top is a different matter.
No, not that paper . . .
And I'll need that booklet
Tomorrow.
Last week's agenda is in that pile;
Next month's schedule in that one . . .
I cannot throw these away!

*Dear Grace,
Sorry I didn't write sooner. Grace, you've been
a wonderful friend and I don't know where to begin,
but I met this girl . . .*

Try to put a life in
Order.

Try to get a neat, simple pattern.

Go ahead, try!
Where will you fit-in the
Burning eyes, the lump in the throat,
The nervous laugh?

Eating, drinking, sleeping . . .
It's too early, too early.
They must not know.

Giggling, punching,
Red Rover, Red Rover
Let Timmy come over . . .

No, no, it's still too early.
Let them alone . . . they'll know.

Dancing, kissing, dreaming . . .
But they're still, they're still
Such babies.

Let them believe in
Rooms and drawers and desk-tops . . .
Some day they will know.
Some day they might open a
Slim, slim white envelope and . . .
". . . but I met this girl . . ."

Trees

THOMAS SAIERS

It often strikes me as being queer and unusual and really quite odd
That nobody in the whole world, with the definite exception of God,
Can make a tree. Anybody can make poems.
Anyone can make ash cans, automobiles, crepes suzettes, or homes,
But a tree is different, a horse of another color, something else again.
A tree, for all you or I know or imagine or care,
May be wearing a nest of robins in its hair,
Who (meaning the tree) has a bosom on which snow has lain
And who has been kept by, or at least lived intimately with, the rain.
Now poems, in brief, are made by fools like you or, more frequently,
like me.

But I don't suppose you'll ever catch either of us
Going around dashing off a tree.

The Sentence

PETER J. BRUNNER

The early-spring sun filtered through the gnarled, still-bare branches of the hawthorn tree and lay in yellow splotches along the field-stone wall where Richard Pendelton was making a half-hearted attempt to prune an ancient rambler rose. The dark, reddish-black soil, still moist from the winter's snow, encrusted his shoes, and the thorns of the rose vines hacked relentlessly at the ungloved hand in which he held the pruning shears. Suddenly, an overload of irritation caused by the mud and briars made him straighten suddenly, throw down the clippers, and curse foully under his breath.

"Having trouble?"

He looked up and saw Christine, his wife, standing at the back door of the small high-roofed farmhouse. She was holding a broom, her hair was disheveled, and her face seemed sallow and without character as it always did when she neglected to wear lipstick.

Richard grunted instead of replying, wiped his muddy hand on the seat of his dilapidated corduroy trousers, and walked toward the weather-beaten porch on which Christine stood.

"It looks good where the briars are cleared out."

"Yes, it does. Raise Cain with the hands, though."

"But you're almost through with the ramblers, and they'll be lovely when they begin to bloom."

He looked at the ramblers which he had cleared and tied together with pieces of baling twine. There were eight of them in all, spaced at odd intervals near the wall which ran along the side of the house toward the out-buildings.

"Yes, look at the damned things. I'm going to hate this place long before it's livable."

"Oh, Rick!"

"I never wanted to own any house. I certainly never thought I'd find myself buying a miserable run-down farm in this God-forsaken country that's fit only for Puritans, rich lawyers, and crazy poets!"

Christine swept a pile of long-accumulated dirt out of the corner of the porch. "Let's not go into that again. After it's fixed up it will be fine. The children love it. I rather like it. And think of the prestige. We're the envy of all the old crowd in New York." She paused, then added a cold supplement. "Sometimes I think your disinclination to own a house is nothing but irresponsibility."

He lit a cigarette, and leaned against the post which supported the roof. "What the hell . . ."

He ground out the cigarette beneath his foot, picked up a mattock from beside the porch, and began to chop away at another huge rambler which grew at the corner of the house.

All right, he told himself, he was being unpleasant. He didn't like the idea of being pinned down to a place his wife had picked for him.

He especially did not like the mortgage. To own something to that extent was to be owned. His idea of a good way to live was in an apartment in town where the landlord had to worry about the furnace and taxes. He connected happiness with a certain luxury, and although he knew this was not a noble association, he wasn't able to convince himself that it was actually otherwise. This knowledge made him attack the rambler with a vengeance.

For some reason Richard felt that he had a peculiar intimacy with vegetation. Perhaps it was the only thing in Vermont which he had really come to know. And he loathed it with a violence which he recognized was really quite undue and which made him feel childish and curiously guilty. Yet he could not laugh away this loathing. The roses for instance . . . they began, the minute they were neglected, to start a foolish competition among themselves, and the thin wiry stalks fought all summer to reach the stalks of the bushes on either side. Then the bushes tangled together in sort of thatch, and come spring and the pruning, even if you did succeed in cutting the stalks loose near the roots, you still had to extricate the tenacious branches from those of all their neighbors. As a rose, it was a total fraud, and despite its delicate weblike stalks and its feminine-looking blooms, it was almost invulnerable to attack. Richard beat away relentlessly—as if he were beating the life out of some hated enemy.

He did not hear his son come up the walk behind him, and the boy stood quietly until the father turned and leaned panting on the handle of the mattock. Then the boy said, "Hello, Dad." He said it slowly, shyly, as if he were expecting an unpredictable response.

"Hi, Jerry."

"What you doing?"

"Can't you see? What did you do in school today?"

Jerry picked up a stalk of the rose bush and toyed with it carelessly. Presently he pricked his finger on a thorn.

"Ouch, it hurts!"

"Oh, that will be O.K. How was school?"

"It stinks."

"Give it time. You'll get to like it before long."

"No, I won't. I hate it."

Richard was at work with the mattock again. "No, you don't. You'll like it after you've had a chance to make some friends."

"None of the other kids like me."

Richard leaned the mattock against the house and, turning toward the boy, spoke with an air of exasperated patience. "That's wrong. It's just that you've come to a new school at the end of the term and are from the city and probably know more than any of those hicks at the school, and you'll probably have trouble making friends right off. But they'll get to like you."

"I need some money."

"What happened to your allowance?"

"I need more money. Can I get a job? Can kids make any money up here?"

"You can work for me. You can get at and tear down those old vines from the side of the tool shed."

Jerry looked pleadingly at his father. "I need a lot of money."

"I'll pay you a lot of money."

"But I need a dollar."

His father did not hear him; or at least did not turn from his work again until he heard his daughter slam the door of the mail-box and come running up the walk. Jerry broke into rapid desperate speech. "I need a dollar bad. Remember I told you about that dollar I found? I got to pay it back."

"What dollar?"

Jerry glanced quickly over his shoulder toward his sister, Gwen, who was now half-way up the walk. She was clutching a rolled-up magazine in one hand and a tin lunchbox and a white envelope in the other.

"That dollar that I found and you asked me what did I do with it and I said that I gave it to Squint Saxton and you said I should have brought it home."

"Oh, that? I thought you were kidding."

Gwen, the six-year-old, was now behind them. "Daddy, you got a book in the mail. And Miss Graves sent you this." She handed him the envelope.

Richard glanced at the address: Mr. or Mrs. Richard Pendleton.

He tore the back out of the envelope, removed the letter, and read it.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Pendleton,

Today your son became involved in an affair concerning a dollar which he claims he found on the floor of the cloakroom. The money belonged to a girl who says she is sure she left it in the pocket of her coat. When I questioned Jerry, he said he didn't steal it. I would have said no more about the money had he returned it, but he gave it to Elwood Saxton, one of our problem students. Elwood spent it. Jerry has said that you know about the money, that he told you about it and was told that he should have brought it home. Since Jerry is such a fine little personality and is new here at our school, I shall be very grateful if you can help me straighten this matter out in his best interest.

Sincerely yours,
Anne Graves

"So now you have me dragged into it! I wonder what that teacher thinks? If it was inside the building, you should have turned it in at the office. You said you found it on the way to school. Why did you lie to me?"

"I knew you'd tell me not to keep it."

"How did you know?"

"I just knew."

The father stood quietly for a minute and grimaced in exasperation. "What color was the little girl's coat?"

"She isn't little. She's big as a cow. Besides, I don't know. I never saw her coat. The money was on the floor."

Richard grimaced again and drew a long breath. "Let's go in the house." He led the way in.

Christine was dusting a heavy, old-fashioned oak table. It was only one of the many hideous pieces of furniture which had been in the house when they purchased it. The Pendletons hoped to renovate the house completely and had decided to leave their own furniture in storage until the work was done. But it was difficult to find men to do the necessary work and no one would promise to do it immediately. The electricians had torn out a strip of plaster and lath along one wall. Then they had left. A carpenter had torn out a wall between the kitchen and a useless pantry and the dust from the plaster had been tracked to every room in the house. The result was that the entire place was a bare, bleak, shambles; and while Christine managed to remain pleasant under these conditions, Richard did not.

"More problems." He pushed himself wearily into the room and handed her the letter. She read it and called to Jerry, who was taking a great deal of time to hang his jacket on the clothes tree in the hall. "Jerry, come here."

When Jerry entered, Christine took his hand and led him over to the worn Victorian sofa. Richard sat facing them in the single straight-backed chair.

"Now tell me all about it, Jerry."

Jerry raised his head, looked first at his mother, then his father, then back again to Christine. His firm-set face relaxed, his chin and lower lip trembled, and he began to cry. "I know what you're thinking. Everybody thinks I stole it. But I didn't. I found it on the floor and I gave it to Squint. But I didn't steal it. Honest."

Christine spoke cheerfully. "Well, that settled that. But you see, Jerry, it was really as much stealing as if you did take it out of that girl's pocket. The money simply wasn't yours."

"But I didn't keep it. I gave it to Squint."

Richard leapt from his chair and pointed a menacing finger at the boy. "That's just it. Why did you have to give it to that Saxton Kid? I've told you that I don't want you hanging around with him. He's too old for you."

"He's my friend."

"Your friend! One hell of a friend!" Richard seized the boy by the shoulders and shook him. "He's nothing but a snide little . . ."

"Rick, let the child alone!"

Jerry sank back on the sofa. His eyes were red, his nose was running, and tears washed their way down his cheeks. He looked quite pathetic.

"Richard stood looking at him for a moment. "Do you have any homework to do?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"We have to write five sentences with a subject and predicate."

"Well, do that now, and be quick about it. Then you can pull down those vines to earn the dollar."

Jerry looked sullenly at his father, then rose slowly and started up the stairs to his room. When the door had been closed, Richard broke out, "What is it about that boy that makes him so stubborn and so damnably thick-headed? I still don't know whether he stole that money or not."

Christine's face flushed with anger. She stood in the middle of the room and looked fleetingly around as if she felt a desperate need, a hunger for objects. But there was only the hideous sofa, the bare table, and chair, and Richard. She glared at him. "Have you thought of his difficulties at all? It's not easy for a child to enter a new strange school toward the end of the term. He's having trouble making friends and becoming accustomed to the teachers. And all you've done is to play the heavy parent and tell him that new boys have a hard time making friends if they enter school late. The one friend he has you deride. I know Squint is a horrid little monster and I don't want Jerry playing with him either. But you're just too dumb to see that they're both pariahs. And I think that Jerry's giving him that dollar is one of the kindest things I ever heard of."

"But I don't want him playing with that little bastard," Richard insisted.

"You're perfectly right. Squint taught him some dirty words and some nasty mistaken things about sex. But you just can't say no to the child. After all, you're his father. You should have told him that stuff yourself. You're the one who should give him a moral attitude toward those things."

"But he's not even nine yet."

"He's getting it, isn't he? And all wrong."

"I know! I know! Look, I'll try. I'll go talk to him now."

Christine blew her nose. "It's probably this terrible house. I've been so on edge lately. Maybe I'll get cleaned up for supper, and we'll eat at the table instead of sitting on the floor." Then she added as sort of an afterthought, "And I'll find a tablecloth, too."

As Christine was ascending the stairs, Jerry was coming down. Richard called to him, "Son, you won't have to cut those vines if you don't want to. I'll give you the dollar."

"I want to earn it. Can I wear your gloves?"

Richard removed the gloves from his pocket and handed them to the boy. "Don't work too long. Supper's soon."

"I won't."

Richard went up to Jerry's room and looked in. There was a sheet of ruled tablet paper on the make-shift desk, and from the doorway he could discern several lines of writing. He crossed the hall to the bedroom where Christine was dressing.

"At least I get results."

She didn't reply; so he went back across the hall to Jerry's room. He lit a cigarette, picked up the sheet of paper on which the boy had done his assignment, and read the sentences. The first was "I am earning money." The next was "I am going to work." The third was "The sun is out." The fourth was "The snow is melted." The last declared in a firm youthful hand, "You hate me and I hate you."

Richard took a deep breath, leaned his head against the cool glass of the window, and tried to think. When he heard Christine's high heels clacking through the rugless house, he turned, folded the paper which he still held in his hand, and shoved it deep into his pocket.

He walked to the door and saw Christine standing near the window of their bedroom. She had on a light blue housecoat which hung loosely from her shoulders, her hair fell in short, carefully unkept ringlets, and her face was smooth and white. She was in the house, yet detached from it—remote and cold. Helplessly, Richard turned away.

He went to the boy's room again and looked out the window toward where Jerry should have been working. But twilight obscured the yard now. Shadows hung around it like veils. Then he thought he saw Jerry leaning against the hawthorn tree and he went out quickly to find him. Perhaps even now, after everything, it was the boy who could help—somehow.

Definition

ROBERT JACOBS

Jerk:

A term

Which designates

A more than normal pull—

And man.

Cinquain

ZOE LINGLE

Laughter,

Sit here awhile;

For soon you'll have to leave

And grief will latch the door to keep

You out.

We walked quietly down the hall.
As we turned to go into our rooms
We could see the damp, snakish mop-print
Sneaking silently after us.

A girls' dormitory is a funny place
At two-thirty in the morning.

Cosmic Love Song

MARY FONTANA

Of worlds we have enough, my love ; and time
Is no concern out here among the stars.
I'll woo you first on Saturn's shores, where nine
Moons rise and set, and then we'll go to Mars.
When Martian spring has lost its verdant charms,
We'll sit beside the scented stream that runs
Through Pluto's fields ; I'll take you in my arms
And kiss you in the light of twenty suns.
Our love will penetrate the depths of space
And kindle every asteroid anew.
Vast galaxies that witness our embrace
Will blaze with brilliance marvelous to view.
To what sublimer heights could man aspire
Than this : To set the universe on fire !

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