

# The Crucible



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# THE CRUCIBLE

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## Retaliation

ROBERT J. WEAVER

Ezra Appleby sat up close to the window, in the old cane-backed rocker, his stockings feet piled unceremoniously on the window sill. He gazed long and lovingly out on his cornfield that was swaying gracefully at the touch of a gentle, July evening breeze. Appleby chuckled and rubbed his hands together. He was extremely pleased.

Mrs. Appleby smashed potatoes on the back of the old but well preserved Columbian range. From outside came the sound of children at play.

"Pretty, ain't she, Ma?" Appleby chuckled again and traded the position of his feet. His left foot, cramped and numbed, now occupied the top position. "I said she's pretty, ain't she, Ma?" His wife looked up.

"What are yuh talkin' about now?" she asked, and then angrily, "Ezra, don't you dare kick my geranium off the sill!"

"I'm talkin' about the cornfield, Ma. Yes siree, by George, she's a sight for sore eyes. Can't recall ever havin' a stand like that." In fact, it was the nicest stand around the locality. Early planting and a few weeks of warm, moist weather had proved most advantageous. Neighbor Pringle's cornfield, separated from Appleby's by a narrow lane, looked less encouraging. A tractor breakdown had delayed spring plowing on the Pringle farm. "Ma, I tell you, for once in my life the Good Lord had seen fit to afford me my just dues." Appleby shifted his feet again dangerously close to the geranium. Martha Appleby held her breath. "Yes siree, a man's entitled to a little good luck once in his life." Appleby chuckled happily. "Ma, it's that heifer. Having her around is just like havin' a rabbit's foot in a body's pocket. I sure named her right when I named her Lucky." Lucky was the little Holstein heifer that romped playfully about the barnyard. She had been bought from Neighbor Pringle by Mrs. Appleby to compensate for the overwhelming loss that her husband had suffered when Lucy, the pretty little Jersey and Appleby's pride and joy, had wandered through an open gate and fallen down the well. Appleby had never been himself again until Lucky came to the Appleby farm.

Martha Appleby scooped the creamy mashed potatoes into a deep flowered vegetable dish before she spoke. She was irritated:

"Ezra, that cornfield ain't the only thing in this world that matters. For instance: Where's the money comin' from for Alexander's next pair of shoes? I suppose that's my worry, ain't it?" She busied herself about the table in preparation for the evening meal. "Ezra! Don't you dare!" Ezra was chewing and had leaned ahead to spit in his wife's geranium pot by his feet. He jerked back and swallowed noisily. His Adam's apple bobbed up and down and his face became red.

"Martha, get me a drink, will ya?" Appleby gagged once or twice.

"That dang Five Brothers is a mite too much to be swallerin'." Martha didn't appear to hear. After a time Appleby gained some composure and spoke reassuringly, "Money shouldn't prove any worry now, Ma. The way that corn's growing I ought to clear a couple hundred dollars easy by fall. Yes siree, by George, at last the Good Lord has seen fit to reward me." He chuckled again. "I'll bet that old skinflint of a Pringle is a wishin' he had my cornfield on his side of the fence."

Mrs. Appleby registered her disgust of her husband's enthusiasm by a clicking of her tongue. Years of unceasing struggle with little reward and numerous set-backs had developed in her a keen reluctance to unbounded optimism. She took a well browned rib-roast from the oven and set it on the back of the stove to cool. Then she went to the door and called the children to supper while Appleby beamed one long, last, loving look on his cornfield before suppertime. What he saw pleased him to no end.

Ezra Appleby's wife knew nothing about what had happened when she saw her husband hurrying in from the barn the next morning, his face contorted with rage. She could see his lips moving, mouthing terrible curses, long before she could hear him. She remembered when Lucy had fallen down the well—how her husband raved and carried on. Good heavens! Lucky—the little Holstein heifer—maybe she got over into Fred's stall and he kicked her! Martha was glad the children were in bed.

"Damn his black soul . . . damn his soul!" Appleby thundered into the kitchen and kicked savagely at the little black and white kitten waiting at the screen door to be let out. "He did it on purpose, that's what he did!" Mrs. Appleby wondered what reason a horse could have for kicking a heifer. She ventured a glance at her husband and saw the crimson band across his forehead. He was so mad he shook all over.

"Look at that cornfield out there, would you! Ruined! Absolutely ruined, I tell you, absolutely ruined. It's that Pringle's work, I tell you."

Mrs. Appleby went over to the window and stared amazedly at what she saw. Her husband's cornfield, yesterday the finest stand about, was now a mass of twisted, broken stalks. Again she turned to her husband, venturing:

"Didn't blow that hard last night, did it, Pa?"

"Hell, no, no windstorm did that! Cattle—that's what it was—Pringle's cattle. Nobody's but his."

Appleby was stamping back and forth across the kitchen. Once, in a renewed burst of anger after forcing himself to look at his devastated cornfield again, he stamped so hard that the doors of the warming cabinet on the range fell open with a bang. Mrs. Appleby became angry. She prized her stove highly.

"Ain't no sense in your acting like a two-year old. You ain't tearing my house apart just because of an old cornfield."

"Old cornfield! You realize, woman, that out there was my life's work, you might say." He flung himself into the old rocker, which cracked under the strain. "And all because a jealous neighbor can't stand to see a body get ahead in this world. I've got nothing now—nothing but my heifer and"—he clenched his hands together—"I wouldn't put it past him one bit but what he'll slip over here and poison her. Damn his black soul!"

"Now, Ezra, there ain't no sense in your flyin' off the handle and blamin' Pringle. To hear you talk, a body would think Pringle deliberately turned his cattle into your cornfield last night. I never heard tell of such talk," she said angrily. Mrs. Appleby had always been somewhat more scientific in arriving at conclusions than her somewhat impulsive spouse.

"That's just what he did—damn his black soul!" Appleby thundered, glaring at his wife because she seemed to defend Pringle. "Couldn't stand to see me get ahead in the world, he couldn't. Jealous of my cornfield 'cause it had his beat all hollow. What does he do then but turn his cattle in my field when I'm sleepin' like any honest, hard-working soul would be?" Appleby glared at his wife. "I suppose you're insinuating that it was our own cattle, locked up in the barnyard as tight as they were."

"I'm not insinuating anything of the sort," she snapped, "but if you're so certain it was Pringle's cows why don't you get the sheriff up and settle things right this minute."

"And have Pringle go scot-free except for losin' a little money out of his pocket," Appleby sneered. "Guess you don't understand your husband too well, do you?" Mrs. Appleby dared admit only to herself at the present that she didn't.

"No sirree, I always said—'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. You'll find that in the Good Book somewhere."

Alexander appeared in the doorway, rubbing his eyes, still half asleep. He looked questioningly at his father.

"We've got a job to do tonight, boy," Appleby stated flatly. "Yes sirree, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. No man—no man, d'ya hear," Appleby was fairly raving now, "no man ever pulled one on this Appleby and got away with it. Damn his black soul!" Appleby started down the cellar steps, and Mrs. Appleby heard him mumble something about "it being enough to drive a man to drink." She realized that the vinegar barrel, dangerously low in content at this time of the year, would be tapped frequently throughout the day. She said nothing. It would have been as futile as trying to reason with a mad bull.

Appleby drank recklessly throughout the day, and Alexander, wide-eyed in bewilderment, noticed that his father was weaving badly as he led the way to the barn that night. Mrs. Appleby was unaware of their strange, nocturnal activity. She had gone upstairs to quiet little Sally who had awakened screaming from a nightmare, and she had fallen

asleep herself. Appleby found the latch on the barnyard gate, lifted it, and the gate swung open protestingly. The cattle, roused, got to their feet slowly and stood about with hunched backs.

"What are yuh gonna' do, Pop?" Alexander queried breathlessly.

"How many cows has Pringle got, son?" Appleby evaded the question.

"Six. Seven, countin' the bull. Why?"

"And we only have five," lamented Appleby. "Except—except Lucky." Appleby was struck with an idea. "Reckon she's big enough. Yes sirree, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'," Appleby chuckled, very much pleased with his proposed plan of strategy. "Fetch them cows along, Alexander."

A short time later, with Appleby bringing up the rear, the strange midnight procession drew up in the lane before the bars that opened into Pringle's cornfield. The bars, chestnut poles whitened with age, shone in the moonlight. Appleby let down the bars and herded the cattle into the field. Alexander gasped but had the presence of mind not to say anything. Once tasting the green, succulent corn, the cattle romped about in utter delight for a short time and then settled down to the steady business of gorging themselves. Tender young corn stalks snapped and crackled under impatient hoofs. Lucky was having the time of her life. She raced about, and only after she had tired herself did she begin to feast. "It's her first meal of green corn," Appleby chuckled, "and how she is enjoying it!"

For at least two hours Appleby, chuckling to himself all the while, drove the cattle from one end of the field to the other, crossing and criss-crossing it from one side to the other. A steam-roller couldn't have done a more thorough job. Alexander, still not daring to speak, followed after.

"Guess we covered it pretty well, son," Appleby said as he headed the cattle toward the bars. "Won't Pringle be surprised? . . . damn his black soul." At the bars he noticed that Lucky was not among the cattle. He turned and called: "Here, Lucky . . . come hommie . . . nice little hommie." No sound. "Watch the cows, son, till I fetch that heifer."

Alexander stood and waited for a long time, fearing every minute that Pringle would come sneaking down the lane. The cattle, gorged and contented, sank down in rest. Alexander could hear his father calling for Lucky, first at one end of the field, then at the other. Down the road he heard Pringle's dog bark several times and then become silent. About an hour later his father appeared at the bars, breathing heavily.

"No luck, son, she ate her fill and laid down somewhere. Don't matter, though. It'll be adding insult to injury when Pringle finds her tomorrow and fetches her over—the heifer he sold us, eatin' her fill of his corn." Appleby laughed gleefully. "And the joke is, son," Appleby was never more pleased with himself, "the joke is—he can't do anything

about it since I know all about what he's done. Yes sirree, by George, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'." Alexander was glad when they started up the lane toward the house, the cattle plodding ahead, one by one.

Pringle lost no time in getting over in the morning. He came up the road, prodding Lucky ahead of him. Poor Lucky! Her sides were extended to enormous proportions, giving her the appearance of a barrel. Indeed, she had stuffed herself the night before, as anyone could plainly see. Still, she managed bravely to trot a few steps now and then when Pringle, impatient to say the least, gave her an extra-severe prod. Appleby, watching from the horse-stable door, cursed Pringle for his cruelty and mentally resolved not to give Lucky any water for a few days. It wouldn't be good for her—not bloated like that. Appleby stood defiantly in the doorway as Pringle shooed the staggering heifer into the barnyard.

"See you have my heifer, Pringle," Appleby said nonchalantly as he leaned on a fork handle and spit, with deadly aim, at a fly climbing up the door frame. The fly was swept away under the deluge.

"You're right I have your heifer! Know where I found her, Appleby?"

"I wouldn't know, but it appears to me as if you were feedin' her a little heavy." Appleby was pleased with what he said. He opened the gate to the manure shed and pushed Lucky inside with the other cattle who lay about, still filled and contented. Red, the old brindle, was continually belching and chewing her cud.

"Appleby, I didn't come here to argue," Pringle settled down to the business at hand. "I'm here to have you make amends for what your cattle done to my cornfield last night. Do we reach an agreement or do I call the sheriff and settle this in court? It's up to you, Appleby." There was a ring of finality in his voice.

Appleby was thoroughly enjoying himself. He almost wished Martha there to hear him tell Pringle off. He egged his neighbor on.

"My cattle in your cornfield?" in mock astonishment. "It couldn't be, Mr. Pringle. I keep my cattle in the manure shed over night. They can't get out."

"Look, Appleby, what do you think I am—a fool? I found that calf in my field this morning. Ain't that enough evidence? There's tracks a plenty to prove what I'm sayin'. And besides, Appleby," he measured Appleby with a shrewd, calculating eye, "I ain't so sure but what it wasn't intentional. Can't recall of never closing my bars when I leave a field."

"Pringle, come here once. I want to show you something, as if you didn't know about it already." Appleby never could hold his temper for any length of time. He led Pringle around the corner of the barn and flung his arm in a gesture toward his own cornfield. He saw Pringle looked surprised. "Now, Pringle, since I figure we're even,

I'd be obliged if you left. Got a lot of work to do."

"See here, Appleby," Pringle burst out, stamping his foot angrily, "just because your cattle ruined your own cornfield, is no reason for havin' them do the same to mine. Appleby, are you going to pay now or do we settle in court?" Pringle was carrying his game a little too far and now Appleby really became angry.

"Pringle, you're a good actor, I've got to admit, but I'm a little too smart for you. Yes, sirree, the minute I saw that cornfield of mine, I knew right off the bat it was your dirty work—jealous as you are. It's like I told my wife—'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'."

"Appleby!!" Pringle exploded, "you're makin' some mighty big statements. Doubt whether you could back them up in court. I wouldn't . . ."

"Hiya, Ezra. 'Lo, Pringle." Ed Larkins sauntered around the corner of the barn. Ed owned a farm about two miles down the road on the way to Lock Haven. "Just on my way back from town. Needed a couple plow shares. Shame about your field, Ezra a darn shame. Any of your cattle sick, Ezra?"

"Cattle's fine, Ed, except my heifer, Lucky. Pringle's been over-feeding her." Appleby winked at Larkins. Pringle was seeing red.

"Shame, Ezra. Told the boys they should'a woke you up the other night when they penned your cattle up—case any of them might've been sick." Pringle became extremely attentive. Larkins rambled on: "Boys were walkin' home from town. Heard your cattle down in the field so they went down and got them out. Darn shame. Might'a saved you a lot of trouble if they had found them sooner." Pringle's face lit up with a gleam of savage joy. Appleby paled momentarily but then regained his composure. He bristled up.

"See here, Larkins, you here in cahoots with this Pringle? I keep my cattle penned in the manure shed every night. Ain't a chance of them gettin' out . . ." He didn't finish. A rattle of the latch on the manure shed drew the attention of the three men. Lucky had stepped up to the door, put her nose under the bar-and-slot latch and lifted upwards. The door swung open, and Lucky staggered out, bent on reaching the watering trough.

"Heifer looks pretty sick, Ezra. Wouldn't be givin' her any water, though, if I were you. Smart, too, ain't she. See how handy she is at opening that door. Larkins offered some advice: "If I was you, Ezra, I'd put some other kind of latch on that there door. She's liable to open the door some night when you're in bed. Those cattle, once they get out, could raise Cain in one of your fields." Larkins rambled on: "Like I was tellin' my wife yesterday—it ain't . . ." Suddenly he stopped, struck with an idea. "Say, Ezra, could it be that that their heifer might've . . ." Appleby wasn't listening. He was looking out at his cornfield—his ruined cornfield. Pringle stood nearby waiting patiently for Appleby to decide how he wanted to settle—in or out of court. Lucky stood at the barn well and bawled thirstily.

## August Night

R. LOUIS PRYOR

The doctor came out of the room, closing the door softly behind him. Lester and Ellen stood waiting, anxiously watching as he walked over to them.

"You'll have to keep her in bed for a while," he said, gravely. "She stood the trip well, but she should have a lot of rest for the next few days." He paused, looked back toward the door.

Lester stammered, hunting for words. "The report, Doctor. It—uh—Is it—what you thought?" Both he and Ellen hung heavily and hopefully on the doctor's reply.

He looked at them steadily. Slowly he nodded. "I'm afraid so," he said. "I may as well tell you the truth. The report I received from Philadelphia was positive in every way."

Lester's heart sank and his stomach seemed empty. His wife looked as if she had been struck.

"But, Doctor—" she cried. "Is there no hope? Is there—nothing we can do?"

He laid his hand on her shoulder. "Mrs. Sanders," he said, slowly, "I wish I *could* give you some hope. But in a case like this we just have to make the patient as comfortable as possible and wait until it's over."

She laid her head against Lester's shoulder and sobbed. His arm went around her and held her close. Hot tears stabbed at his eyes as he looked at the doctor now bending over the bag which he had placed on a chair.

"Isn't there anything, Doctor?" he insisted. "We'll sell our home and our car to give her what she needs. Any operations?—Anything at all that might help her?—Just tell us. We'll do—"

"No, there's nothing." The doctor straightened up with a bottle of tablets. He poured some into his hand, counted them, poured them into a paper envelope. "It may seem cruel to be so blunt, but I think you might as well know the truth now as later. The only thing you can do for her is to ease her pain and hope this doesn't last too long. My advice to you is to save your money and try to make her as happy as you can."

The two parents stood there in stunned abjection. This was the thing they had feared. They had sent her to Philadelphia for a case study in the hospital there, and the opinion of the specialists confirmed their fears. Now they knew that Carol would never get well.

"Oh—Doctor." Ellen looked at him plaintively. "Will she suffer much?"

He held up the envelope. "These tablets I'm giving you are for pain. Don't use them unless you have to. Give her *one* tablet when—"

ever she complains of pain. Never give more than one tablet at a time. And keep them out of her reach."

He handed the envelope to Lester, who stared at it blankly. The doctor picked up his hat and the bag.

"I'll talk to you in a day or so," he said. "It's a hard road you have to travel now and I can't give you any help on it. All I can say is that this may go on for months or it may end suddenly." He turned to go. "We will hope for the latter."

As he left, they stood in the doorway looking after him. Three children, a boy and two girls each about ten years of age, stood on the porch waiting. As the doctor went down the walk, the boy stepped up eagerly, questioningly.

"How is Carol, Mrs. Sanders?" he asked. "Will she be well soon?"

"Oh, she—she's pretty good," Ellen answered.

"Could we see her?" one of the girls asked.

"Why—" Ellen looked at her husband. "Why—yes, I suppose so. What do you think, Les?"

"All right. But just for a few minutes, kids. She's pretty tired now and needs some rest."

"Oh, we won't stay long," the boy assured him quickly.

"Just wait a minute till I see if there's anything she needs first," he said, turning and walking toward the bedroom.

As he approached her room, which they had arranged to have on the first floor, a huge overgrown dog slowly and laboriously struggled to his feet, awkwardly bumping an end table and cascading a small pile of magazines onto the floor. "Clumsy mutt," growled Lester, irritably, as he opened the door and stepped into the room. The dog lumbered in behind him.

Carol was a small girl, pitifully small in the large bed. She was eight years old, their only child, and until recently as healthy as any other child in the block. Now she was thin and white, and her blonde hair sprawling over the pillow seemed to accentuate her wanness.

"Well, Carol," greeted her father as he walked into the room. "You have company. Are you all ready to receive them?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, raising her head. "Who are they?"

"Oh, some of your—friends." He set the pillows and a blanket against the headboard and raised her to a sitting position. "Is that all right?"

"Yes, that's good," she replied. "Oh, Daddy, did you see the birds out there in the tree? Two of them are building a nest right outside the window."

"Why, no, I didn't notice them. Where are they?" He walked over to the window and looked out. The trees were blossoming in the warm sunshine. Such a lovely spring to be indoors. So much suffering and so much beauty.

The birds raised their family and left. The blossoms fell, and leaves grew thick and hid the empty nest. The sun got warmer, and the days became longer. Warm summer rains streamed tearfully down the window. At night the moon poured its faint glow over the bedroom floor.

Carol grew weaker, and thin lines etched themselves into her face. Lines of worry and strain appeared in her mother's face, too, as the disheartening months dragged by. Concern was written in her father's manner also, as he strove to keep her anticipation of recovery at a high level. As her health continued to fail, the strain of the ordeal became more pronounced.

"Every day she seems so much worse," said Ellen, in despair. "I can hardly bear to watch her suffer."

"Yes, I know," Lester replied. "But she does get a lot of relief from those pills. We can be thankful that they keep her from suffering any more than she does."

"But, Les, she's such a little girl to have to go through this. She doesn't understand—"

"Now, Ellen, we'll have to do the best we can as long as we have her. She does get a kick out of the kids coming in every day or so. And she's looking forward to going back to school this fall. If we can just keep her planning on things—"

"Yes, but she's planning on going to summer camp next month, too," said Ellen, her voice wavering. "It's going to break my heart to tell her—" She stopped and lowered her head.

"Oh," said Lester, quietly. He was silent. There were so many times there was nothing to say.

"I love Carol very much." Ellen's words came slowly. "She's everything we've got, and I can't bear to think of losing her. But I'm praying every day that the Lord will take her soon. It isn't right that she should suffer like this."

Lester had no reply for this, either. His prayers also had gone unanswered.

There were times, though, when Carol seemed quite cheerful and was relatively free from discomfort. Then, when the neighborhood children came in, she would play with her games on the blankets or at times in a chair by the window. She would often sit by the window and look out on the street at other children playing. Sometimes it seemed that she looked wistfully up the block to the schoolyard, which was now a summer playground. She read books and put jig-saw puzzles together, listened to children's programs on the radio, and sang little songs her mother taught her.

One day her uncle came to the house. She was lying on her back studying the pattern of whorls in the ceiling paper when he stuck his head around the corner and barked, "Hey, when are you getting out

of that bed, anyhow? Don't you think you've been in there long enough?"

"Oh, Uncle Ned! Come on in."  
"By golly, girl, you're wasting all these nice days, just lying there and dreaming," he snapped, walking over to the bed. His arms were laden with packages. "I tell you now, if you're going to get sick you ought to wait till the winter time."

"Oh, I'm going to be up soon," she said, smiling. "Daddy says I'm a lot better now. I'm going to camp with the Girl Scouts three weeks from today."

"Why, sure you are!" he said with a wide grin. "Here, I got you some things to make the time go faster."

"Oh, a doll! That's a nice one." Carol held it at arm's length, her delight showing in her eyes.

"Yes, and here's some doll dresses, too," he said, laying one of the packages down on the bed. "And a sewing kit to keep them in repairs. And an iron to keep them smooth. And—" He took a longer package from under his arm. "To make everything complete, we got you an ironing board." He began to open the package.

"Oh, Uncle Ned! They're beautiful! Thank you very much."  
"Now you got something to keep you busy for a while," he said.

"Hey, you! Get down!" He spoke sharply to the huge, shaggy dog which had raised up and leaned its big front paws against his chest. The dog slipped heavily back to the floor.

"You clumsy hound!" he said, reaching down and ruffling the dog's head. "Why don't you get rid of that mutt? He's as big as a pony."

Carol laughed. "Old Dick's all right. He's just glad to see you."

The dog turned and, with a supreme effort, planted his front legs up on the bed, straining his shaggy head over for the affectionate pat which Carol gave him.

Later Ned was talking to her parents. "She certainly has a lot of spunk," he said. "I didn't expect her to be so cheerful."

"Well, she does have a good day like this every one in a while," said Lester. "But she's getting worse all the time."

"There's no chance that she might be able to get out for school this fall?" Ned asked.

"No," said Lester. "The doctor says she will just keep failing. There's nothing we can do about it. He keeps giving us pills for her."

"Yes, and it's getting so that sometimes the pills don't even help her," said Ellen, the tears starting to her eyes. "And we can't give her too many in a day. Some nights she just moans for hours." She broke off and turned her face away.

"It must be terrible on you folks," he said, sympathetically. "I wish I could do something for you."

As the days passed and early August came, Carol was more

concerned about the vacation plans. One day, after some of her playmates had gone, she asked her father, "Daddy, do you think I'll be able to go to camp with the girls before school starts?"

"Well, I don't know, Carol," he said. "I hope so, but we want to be sure you're good and well before we let you go away."

"Ye-es," she said, softly. "But I hurt so much most of the time."

"It takes a long time, Carol," he explained and turned away.

Ellen came into the room with a bowl of chocolate pudding.

"Oooh!" Carol exclaimed. "Choc'lut pudding!"

Her mother smiled. "Yes, I thought you might like a little treat. There's a lot more in the refrigerator."

"Oh, gee!" exclaimed Carol, in delight, as she dipped the spoon into the pudding.

As she ate, the three of them sat and talked. Carol did not seem to be in pain today, and for that they were grateful. They talked about the future, the immediate future of Carol's world.

"You'll soon have to start taking piano lessons again," said her mother in a bantering tone.

"I won't mind those," Carol replied, quickly. "I'll be glad to practice—if I can get out of this bed. But, Mom, why don't you play something on the piano?"

"Why sure, I'll play something—if I still know how. I haven't played for so long I might be out of practice. What shall I play, anyhow?"

"Oh, play 'The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers'. That's my favorite," Carol said, enthusiastically.

Ellen walked out to the piano and sat down. Funny how she had neglected playing the last few months. Carol's illness had taken all their time and thought. As she played the lilting melody of the march, tears came to her eyes. Carol would never play the piano, she realized. Well, then, she must play it herself as long as Carol could listen.

Lester stood by the window looking up at the school ground. Carol would never be able to run and play again. The disappointment of the summer camp would be only one of the many disappointments yet to come to her. Well, then, she must have anything she wanted to keep her happy here till the merciful end.

The day her friends left for camp, Carol was talking with her mother, trying to fight back the tears. It was a beautiful day, and the sun streaming through the leaves of the tree outside her window seemed to plead with her to go along. She knew they were leaving, because yesterday they had stopped in to say goodbye. Her mother did not mention it in their conversation, and Carol tried not to show her disappointment; but Ellen noticed her drawn mouth and listless eyes.

"How would you like us to ask Grandma to come here for your birthday?" her mother suggested.



"Oh, yes!" Carol exclaimed, brightening. "And ask her to bring some patches to make a quilt for my doll."

"I'll drop her a card right now and find out what day she is coming."

Later in the day Ellen told her husband that Carol wanted to see her grandmother.

"I think it would be nice if you would go after Mother," she said. "The train and bus connections are so poor between here and there. It would save her a lot of waiting around to change trains."

"Yes—only I want you to take the car and go after her," replied Lester. "It will be a chance for you to get away from this tension for a while. You've been here with Carol all day long for months, and that little trip will do you good—"

"Little trip? Why, Les, it's eighty miles each way."

"That's all the better, Ellen. Tomorrow is Saturday. You can leave in the afternoon and stay there overnight—sort of break your trip up. Then you can come back Sunday at your leisure. I really think you ought to go, Ellen," he said, earnestly. "You need to get away for a bit."

"I—I'd like you to go," Ellen insisted. "I'm used to taking care of Carol and—"

"You give your mother a call on the phone," Lester said, emphatically, "and tell her you'll be after her tomorrow."

"All right," she said, smiling. "I'll go after her. It's probably better that way anyhow."

Ellen left early Saturday afternoon. She said she would return before noon on Sunday. Lester noticed how tired and drawn she had become since this tragedy had befallen them. Even this short trip would benefit her a great deal.

After she had gone, Lester returned to the bedroom. His daughter was lying on her back, her face set in a mask of anguish.

"How are you feeling now, Carol?" he asked, anxiously.

"I have a bad pain, Daddy," she said. "Could I have a pill, please?"

"Why, certainly," he said, going to the bureau and taking an envelope out of the drawer. "And when you feel all right again, I'll have you a game of checkers."

A half hour later he returned. "Are you ready for that checker game?" he asked, cheerfully.

"Oh no, Daddy," she said, turning a tear-streaked face to him. "I hurt so awful much."

Lester walked over to the bed and sat down. "Still hurts, huh?" he asked, softly. She turned away and buried her face in the pillow. Lester looked out the window at the vivid green leaves on the tree, just barely stirring in a lazy breeze. Creamy white clouds foamed up behind them in the dark blue sky. Somewhere down the street a child shouted. And his child cried.

He laid his hand on her shoulder. He could feel the trembling

of her small and wasted body. His heart swelled and his throat became dry. He lowered his head and silently prayed.

After a long time he stood up and walked across the room. Poor kid! It wasn't right for her to suffer like this. Why couldn't the Lord be merciful?

He turned to look at Carol again. She stared at him from the expanse of the bed, pain-glazed eyes pleading for relief. Lester bit his lips. He turned once more to the bureau and stood there for a long time.

He approached the bed once more, cleared his throat, and bent over her. In a soft, persuasive voice he asked, "Carol, would you want to take some pills for Daddy?"

The twilight deepened. Darkness came slowly, gradually enveloping the neighborhood. On the sidewalks a few children drifted by on roller skates. A group of youngsters sat down on the curb, straining their eyes to play "jacks." It was a hot, dark August night.

Lester sat motionless at the window for a long time, looking out upon the street. He turned once to look back to Carol on the bed. She was very still; she had not stirred for a long time. On the floor Dick signified his notice of the movement by thumping his tail heavily three times. Lester looked back out the window. The room was silent again.

Ellen stood by the small end table, arranging the magazines, an ash tray, and the other small items upon it.

"It's better that it's over," she said. "If I feel bad about it, I know I'm only feeling sorry for myself. Carol was getting nothing out of life but pain."

Lester said nothing. What would Ellen say if she knew? In his heart he was certain he had done the only right thing. Carol was now buried, and the secret was buried with her. In his mind's eye he could still see the pleading, pain-glazed eyes she had turned to him.

"It's too bad she didn't live till Mother came," Ellen said. "She never saw the music box her grandmother brought her. She would have liked it a lot." Ellen smiled, wistfully.

Lester remained silent. He walked to the window. The house was so lonely.

"Lester." Ellen was at his shoulder.

He turned to her. She put her arm around his waist. No words came for a time, but Lester waited.

"Lester, I feel I must make a confession," she said, softly. "I don't know what you'll think of me when you know, but I must tell you anyhow."

Lester waited. For some uncontrollable reason his heart beat faster. He hoped she did not notice.

"I was saved from doing a horrible thing." She paused, and there

was a thick silence. She began once more. "When I tried to get you to go for Mother, I wanted to be alone with Carol. I wanted to get you out of the way so I could end her suffering. I couldn't bear to see her in such torture—" Here she broke down and cried. Lester drew her to him and sat down in an armchair with her.

After a long time she spoke. "I did not get the chance to—to—" Lester squeezed her arm. "You saved me from committing that sin. When you made me go for Mother, you prevented me from becoming a murderer. The Lord was good to us, Lester. It was an act of God that she was taken on that very day."

Lester was surprised and shocked. But he was happy. Perhaps she would understand now. He felt he had to tell her. The intention had been in her heart, but the deed had been committed with his hand. He cleared his throat, but she spoke first.

"I'm so glad it happened that way," she said. "I could never have lived with myself if I had done that. I would always think that I had done it just to make it easier for myself—so that I would not have to see her suffer. I wouldn't ever be sure I had done it for her own good. I could never forgive myself as long as I lived."

Lester stopped, swallowed hard. He knew he could never tell her now. For the rest of his life he would have to bear his secret alone.

They both looked up at the sudden noise to see Dick lumbering into the room, clumsily bumping into the stand. A small music box was jarred to the floor. As the dog slumped to the floor, the spring in the box caught, and from it came the tinkling musical tones of "The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers."

## The Slav

OLGA HORLOCHER

Karl Torsky hadn't nosed around on the southeast-bound Prague Express over an hour when he came upon the compartment of Captain Kosovich of Petersburg. Torsky, a young Russian correspondent who had recently attached himself to a large Prague newspaper, was both surprised to find some of the Russian brass he had come to know so well when he was making himself a name as an A-1 frontline reporter back in the war days and also very much delighted at the prospect of sharing some excellent cognac that the easy-going captain was probably not without.

Captain Kosovich looked startled when he opened the door of his compartment and saw Torsky scowling his meanest in the doorway, but in the next moment the captain's face mellowed into broad good humor, a change that came so quickly and was of such intensity that it was easy for Torsky to guess that the captain regarded his presence with enormous lift and relief.

The captain seated Torsky and then roared, "Not one thing but a dozen! A nasty bit of work in Kosice and a messing reporter to boot. I should have stayed in Petersburg and sent some stupid major to dirty himself with all this." As the captain ribbed Torsky much in the same fashion as he had done back in the war days, he came up with an impressive looking bottle of cognac, held it up appreciatively and then handed it to the reporter.

Torsky's characteristic scowl changed into a beaming smile of anticipation. "Right back in the good old days at Petersburg. Huh, Captain?"

The captain broke into a slight smile. At the same time he started a sharp scrutiny of the reporter's face, trying to read whatever evidence was there of attitudes and purposes.

Torsky was quick to perceive this, and the captain, seeing that he was outguessed, put the question to him flatly, "What are you doing here, Torsky?"

Torsky could have laughed. What was he doing here? What had made him suddenly give up his easy life at Petersburg to follow the new order into the Czech capitol? What had made him grasp the Kosice news story as if it were a home-made mission? What were his relations with the placid face of the peasant? Torsky saw himself as a man floundering in a deep sea, clutching at straws and sea-drift and asking the heavens, "Why?"

"Captain," Torsky responded softly, "I'll tell you—I want to know the answer to the question," Torsky's voice now came out savagely, "Is the Slav still a Slav? You can ask me why. I don't know. I keep asking myself that, and all I can suppose is that a reporter is stricken with some malady that drives him to figuring the future of international

affairs. . . . You have nothing to fear, however, captain. We reporters do this only for mental exercise." He paused for some reaction from the captain. When the captain made no effort to argue, he spoke up again, "And now, Captain, what do you have on the Nivorstak case?"

For a minute the captain looked as if he were going to cut off any talk about the case but, on further reflection, he settled himself back instead and returned to being jovial and witty.

"Same young scamp, eh, Torsky? Never coming around a military man without trying to pull a story out of him!"

Torsky's plain face grimaced and scowled. "This is a very fine bottle of cognac you have here, Captain. It needs more than a clever word or two to do it justice. It should have some great problem to discuss and wrangle over." Torsky knew just how to lead and influence the Russian military mind. He had had much practice in Petersburg.

Whether the captain was influenced by Torsky's ideas or not, his new duties were at this point so distasteful to him that his innate sympathy came forward, and thus forced the captain's feelings into words.

"What do I have on the Nivorstak case? Bah! A pregnant peasant girl in prison. Nivorstak couldn't leave the women alone. A fool. A weak fool—"

"They will hang the girl?"

"Eventually. Eventually. But first I must get some information. Nivorstak was one year in Kosice getting certain information which is now missing. Nivorstak was killed either for this reason or because his hard nature turned the girl against him. Nivorstak couldn't leave the women alone but he was never an easy man with them."

"This girl, Captain, what do you have on her?"

"The girl? Yes, the girl." The captain looked at the empty bottle of cognac with a little bit of a lost air about him. "The girl was sent to Kosice six months ago to teach at a nursery school. The first month she is known to have attended the youth gatherings. That is all I have on her. The rest of the time she is supposed to have been living with Nivorstak."

"What if you fail, Captain? What if the girl was not a spy?"

"I have one task—to regain the information. I feel sure that the source of trouble comes from that valley—"

Torsky thought awhile and then remarked, "She is not from Kosice?"

"No. Her family are peasants in Urg Valley. Urg Valley is about eighty miles from Kosice. We pass through the place I think on this train. Those peasants will not find me an easy man if I have to go there. I—Captain Kosovich—"

"Urg Valley, did you say, Captain?" There was something strange and unnatural about Torsky's voice but the captain somehow failed to take notice. He had loosened up completely and was giving freely of the facts of the case.

"You want to hear a funny story, Torsky? The girl's brother is on the train. He went up to his captain every day for two whole weeks trying to get this leave." The captain laughed, "Do you see the joke, Torsky? His pass was ordered long before. He's being guarded every minute. If the girl talks to him, if she is the one responsible for the missing papers, it may be very easy to get the information." Then he brightened up, "I will be back in our good city of Petersburg."

Torsky only half-heard the captain's story. His nervous system had experienced a terrific shock when the captain had first mentioned the Urg Valley. In the reporter's mind there crept a raucous jingle, "The House on Jing-a-ling, The House on Jing-a-ling." Was it finally dawning upon him why he had moved in with the New Order?

"You are a very clever man, captain. Very clever." Torsky stood up. "I think I'll go down and look at the peasant," he said.

Berte Rusnik, a stocky young Urg peasant in the uniform of the national army, sat at the lower end of one of the third-class coaches. Beside him and across from him were several Russian soldiers. The Russian sitting next to Berte amused himself by exercising a jostling elbow regularly into the young Urg's ribs. From Berte, however, came no reaction. His countenance remained changeless, with a docile and an unoffending expression. Young Berte either slept or he prayed that his sister might find some escape from her misfortune. He thought little about the situation. What thought he did give away to crop out of the well of his sub-conscious, impression after impression that leaped up like comrades to his loneliness. He saw himself walking to and from the village school, winter by winter in deep snows, a young laughing sister at hand. How many of the boys had succumbed to the fair face that was never without laughter! One day when he went fishing one of the boys caught her in the wood and kissed her, and how the boy had strutted around like a proud rooster for weeks afterwards!

When Torsky entered the coach, Russian songs were filling the air, coming forth lustily and thickly out of much-taxed diaphragms. Empty bottles were being rolled back and forth across the aisle by booted feet. Torsky watched the Russians. He saw their faces dampening and growing fiery red. As their spirits became charged with the forces of their native folk songs there spread a boldness about them that rose steadily into a burning desire towards misadventure. There was much loud laughter and loud joking and then finally a number of them arose together and pushed down the aisle as if off on a hunt for bigger fun.

Like a carrion moving in upon a single isolated prey, Torsky moved in as quickly towards the young Urg.

"Rusnik," he said softly.

The Urg opened his eyes and regarded Torsky with an odd, expressionless stare.

Torsky picked an old pipe out of one of his pockets and as he bent over filling the tobacco into the pipe, he began talking in a soft and a sympathetically warm tone.

"My friend," Torsky began, "I am a correspondent on my way to Kosice to cover a story about an unfortunate peasant girl. It's a mighty big story. And there is something that I will find out through it. 'Is the Slav still a Slav,' Rusnik?"

The Urg's fleeting surprise changed quickly to great fear. "They're going to hang her. I know. They won't give her a chance!" he cried.

"Rusnik, listen to this." His tone was sharp, his words terse. "This is a new order. There is a new way of looking at things. You must know what is the right thing to fight. Your sister will make a good soldier. Don't let her down, Rusnik. Fight, Rusnik. You've got to fight!"

"My mother and my father—this will hurt them terribly—what she's done—"

Torsky again renewed his argument, now with even greater vigor. "I want to tell you something, Rusnik. To me, good and evil are relative things. I don't care whether one or the other triumphs as long as the best man wins. What does it matter what a man is as long as he is true to himself? When a man is true to himself he has no loyalties, he has no friends, he has no family. Everything he encounters is a new situation which he fights out as he sees fit. When a man becomes subservient to any man, party, state or deed, he is tied fast and cannot rise above it. He can serve well or badly but he will never win out for himself. You know, I've always found my best stories not in the regime, but with the humanity that clashed with that regime." He had talked easily but with such penetration that might shake the depths of the peasant's thoughts.

Out of the corner of his eye, Torsky saw the Russians making their way back up the aisle. "Is the Slav still a Slav,' Rusnik? Which is going to be the victor, the Russian or the Slav?" He stood up and turning away he added almost affectionately, "I'll see you at your sister's trial tomorrow."

When Torsky left the coach his thoughts were very disturbing ones. He knew he was somehow identifying himself with this peasant, an identity that made itself aware to him through the maddening jingle that echoed and re-echoed in his mind. The Urg must not let him down.

The young Urg who went to sit at the trial of his sister the following day was already sick before he got into the courtroom. Before the steps of the Kosice courthouse he had encountered glaring headlines on each of the morning papers, "Police Murderess Comes Up For Trial." When the trial opened he wished he had not come. When the young Urg first caught sight of his sister he couldn't help experiencing a deep repulsion. He watched her in front of the courtroom. Seven-

teen, with the face and body that now looked to be twenty-five. In place of the fair laughing face there was a frigidity and a cowering that was awful to behold with her state of pregnancy. The corners of his mouth twitched, his hands grew shaky and clammy. All of a sudden Berte Rusnik got up and rushed out of the courtroom.

Out of duty, Berte went to see his sister. "Berte, oh Berte," the girl sobbed at the sight of her brother.

The young Urg regarded her with bitterness, "You have brought shame on your mother and father—"

"Berte," the stricken girl began in an emphatic tone. "I want to tell you just what happened. Only because our mother might want to hear why it happened. When I was teaching in the nursery school, Nivorstak sent for two of us teachers. He said there was some complaint that we were not teaching true nationalism to the children. Anyway, I was called back time after time. I soon figured out why Nivorstak kept calling me in all the time. It had become a game with him. I tried to fight him but he was too strong, much too strong. He was a kind man—but for such a little while. Then he started getting drunk all the time. I couldn't stand it. I was going crazy, Berte, crazy . . . Oh Berte, you don't know how terrible a man can be."

The brother was in deep misery but he could not feel any sympathy towards his sister. "So you brought this shame on all of us. If you wanted to do the right thing, Rosa, you could have killed yourself," he lashed out his passionate judgment against her.

The girl stepped back as if struck. Then suddenly the suffering went slowly out of her face and her face shone with the soft quiet glow like that of a new moon just emerged upon a darkening sky. "Dear Berte, you have been a good kind brother," she reached through the bars and took his hand, pressing it to her lips.

Then she said, "I was hoping that somehow something would happen and that our mother would persuade them to give the baby to her. But it is better this way. The world is not kind these days. How do I know it will be kind to my baby?"

Berte's head dropped down. He shook and shivered and turned feverish from hard convulsing sobs. His large square hands tightened to crash in the bars but their steel proved ineffective against the steel of the prison.

"It's no use, Berte," his sister said.

Berte, now wretched and in deep sympathy for his unfortunate sister, felt of the same futility. He bowed his head in submission to a peasant's everlasting burden.

Berte escaped to a cafe in the street above the courthouse. Here he was surprised again by Torsky who looked as if he had been expecting his arrival

"Well, Rusnik, is the Slav or the Russian to be the victor?"

"My sister will not be executed," the Urg spat at him.

"You have found a way, and the courage?"

"My sister found her courage," Berte exploded as he sought relief in a fiery glass of vodka.

"You peasant," Torsky cried, slamming his fist upon the table with a terrific bang. "Have you got her to take her life?"

"What good is she to herself? I wish she had died the day she left my mother's house."

"So this is how the Slav puts up a fight," Torsky's anger broke out in a hoarse tone—"one that will back away and hide behind a sister's petticoats. My God," he cried, "the oppressed, the enslaved, making pretty moral judgments which society played with a hundred years ago. Can we do nothing but sit back and submit?"

"You're a Russian—" the Urg's face was livid with violent reaction. "What is all this to you? You come upon me and you talk and talk. Why? A man is staring in the face of a gun, and you tell him to do something—why? Why?"

"Wait, Rusnik. I will tell you. Remember the House on Jingaling? Remember that story. It was my mother, Rusnik. It was my mother that that Russian soldier took away with him. You probably heard how she came back to that house and then I was born. What was her life after that? So she went back to Russia again to look for him. I was thrown into a day school, and then into another for full time. I never saw her again. You are losing your sister just like I lost my mother. We can't let them do it again. The time to start fighting the new order is now!"

"We can blame others for our evil?"

"No, but we can fight the evil that is greater than ours. As long as there is one Russian here, every man, woman and child must turn soldier to fight our way back to freedom and good. We must show them—the Slav is still a Slav."

The peasant was convinced. "What can we do though?"

"Go back to your sister and give her the word of hope that she needs. We will find some way together." He finished, "I know a Russian captain we can start work on."

Torsky sat at the table alone and looked at his empty glass. His thoughts closed in about him. "God," he began to himself, "am I a wondering Judas spreading an evil philosophy or is the word I passed to this illiterate peasant the right word for this new order? Have I doomed this boy and perhaps myself to death or have I just snuffed out the life of a boy to make a man out of him?"

Was his mission a success? Was the Slav still a Slav? Torsky felt a sudden chill. The new order was overpowering. But he rose and went out of the cafe to hunt up the captain from Petersburg.

## West As The Eagle

L. COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

Steel gray floats toward the east. The fantasy  
Of mist clears to reveal the moving stream  
Of earthly mountain tides—a heather blue  
With contour swirls of frozen orange. Again,  
The mist, with feather touch, surrounds this core.  
I am an energy about to break  
My shell, to be reborn.

Hot sun in summered south pricks this tired skin  
And makes it live. So now, within—as with  
My burning southern skin—new life erupts  
And bold rejections clear the way.

Intense

Revisions sweep my minute, unsurpassed,  
To greater, more-requiring pain.

The earth's incessant tides still flow their course.  
The mist goes to the east with eastern waves  
And all is clear; the western sea is calm;  
The sun is gone; and I am following.

II

Appears a ball of haze within this void.  
Black sphere! There—a filtering light . . . and here—the drone  
Of propelled force. Two visible spots in  
A universe. The navigator draws  
His geometric computation with  
Expert degree—our path through space and time.

The whitish haze grows fiercer in this night.  
Chicago fires its blazing forest edge  
In jagged line along the lake. The flame  
Shoots out its spears—the wharves where lighted ships  
Are docked. Beyond—the even embers glow  
Into the dim horizon. Time and space—  
Again—show here a spark and there a spark  
Like starlight in a milky dawn: symbols  
Of corporate strength, for yet we're miles away.  
Another minute plies a brighter blaze,  
Profuse with myriads of eerie sparks,  
Intensified by this—the peopled space.

Each light, an individual disguise,  
Keeps secret all it hides, yet blends to make  
One symbol of humanity: one sphere  
Of city night.

### III

A plan . . . A purpose . . . Then—a masterpiece.  
Yellow and blue diffuse to make their own  
Effect. Despite the native clay from which  
These pigments were refined, each has its own  
Degree of character and undenied  
Intensity.

Chartreuse and choral, side by side,  
Find marriage in this symmetric form.

Abstract design: a pattern built upon  
A pattern . . . lines on curves . . . the basic laws  
Of pigments used. They touch, unite, and find  
Resolvment in themselves.

Creator and result . . . A passion caught . . .  
Frozen emotion . . . Painter and the art . . .  
Two strokes and one impression. I define,  
And am defined. Projected, re-evolved  
Impressions manufacture a chaos  
Out of the only law—order.

A smile of constant, unregretted love  
Leaves lines for consummation by the brush.  
False Brutus filled his portrait with contempt.  
Love? . . . Hate? . . . Order? . . . Chaos? . . . They, side by side,  
Must take their place to show perspective paint—  
Impressions through this lovely city on  
An inland lake.

## The Souvenir

HAROLD E. STINE

It has often been said that lightning never strikes twice in the same place. It is not likely, either, that two mortar shells would land in the same spot but sometimes they do. The mathematician would say that such an occurrence is *improbable*. But probability is not concerned with individuals. Statistics tell what happens to regiments and armies and nations, but the calculus of probability means nothing to Private Joe Blow crawling on his belly on an enemy beachhead. The man who is killed in a shell hole by another shell is still very dead.

There are many people in Japan whose name is Tabara. If one were to go to Japan for any length of time it would not be incredible if one were to meet a person of that name. Still, it was incredible that Frank Martin should meet Ichido Tabara.

The Tabaras were a poor family. Frank liked to visit them, though. They were friendly and hospitable, and Frank enjoyed talking to Ichido, the father. They would sit on soft cushions on the clean straw mats on the floor drinking tea and, sometimes, hot *sake*. Ichido's wife would often sit with them. She liked to see Frank come. Frank always brought American cigarettes for Ichido, and sometimes white bread or pastries from the marine camp in Omura. He seemed quite different from the other Americans, who were always so loud and boastful. Frank was quiet and thoughtful and would sit by the hearth sometimes for hours without speaking.

Frank was more serious than usual one day. He had come early in the afternoon with an expensive gift for each member of the Tabara family. There was a fine pipe for Ichido, and two red cans full of tobacco. And there was a box of matches, good American matches with strong, thick stems; not like the slender, skimpy Japanese matches which were so hard to light. Then there was a beautiful green comb for Ichido's wife, and two pieces of perfumed soap. For each of the three children Frank had brought a box of hard candies of many bright colors. It was sweeter than any the Tabaras had ever eaten.

For an American, Frank spoke Japanese well. He talked long with Ichido today—asked many questions.

Had Ichido once said he had a son?

Yes, he had mentioned him to Frank many times. Why did he ask again?

Where had Ichido's son been?

A while in China. Then he was home for a week. After that in the islands to the south of Japan. Ichido's son had not returned. It had been over a year since the family had heard from him.

Had Ichido a picture of his son?

Yes. He had shown the picture to Frank once before—several months before, when Frank had first come to visit.

Frank remembered now, but could he please see the picture again? Certainly. It was in a chest in another room. Ichido's wife was dispatched with haste to bring it.

The picture was of a soldier in uniform. He was standing erect with one hand resting on a high-legged table. In the lower left corner were several words written in Japanese. What did the words mean?

That was his name, Ichido. The same as his father's. The old man looked proud—and for the first time he looked to Frank as old as he really was.

Frank scanned the picture slowly with no expression on his face. Very absently, as though in deep thought, he handed it back to Ichido's wife and said nothing. She rose and left the room, returning the picture to the chest. Soon after, she returned carrying a tray with a pot of tea and three small cups. The woman sat down with Frank and her husband. There was a long silence as the three people sipped slowly the tea in the tiny porcelain cups. Finally the wife spoke to Frank.

Did he have a mother?

Frank grinned. Yes, he had a mother. "In fact," he told her, "all Americans had mothers."

The Tabaras both laughed. Ichido playfully struck his wife on the arm, marveling at the inane question. The wife was embarrassed.

No, she meant was Frank's mother living?

Frank laughed quietly. Yes, his mother was living. She was in America.

Ichido's wife looked thoughtfully at Frank. Frank's mother would be happy to see him when he returned home. She would be happy to have her son home again.

Frank turned his head and lit a cigarette. There was a long silence.

Ichido looked at his wife. This American marine had come to visit them twice a week for five months. He would sit for hours with them in silence, smoking. It was seldom he spoke. Occasionally he would ask about their son. He was the same age as Frank. What was their son like? Did he used to play over in that field behind the school with the other boys? No doubt he had helped Ichido and his wife in the rice fields? It was nice that Ichido's son had always wanted to be a soldier—even when he was a small boy. Frank also had wanted to be a soldier when he was a child.

Ichido nodded thoughtfully as he smoked his new pipe. Strange fellow, this American—strange fellow. Not like the other Americans he saw every day in town—boastful and domineering and rude. Yes, a strange fellow, indeed.

Ichido's wife spoke to Frank. Would he like some more tea?

No.

Frank looked very unhappy. Was something troubling him?

The American looked at them thoughtfully and smiled. Ichido and his wife and three small children were his close friends, he said. They

had treated him kindly. He was grateful for their hospitality. Tomorrow he was going to Sasebo. There he would board a ship to leave Japan. He would never visit Ichido and his family again. He would ever remember them and cherish their friendship. It was late now and he must return to camp. Please remember him as a friend.

Ichido Tabara and his wife were astonished. They regretted his departure. He had been so generous and polite. He had not treated them as a conquered enemy. Why had he refused to take money for the food he bought, and why had he asked of their son? Frank only smiled as he shook their hands and said, "Goodbye."

The sun was sinking slowly behind the jagged hills to the west as Frank walked back to camp. It was chilly and he pulled the collar of his field jacket up around his neck and pushed his hands deep into the large pockets of his dungarees. He walked slowly looking down at the path. Passing a low stone fence, the limit of Ichido Tabara's rice field, he gave a last glance back at the small squatting hut with the steep thatched roof and surrounding hedges.

The sun disappeared behind the mountain and a damp, chilling breeze blew over the land and out to sea. As darkness closed in over the countryside, Frank's footsteps became slower and slower—His thoughts were back—back some fourteen months on an island to the south of Japan. One evening fourteen months before, he, Frank Martin, had watched the sun sink into the sea off Kitano Point at the northwest tip of Iwo Jima. As it disappeared he noticed a Japanese soldier moving about in the shadows among the rocks in front of him. He squeezed the trigger of his rifle once, twice—and the enemy soldier slumped into a gully behind the rocks.

Frank's company moved ahead the next morning and Frank leaped into the gully beside the dead enemy. Frank wanted a souvenir—and he found one, a good one. It was a picture of the dead Japanese soldier. In the lower left corner were some Japanese words. Frank had always wondered what those words said. Now he knew.

"Superior Private Ichido Tabara, Omura, Japan."

## The Tree

ALICE YOXTHEIMER

There were no birds, but she was not lonely. She hated it when the wood was full of birds. They seemed always to be mocking her with a twittering laughter—cruel as the silent mockery of the people in the streets. She left this cruelty behind as often as the weather allowed, gladly forsaking the town for the silent, impersonal shelter of the wood.

A seared and crumbling leaf dropped at her feet and she smiled. She lifted her head and her eyes searched the tree from which it had fallen. "No," she thought. "You're not quite bare enough. Today I want to do one that's bare and black." She shifted her easel and trudged on. Her series of portraits was almost finished now. She had started in early spring when the trees were lithe and rough—brown with feathery yellow green caps. She had captured on canvas the oily blackness and lush green of mid-summer and in the past month, the flame-consuming color of autumn. Now she was searching for the last one—the dead one.

For soon there would be snow, and the trees would no longer be beautiful. She would not paint snow-covered trees. The very thought was revolting. It would be like painting a shroud-covered body that had once been beautiful. Perhaps she would not find the tree today. Most of them seemed still to be clutching the withered vestiges of life. She had to find it, for it would soon be too cold to sit still for long. Even now her fingers would probably grow clumsy with cold.

Ahead there was a rise—to her left a thick clump of silver birches. She had never been this way before. Well, she would go over the hillock and look around. She climbed, her heavy brogues protection against the sharp stones underfoot. She reached the crest and her labored breathing stopped on a shuddering sob. There, below her, in a clearing, was a violent, naked thing—a dead tree. Thick roots had thrust ground aside and melted into a trunk of dull grey-black. It was bent and tortured and its bark was crusted and scabbed. Seven twisted arms waved wildly in an agony of frozen motion and one blunted stump protruded from its right side.

She was pulled toward it. Slowly she descended and circled it. Which side should she use? The right? The left? No. No, she must paint it exactly as she had come upon it.

Perhaps she might even capture that element of sharp revulsion she had felt. If only she could get into her painting the feeling of having suddenly happened upon the ugly thing. Then her work would certainly be successful.

In a frenzy, she started to set up her easel and get out her paints. And suddenly she stopped. It was as though a gigantic hand had at that moment laid itself on her and said very quietly, "Look at me!" She didn't want to look at it again. Her eyes felt dull and weighted.

With a tremendous effort she raised them. A queer atavistic panic rose in her throat. She knew what that tree was saying and she didn't want to hear it.

"You are ugly, too," it whispered, "as ugly as I. We are alike, you and I."

"No," she protested. "This cannot be what people feel when they look at me. Besides, I flaunt my ugliness. You hide yours in a wood."

She sat determinedly on her camp stool. She must not be emotional. With a concentrated casualness she did not feel, she took her charcoal and began blocking-in angular lines. She had decided to avoid all color in this painting. The sky, the ground, even the dull crimson leaves blowing about on the ground she would interpret in shades of grey. Only this way could she convey the tree's ugliness, its bitter loneliness.

After a while, she found herself squinting. Dusk had fallen and she had not been aware of it. "Well, I'm ready to start painting in," she thought as she reassembled her materials. She peered at the faintly glowing canvas. Even in its rough state she felt that it was good. She felt that it would be the best of the lot. One more trip would probably finish it.

As she started back through the woods she was glad that it was not yet dark. She knew it was ridiculous, but somehow she hated the thought of being alone in the dark with that thing. She walked briskly in the chill air. As the lights of the town began to beckon she was surprised to find herself hurrying to them. She stepped among the people and they comforted her, even the mocking ones. "What is wrong with me?" she demanded of herself scowlingly. "I am a supposedly intelligent person, and yet I have permitted myself to be disturbed by a dead tree, a dead, inanimate thing. I know I am ugly. I have known it this long time. I display it as some women do their beauty. I have compensated for it and am respected, if not admired, by a few people."

She ascended the last step and fitted the key to her apartment door. She switched on the light and carried her stuff into the studio. "I'll get supper," she thought, "and then start filling in on this thing. Maybe by tomorrow night it will be ready to show Greg."

She thought about Greg as she busied herself in the tiny kitchen. She was quite sure she had him figured out. Most men, outside her artist friends and business associates, shunned her. But Greg stuck. He laughed at her when she wanted to be laughed at, consoled her when she needed it, praised her painting (although he knew nothing about it), and was, at the moment, proving himself invaluable. He knew the right people at the Midtown Galleries (a place she had never been able to crash), and was sure he could get her a mid-winter showing of her tree portraits. As a woman, however, she was to Greg—a fad. Greg wandered about, never doing anything important, but periodically attracted to groups of writers, musicians, and artists. She had discovered that his last attachment had been with a pianist, a strikingly beautiful



woman. It was typical of him to want to display, for a while, someone just as striking, but ugly. She laughed. Oh well, there was no danger of having her heart broken by Gregory. He was a phony, an intellectual snob, flippant—but thoroughly harmless.

She ate hurriedly, stacked the dishes, and went into the studio. She squeezed huge blobs of white and black on her palette and went to work. Her brush strokes were bold and positive and she had developed a technique of using her fingers and knife on the canvas with violent effects. The huge, twisted mass began to grow in front of her. She felt that she was working strangely tonight. She lacked creative freedom; her strokes were automatic and forced as if she were working against her will and yet was powerless to stop. It must be tension, she reasoned. "My mind is tired and I need rest." Finally she threw aside her brushes in disgust. She didn't know why she had worked on this tonight. She had plenty of time.

She rose, switched out the light, and went to bed. But all night long, seven twisted black arms pushed themselves into her dreams. They seemed to be reaching to her, almost touching her, only to fall heavily to the ground, vibrating metallically.

She awoke late in the morning with a pounding headache. It was dull and misty outside. She wouldn't go out today. By late afternoon it still had not cleared and she was restless. She hadn't touched the painting or looked at it all day, but now she went to the studio. She knew she could finish it if—she seized the damp canvas and packed her things. She had about three hours of good painting light left.

The leaves were soft and squishy underfoot and made walking treacherous. She had started at a slow pace but as she got farther into the wood a rush of eagerness swept over her. Strangely, her feet seemed to have memorized yesterday's path and as she finally mounted the hillock she was almost running. An aura of mist clung to most of the trees, but her tree stood as naked and alone as before. So ugly was it that not even the atmosphere would touch it. It welcomed her hideously and she felt again, so strongly that she was almost nauseated, that primitive kinship with the thing. She stood there devouring it with her eyes and a slow laughter arose in her. "How stupid!" she shouted aloud. "How utterly stupid! I would not have had to come here today at all. I know your every line, every contour, every depth of tone." She stopped laughing. "Why then did I come?"

She walked over to the tree. "What is it?" she screamed. "What do you want of me?" She was shaking. "Oh my God", she said, "am I losing my senses?" She slumped to the ground and lit a cigarette with shaking fingers. "It's panic", she told herself. "Everyone feels it in the woods at some time or another. It's just a hangover from the days when my caveman ancestors worshiped tree-spirits. It's stupid; it's

silly; and I'm too intelligent to let it get me down. I'm going home and finish this painting and I'll even"—her eyes searched the ground—"yes I'll take something back to remind me that emotions can make a complete fool of anyone." Her eyes fell on a piece of the broken limb. It was long and club-like, serpentine and smooth. "Good", she thought, "the most hideous thing I could find. It even looks like a snake."

It was awkward and heavy, but she managed it. As she emerged from the wood she had begun to feel rather victorious, and on entering the apartment she was positively jubilant. She carried her memento into the studio, uncertain of what to do with it. It was rather attractive, and had good lines. Perhaps as a door-stop—she set it down and stepped back. Oh well, she thought dryly, artists can get away with anything.

She began to paint with a vigor; soon she was completely absorbed. The clock struck seven. "Good heavens," she thought, "Greg will be here any minute to take me to dinner."

She was dressed and waiting when he arrived and they left immediately. She considered make light conversation of her experience in the woods, but decided against it. "If he notices the door-stop", she thought, "I'll be forced to tell him. But if he doesn't, I'll say nothing. In fact, I've almost forgotten it myself."

In truth, she had. She supposed she had painted it out, but regardless, she had only a dim remembrance of the feeling that had been strong enough to sicken her. The evening dimmed it even more. Gregory was entertaining and attentive, exhibiting her, as usual, with a sort of childish glee. "Look what I have," he seemed to be saying, "the ugliest woman in captivity." She indulged him. After all these years it made no difference to her.

It was late when they got back, and Greg was stupidly tight, but she invited him in for a drink anyway. She wasn't sleepy and he was always good for a laugh. She went into the kitchen and got out glasses, ice cubes. He had turned on the radio and she could hear him moving around and humming. She carried the drinks into the living-room. Where was he? Oh yes, probably the studio. She walked there, silent on the thickly carpeted floor. She suddenly wished she had covered the painting. She walked rapidly. She didn't want him to see it. She didn't know why, but she didn't want him to see it!

He was saying something, shouting it. He thought she was still in the kitchen. "Come here, Florence; look, I'm finishing your picture. I'm making it pretty, pretty."

She stood in the doorway rigid—paralyzed. His back was toward her and he was jerking a brush, heavy with bright green paint, over the canvas. His almost skillful strokes had scattered leaves over the naked lines in profusion. The room swam before her eyes, sweat

poured from the palms of her hands. She couldn't see; she couldn't see a thing. With a lazy swimming motion she lifted the grotesque door-stop. It was a snake. It seemed to writhe in her hand. In one swift motion she was upon him, beating, beating, beating the back of his head. Her voice was wind, and rain, and the agony of centuries. "I don't want to be beautiful. Don't pretty me. Don't pretty me."



### 1400 Haskill Street

DAVID SHULTZ

Down the street  
Sits an old red brick building,  
A pattern of straight lines, up and across—  
With a dozen porches,  
A row all identical—  
And the trip-hammer rain has etched its walls  
With a fresco in brown.

A generation of children has thrown balls against the  
    silent brick  
And passed on;  
And a new generation  
Pitches pennies against its unyielding front.

The red tenement sits in the sun and watches  
While THEY toss up steel and stone that towers all around.  
It watches—and doesn't grow.

It has seen scores of whistling paperboys  
Toss the news at its feet.

It has sat stiffly waiting  
While the traffic noises increased to a clattering pitch.  
All day, all night, it hears life's crescendo  
(And hums with the wind when the night gets lonely:  
*Move slowly — play lowly — I'm tired — and I'm weary*).  
And it sits still and watches while the plowshare of  
    The Coming City  
Throws about it a concrete furrow.

It has blinked at the variations of lights  
That reflect on its blank face;  
Echoed the babblings of the multitude babblers,  
Echoed in every tongue, sung with the organ grinder's song;  
Whistled when the "pokey-man" whistled;  
Embraced the idlers on a hot summer evening  
And wrapped them in comfort and easiness,  
And heard how Pennock had twirled them that day.

It has hunched in deep solitude  
With the snow settling on its brow.  
Alone with its thoughts and the night.

You, with your pock-marked face,  
The city's oblivious to your rotten brown mosaics—  
And can't hear your rain gutter's splash-song in April,  
Nor feel the vibration of a kid on his roller skates.  
For the city's dull and hard  
And sees people only as overalls and lunch buckets  
And knows life only as a servant of progress  
And feel love only for the next generation.

Well,  
You dumb monstrosity  
With no personality,  
Just as soon as the Micks and the Dagoes move out  
We're shooting a highway right down the center  
Of 1400 Haskill,  
And you're in the way.  
They'll smash and level and cart you away—except for  
    enough to help make the foundation.  
The bulldozers and the dump trucks are moving up—

And you'll be a crumbly  
Pebble heap of yesterdays.

## Dogs and Buckwheat

ROGER SCHNEE

The antlered buck  
Leaped into the clearing,  
Paused a moment,  
Sniffed the air,  
Then pawed the ground.

Suddenly his lithe, proud body quivered  
And he bounded off.  
From the distance I could hear the dogs.  
It is illegal for dogs to chase deer.  
You tell that to the dogs.  
Their masters should know where the dogs are,  
But masters have to work  
And dogs cannot be tied all day.

They'll run that deer to death.

The froth will come at his mouth.  
His eyeballs, full of fright, will bulge half out.  
He'll fall, get up—one step or two—  
And then the dogs.

I should not feel sorry for him . . .  
The tops from an acre of buckwheat gone.  
It's natural for dogs to chase deer—  
That's what they say.

But still . . .  
A deer ripped and torn . . .  
And yet . . .  
An acre of buckwheat ruined.

