



HELICON

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The Square Peg

by HENRY MOZDZER

From the day I first learned to operate the penny gum machine I have had nothing but the profoundest respect for science. Mechanical . . . electrical . . . chemical science were all of the keenest interest to me. In recent years, the advent of yet another type of science—that of psychology—has filled me with still a deeper sense of admiration.

I remember seeing a movie short on career finding wherein a learned practitioner of this school, using little more than a hat full of blocks and a board mutilated by irregular holes, was able to look at his subject and say confidently: "Brown, you are wasting your talents as a plumber. Take my advice and get yourself a job as a professional consultant with some Yo-Yo restringing outfit." It was incredible!

This, in my opinion, was the acme of scientific prowess. Psychology had established itself as the trail blazer of mankind's destiny . . . but I digress.

Ever since I was tall enough to cut my teeth on a coffee table, well-meaning relatives—for lack of a mutual topic of conversation—would invariably question me as to my ambitions for the future. In the face of such ridiculous queries, I was, at first, hopelessly devoid of an intelligent answer. But gradually, I learned to satisfy their curiosity by spouting some time-worn cliché as "cowboy" or "Indian". Then from year to year, I changed my objective that I might impress my antagonists with my capabilities of doing something better. The list ran something like this: fireman, policeman, FBI agent, aviator, doctor, and so on.

About the time I worked myself up into the higher pay brackets, (as executive director of Amalgamated Steel) I realized that this harmless game had become an obsession. I resolved, forthwith, to discover just what potentialities or talents I actually did possess. The block test! That was it . . . a ridiculously simple way to find myself and quit this life of sham and hypocrisy.

I primed myself for weeks in advance solving any and all jig-saw puzzles; assembling broken milk bottles; and, at spare moments, pieced together discarded theater stubs. Then confidently, I presented myself at the nearest vocational guidance office.

After the usual formalities, I was ushered into the testing room. Nowhere in sight did I see the expected magical blocks. On inquiry, I was told that this test had become obsolete.

"Obsolete?? No, no!!"

"Yes, yes."

Recoiling from the initial shock, I turned dejectedly to the booklet which had been provided me. The first question read:

Would you rather be (a) a mule (b) a pig (c) a fish.

I remembered immediately that this was a song from one of Bing Crosby's latest pictures, but I couldn't, for the life of me, make up my mind as to which I would rather be.

Question number two offered another poser:

Which *one* of the following activities would you select:

- (a) read to a sick old lady (b) go out with a blonde
(c) take a dog for a walk.

Now there was a toughy . . . a conflict of moral forces. I resolved, at length and not without great qualms of conscience, to leave man's best friend with the sick old lady and go out with the blonde.

These and a hundred similar predicaments baffled the intellect, tried the soul, and smothered me with mental anguish. Nevertheless, I fought on, determined to see the end, cursing occasionally, the cruel faith which brought me on the field of decision so ill prepared.

One week later I received a letter from the vocational guidance center which left me more surprised than the outcome of the recent presidential election. It read in part as follows:

Dear Sir:

After a lengthy conference among the heads of this institution, we are happy to inform you that your case is unique in the history of our organization.

You, my dear sir, have an aptitude for aptitude tests . . .

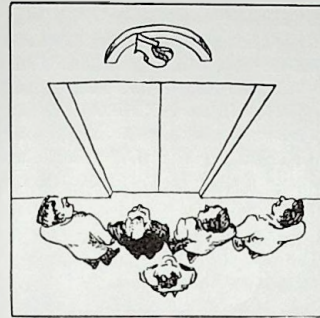
Blue

The pigmented cerulean of Mediterranean sky,
Seen through mellow columns of aged Pentelic marble;
The cold, fired cobalt of the fathomless northern seas;
The idyllic froth-edged azure at the lone ship's prow;
The enigmatic grey-blue of world above the clouds;
The fragile, tentative blue of priceless heirloom china;
The stern, censorious broadcloth of a policeman's highneck tunic;
The warm, faded denim on the plowman's sweaty frame;
The evasive haze that hovers over distant haughty ranges;
The immediate aromatic blue of spruce at Christmastime;
The latent blue of promise in vestments worn at Advent;
The luminous royal carpet in a costly Lady Chapel;
The hot green-blue of mystery in eyes that will not promise;
The cover of a heavy book that helps me to forget.

Leonidas C. Contos

The Elevator

by BYRON B. AUBREY



Willie the Pickpocket was glad his shirt was clean. He didn't know what he would have done had it been as dirty as usual. For as he walked along the spotless marble hallway, he knew that such a thing as dirt or sweat had never been there, and he knew that his shirt would remain clean as long as necessary. He cast a hurried, nervous glance over his shoulder to see if anyone was behind him. Willie was always afraid of people following him, because sometimes they wore blue uniforms and took him to jail. As he looked back, his eyes followed the squared corridor as far as possible, to where the corners converged in a point of white light. It hadn't been long since he was at the entrance, but then, time didn't mean much now. He heaved a sigh, his breath rushing past his yellow teeth, when he saw no one was behind. His footsteps made absolutely no sound. It was as quiet as death.

Willie didn't quite know what he was doing in the long, endless corridor, except that he was looking for something which was vague in his mind. He knew he would find it, though. If he only knew what! Suddenly he knew. To his right, a section of the wall opened, revealing a huge, high chamber lined with wine-colored leather and floored with a plush rug of royal blue with a series of triangles and ellipses and arcs interwoven in it. Willie stepped in, and turning to face the front, he saw that he hadn't been alone after all, for four men stepped in directly after him, and they were all smiling.

To his left, out of the corner of his eye, Willie saw an old man, barely discernible in the shadows which hung in that corner. The man moved his arm twice: the first movement caused the doors to glide together and the second movement was followed by a low hum, like a transformer, and then silence. Willie squinted, trying to make out the Old Man's features, but without success. What's that he's wearing? Looks like one of those ritzy capes the big shots wear on opera night. Never forget the night I h'isted a wallet from a guy like that. A couple o' crummy dollar bills was all that was in it. What a faker that guy was. Willie chuckled to himself low in his throat.

Willie looked again at the four strangers—or were they strangers? The faces are familiar. Where've I seen them before? Still smiling, too. As Willie looked his

eyes were drawn to their white teeth. They shone in the rosy hue. Why don't they stop smilin'? Things ain't so funny, they're kinda scary, 'cause I know where the hell I'm goin'. Willie swallowed—hard.

Then Willie noticed something else white on the lapel of each member of the group. His eyes dropped to the square cards, and as they fixed themselves in a stare, the cards grew larger and larger, and finally they were in front of his eyes. Willie read the one on the left, printed in block letters: CYRUS MULTI*REAL ESTATE*HEART. Then the next: J. R. THOMS*PHYSICIST*CANCER. Willie moved over to his right and read the last two: HENRY BRASK*MANUFACTURER*HEART, and JAMES DINNA*UNIONIZER*ACCIDENT. Willie flashed his eyes to his shirt pocket. There was a white card there also, and he read it, upside down: WILL THE PICKPOCKET*THIEF*MALNUTRITION. He shot a furtive glance at the men. They were still smiling. Willie made a clumsy attempt to cover up his identifying tag with his right forearm.

Willie's breath left him for a moment. Sure, he knew these men; he seen their pictures lotsa times in the newspapers he fished outa the rubbish cans in the park. They was all big men in America, *everybody* knew who they was.

Why am I travelin' with these guys? Somethin's wrong somewheres. Willie looked to the shadowed corner with a hopeful glance. A smile shone through the ghostly hue; that was all, just a smile. Somebody's playin' a bum trick on me. This gang's outa my class. Unless . . . Say, maybe they feel sorry for me . . . Or maybe it's a mistake. Naw, it ain't no mistake. They don't make mistakes, not here, any-ways. I'm gettin' a break, that's it.

A voice behind him whipped Willie back to the matter at hand. Turning quickly Willie was astounded to find no one. "Hello, Willie," the voice said. "Where are you going?" On the wall Willie noticed the diaphragm of a loud speaker pulsate with each syllable. The voice sounded hollow and distant. "No, no, Willie, behind you, over here." Willie spun around again and noticed that Mr. Multi's lips were moving. "I say, my boy, where are you bound?"

"I don't know," said Willie mechanically, and in reality, he didn't. As he spoke these words, he heard them come from the speaker on the wall. His voice also sounded hollow and distant. "No," he went on, "I don't know. How about you?"

"Up, my boy, Up, by all means. Important business, you know. Received a call just this afternoon. Have to act swiftly and with skill in this business or you don't make a nickel." Mr. Multi smiled and patted Willie on the shoulder, only Willie felt nothing.

"By the way, Willie, do you know the other members of the party? I think that we will be seeing quite a bit of each other for a while. I understand it's a long way to the top." "Yes," said Willie, "I know the others." The three men shook their heads in assent. Willie didn't know why he had said yes, he had never met them. But then there were a lot of things which Willie didn't understand and had long since stopped worrying about.

"Well, my boy, I'm glad to see that we're all acquainted, and I think we'll get along well together. You seem like a decent sort. Rather thin, though. We'll have to fill you out upstairs. A little shabby, too. Hope you aren't one of those."

"What," said Willie. "One of what?"

"One of those tenement dwellers; lazy, incompetent, and utterly devoid of ambition," came back Multi. "When I made my first big transaction in real estate I bought up three blocks of tenement houses on the lower east side and tore them down. During the depression, you know. Ripped them all down and built office buildings. All the people looked to me for places to live. Didn't have money, not one of them. Expected me to provide for them. Lazy incompetents. They didn't realize that I had to look out for myself and my enterprise. After all, my boy . . ."

Willie looked at Multi quizzically. "You done that to those people wit' no jobs?"

"My boy," said Multi, his fat face slowly growing red, "you'll have to learn that sentiment has no place in life. If you don't act with your head instead of your heart you might as well be dead. That move of mine paved the way for all my success!"

Willie shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of hopelessness. He looked to the other three travelers. Two of them—the physicist and the manufacturer—were still smiling, their heads nodding in silent assent to Multi's words. Dinna's face, on the other hand, had clouded, and immediately Willie heard his voice thunder from the loud speaker. "That's the trouble wid all you big shots. Never think of the working man. You're just like old man Norman, the dairyman. He built up his dairy and hired a few guys to work for him. Them guys weren't making enough, so I tried to organize them. Old man Norman gives me a hard time an' says they was all right the way they was and he didn't want no union. The guys musta been scared 'cause they didn't say nothin'. But we showed the old man he wasn't so smart, we wrecked a couple of his cars and he hadda close up for a while. An' we'd show you, too, if you tried any of that stuff. The little guy is on his way up—see!" The chamber became deathly silent after Dinna stopped his tirade. He wiped the corner of his mouth with his sleeve and stared at Multi, his breath short and quick. Multi looked down at the heavy carpeting beneath his feet, obviously trying to collect his thoughts and to think of a trenchant remark. The veins at his temples stood out blue. Then he looked up at Dinna's leering face and began to speak. His voice was low at first, but slowly raised in pitch. "My dear sir, I can appreciate any man's position. I'll listen to any man's opinion. But when you have the unmitigated gall to stand there and condemn *me* for *my* actions, I place you in the category of a low-living, dirty . . ." Suddenly the voice stopped coming from the diaphragm. Multi went on, his lips moving rapidly and his fingers accenting his silent speech. Then, realizing that his voice had been stopped, he threw up his hands in despair and retired to the far corner of the elevator. Willie didn't wonder how or why the voice had stopped. Another thing not worth worrying about. Besides it's awful tiring

to try to think too much. But those two—Multi and Dinna—they don't deserve no more than me. I only picked pockets. Wonder how they got in this car. Bet Mr. Thoms and Mr. Brask wonder, too.

Willie eased over to the side of the elevator. A chill spilled down his spine and a wave of fever flushed his face. Suddenly his mind had become confused. Willie wasn't a thinker, but under the existing conditions, he was forced to toss the known events back and forth through his befuddled brain. He thought that his head ached a little, but he wasn't sure. Willie wasn't sure of anything, anymore. The pick-pocket tried to reconstruct what had happened. Four—going Up—and me. But two of them ain't right. I gets a break; don't deserve it, but I get it anyways. Them two—Multi and Dinna—they must be in on the same deal as me. Yeh, that's it. (Butterflies flippin' my guts). Willie thought he was going to be sick, but he couldn't; he had to think. Thought they was going to help fix up things for me, but they need a little fixin' themselves. Got a funny feelin' we's goin' to get socked wid a mess o' trouble at the Gates.

Willie swung his gaze to the shadowy corner. The long, gleaming smile of the operator was longer, but not as shiny as before. It was more like—ah—bones; yeh, bones, or chalk, even. He could almost hear a laugh. And something was different. What is it? The cape, yeh, the cape. It ain't white no more; it's dark—almost black. No, guess it's more like blood—or is it? Willie couldn't look there any more; he snapped his eyes shut and they burned. He rubbed the fingers of his right hand across the closed lids. His hand was shaking; the car was becoming stuffy and hot. Willie felt like dying.

Turning around, Willie focused his tired eyes on the two remaining silent men who were standing directly in front of him. He was sure that one of them was going to speak, and he dreaded it. It was Thoms, the physicist, who spoke first. "Getting warm, Willie?" he asked. "Nothing out of the ordinary, my boy. Merely a guiding post to our position." Willie didn't understand what Thoms was saying, but he remained silent, knowing that the scientist would continue. "Recent observations with atomic instruments have located a stretch of torrid heat surrounding the earth like a blanket. Always thought that it grew colder as we went up, but that's all scrapped now. Progress is progressing, Willie. Might as well face it. That's the trouble with the world today, can't bring itself about to thinking of the future. Especially the United States. A bunch of appeasers in Washington, that's all—appeasers. I told them once, and I'll tell them again: we've got to use our power or we won't have it to use. "Thoms' voice grew soft and confidential. Willie strained to make out his words as they came from the speaker on the wall. "I worked on the atomic bomb, Willie, I worked hard and long, and then those thickheads at the Capitol wanted to hold off using it in Japan. I told them to hit where it hurt most, in the centers of population. Finally they did, and the war ended quickly. Now they want to give everybody in the world the secret so they can annihilate us. When

I was in Washington I told them: Hit Moscow now; and Stalingrad, and Leningrad, and Minsk. I drew a plan of attack that would have neutralized Russia in three-and-a-half days! Almost had them convinced, too, but I got called here too soon."

Willie's mouth dropped open and everything went black. He felt himself slump to the padded floor. His throat felt like sandpaper. He tried to swallow but choked instead. His tongue was swollen and filled his mouth. Visions of Thoms, ordering the destruction of little people like himself, poured through his soggy brain. He knew for sure that his head ached, now. It throbbled with every beat of his heart. He knew that he must listen to the last of the travelers. He knew that he would not be able to take it. He forced himself to look up from the floor of the elevator into the face of Brask. Brask had a look of pity in his eyes as he hovered over the collapsed form of Willie. "Willie," he said, "I drove my wife to suicide." That was all. The heat was stifling the pick-pocket; he clutched his throat with an iron grip. Then came a sudden thud; the elevator had stopped; they had arrived. Willie setruggled to raise his head. His eyes hung in their sockets. He saw wisps of steam seeping in under the door and then finally heard what he had been listening for—a long, low laugh from the shadowy corner. Noiselessly, the huge doors swung open and Willie saw what he didn't want to see—fire and smoke, men and chains. The last thing that he saw was the shocked faces of his traveling companions. Terror was in their eyes. Willie didn't remember much after that, but he remembered that he had smiled. No, they didn't make mistakes.

November Rain

Laughing lightly, blithely chiding,
In the misty sky-lakes hiding,
Mistress Raindrop through the trees
Watches furtively the breeze.
He, bewildered, wildly crashing
Through the quiv'ring birches, dashing
Dry leaves through the twigs in sport,
Frivolously pays his court.
Rough, robustious his advances
Bring him only cooler glances.
Mistress Raindrop, choked with fears,
Sheds her crystal, virgin tears.

Leonidas C. Contos

Strange World

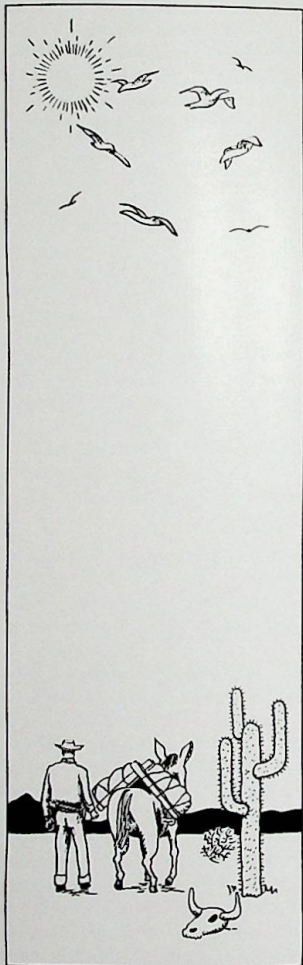
by ROY S. MACKEY

It was a white morning, bright with sunlight reflected from the hard-packed alkali desert. Heat waves rose from the narrow trail, creating the perpetual mirage of the arid Southwest, heat waves which shimmered, almost imperceptibly, like the undulating movements imagined, rather than seen, in a well-painted seascape, and disappeared as magically in the blinking of an eye.

Down the white road, and seeming impervious to, and a part of, the whiteness and the heat, came an old man. He was dust-encrusted; bits of alkali rolled from his clothes with each slow, measured step. He paused, allowed his pack-mule to plod forward until it reached him. He unstrapped a canteen of water from the pack and took a small swallow. Squinting hard against the sun, he cast a critical eye over the desert to where the road merged indistinguishably with purple foothills and yellow canyons in the distance. Satisfied with what he saw, he re-tied the pack and slapped the mule.

"Git along, Jen, we're still miles from home." He smiled, impishly; this was a favourite joke of his, because home was any place he chose to stop, unburden the mule, and make coffee. Jenny knows it too, he thought, I ain't foolin' her none. She knows the desert's our home and walkin's our exercise. Ha!

"S'good life though, ain't it, Jen? Though there's some might not favor



it." The mule waggled its ears as if in reply, and the man laughed, seeming to understand the movement.

They passed some sun-bleached bones which, although seen by the old prospector, elicited no comment, perhaps because they were as common to the scene as the sands which half-buried them, perhaps because he knew, unconsciously, that his own would some day join these time-resisting landmarks of the desert, and until then he wished no closer affinity with them.

Suddenly the mule jumped sideways; her hoofs showered her owner with dust. A small Gila monster lay, sunning itself, in the path.

"What's wrong, Jen? Think you'd seen a stranger. That little feller's got as much right here as you or me. Mebbe more." He walked after the skittish animal, got her back on the trail.

Sundown found the little caravan within the lengthening shadows of the foothills. Its leader was about to call a halt and make camp for the night when his ever-watchful eye saw a thin column of wood-smoke rising from the hillside a few hundred yards above his proposed camp-site. The discovery brought him up short, momentarily; he had marked no sign of a recent trail before him and had considered himself alone in what he sometimes called "these damned and dry wide-open spaces." However, and this he would never admit to himself, he was starved for the sight of a fellow human being. He put it this way. Feller's prob'ly brewin' a fresh pot of coffee, I could sure use a swaller.

This rationalization soon overcame his desert-bred caution and suspicion of each new event and he prodded the mule and laboured up the slope dividing him from the anticipated coffee. He soon arrived within the precincts of what appeared to be the beginnings of a small mining camp. He could see no one about, but his eye took in the few articles and objects so necessarily a part of the miner's trade. A pick, a sledge, two shovels and a pry-bar, all shiny with use, rested against the side of a hastily improvised lean-to. He absorbed the contents of this scene in one sweeping glance. It portrayed nothing but a reflection of his own life pattern, the camp of a wandering desert rat like himself.

He looked over the lean-to and up the slope. A short way higher in the hills he could see, in the gathering dusk, the vague outlines of a newly constructed sluiceway; the whitened ends of recently chopped logs pin-pointed the darkness. Here the picture differed in composition from his own. A man did not build a long sluiceway unless he had discovered ore rich enough to warrant washing it for its gold. He thought, feller's made a strike, I'm sure happy fer him, whoever he is. Then, as an afterthought, I wonder if it'll make him happy?

He returned his attention to his immediate surroundings in time to notice a change in the previously peaceful atmosphere. He was looking into the barrel of a rifle held by a tall man.

"Whup—" He collected himself. "Put up your iron, Mister, I got no quarrel with ya." Without moving, the tall man glanced quickly about him, up to where the

Jarkness had just now obscured his log sluiceway from sight. You could almost see him wondering if the newcomer had been here long enough to have seen it before the dusk concealed it from prying eyes.

"How long you been here?" he snapped.

"Just arrived. Ain't had time to draw a breath 'fore you had that gun on me."

The big man seemed to relax; he lowered the rifle and spoke again.

"Er— Seen any mountain lions? I heard one last night, that's why I'm so jumpy."

"Nary a one," answered the old man. "My name's Evans," the old timer extended his hand. "My friends call me Pop."

"Mine's Watkins," said the other man, ignoring the proffered gesture of amity.

Watkins turned, and cradling his rifle on his knee, sat down on a rock alongside the fire. He added a few sticks of wood to it. Now Pop could see how he had missed seeing him in the first place; the lean-to had hidden him as it partly did now. Pop reflected: Unfriendly cuss. Looks like I won't get that coffee after all. Not an old man; can't have been prospectin' long. Looks like a cowpuncher mor'en anythin' else. He's made a strike and wonders if I know it; not knowin's got him worried for some reason. Wal, I'll straighten that out, I'll just plum' up and congratulate him on his luck and we can be friends.

He started towards the fire, but before he could move, that old desert caution grabbed hold of him and held him back with all the power of an obstinate mule. The tall man by the fire, apparently looking at the fire, had thrown another stick into it. The stick missed the flame, hit one of the surrounding stones, and rolled into the darkness.

Earlier thoughts came back to Pop, to these he added new ones. No recent trail, either comin' or goin' from this place. No sign that he has a mule or other pack animal; prob'ly died. Hasn't filed a claim for this land. Got no way of knowin' that I won't if I know he's struck it rich. And if I tell him that I know; what would he — Pop looked at the shadow of the man near the fire. He had not changed from his crouched position. The glint of the flame slid along the blue barrel of his rifle. Suddenly Pop knew, sorrowfully, that he would have to be miles from this spot before tomorrow's sun showed him this man's little world and its gold.

He walked to the camp-fire. The other man followed him with his eyes.

"Wal, I guess I'll be driftin' along. Looks like it might be a bright night, should make a few miles by midnight."

"Which way you headin'?"

"North," and Pop made a deliberate motion to the left with his head. "C'mon, Jen." The man by the fire didn't move, and the old prospector slowly disappeared into the night.

The desert moon had risen, big, round, and friendly. Pop was speaking to his mule.

"Yup, Jen," as if continuing a thought begun earlier, "it's a strange world, where nobody ever meets anybody, and dogs bark at strangers." And the mule wagged its ears in the moonlight.



Karaly Park

by S. J. MORITZ

Karaly Park was composed of Hungarians and Slovenians grouped together to form a little village of the Old World. Karaly Park was colorful and exciting. Necessity forced everybody to speak several languages; the result was a sort of provincial, cosmopolitan atmosphere. The Old Country customs filled the year with various festive occasions. How the wine would blink as it flowed during the haying season! And how the cold November air would vibrate with the hideous screams of butchered pigs! would fill the neighborhood with the sharp odor of singed flesh! How could the winter evenings ever be long enough when there were so many stories of Europe to be told: eerie tales, prejudiced scandals, warm, human, comical stories! And how, in Spring, when everyone felt young, the freshly-dug gardens would reek with a curious suggestiveness, while the mist would be heavy with the scent of lilacs!

One summer, during the depression, Uncle Tooie came to Karaly Park. With him came two of his cronies. The three rented a small tar-papered shack. Karaly Park sniffed inquisitively at the newcomers. As the sun began to set, the inhabitants settled upon their porches, the women crocheting, the men smoking long, lidded pipes, and the children making general nuisances of themselves. On the "green" squatted the cows, contentedly munching, and vigorously swishing their tails at clouds of flies. All eyes were directed towards the shack.

Suddenly, interest was quickened and eyes were focused upon Uncle Tooie and his friends as they came home, dinner pails over their arms and shovels or picks over their shoulders. The three marched Indian-file: Uncle Tooie, short, heavily-built, and with his pants rolled up past his ankles, led the trio; the next was Shunny, slightly taller, his thin face made thinner by a thin, pointed nose, his eyes shifting evilly under the scenting Karaly Park; Shiga was the last, the tallest of the three, with a huge round bald spot on the top of his head, which made him look like a friar, and yet which curiously gave him an extremely sensual attractiveness. The

three disappeared into their shack. Soon they reappeared—apparently having eaten their meal—and sat on a bench in front of the shack. Shiga, to the amazement of Karaly Park, elaborately flourished a violin, tucked it under his chin, and soon the soft, quiet evening was breathless as the haunting melodies of Hungary drifted over Karaly Park. A feeling of tears, of a tugging at the heart, of an unexplainable urge for suicide, of an intense awareness of beauty, hovered in the air. And then Shiga shouted: "Laugh, neighbors, even with tears in your eyes!"

It is strange how the American bourgeois observes his book of etiquette so religiously that he appears ridiculous, and yet he is absolutely deficient in the matter of gallantry. Any act of politeness he may show to the other sex is done surreptitiously, as if he fears that his fellow-man might snicker at him or the woman might become embarrassed. But that evening, when we met Uncle Toocie, I saw how European gallantry has a respectful dignity attached to it. Uncle Toocie and his cronies greeted the women first with flourishes of hats.

The bench, and other odd, dilapidated chairs or egg crates were ceremoniously given to the women. The women were practically placed upon their seats; chipped glasses bubbling with white wine were brought out. And when the women toasted them, the three men did not give that curt American "Thank you", but answered heartily: "A thousand thanks! May the holy God give you thanks and long health!" Meanwhile, the husbands watched stoically, listening to the scurry of shirts and chattering of the women. Only now did Uncle Toocie and his companions turn to the standing men and become acquainted. While the men conversed, the women looked about curiously, nodded approvingly at the well-tended garden, chuckled at a flower pot planted ridiculously in the middle of a potato patch, peered curiously through the window, and looked knowingly at one another.

Far into the night we stayed. A low conversation hummed in the darkness. A feminine shriek of laughter often was heard. (The sharp slap of a hand, followed by a hearty curse, rang out, occasioned by the pursuit of a reckless mosquito.) The pale glow of fireflies, the flare of a match lighting a pipe, and above all the jubilant frogs gloriating in the night added an enchanted atmosphere to the evening.

We all got up, as if by common consent, and slowly walked home. The men were pleased with the new neighbors, and spoke warmly of them. The women agreed, but a reserved note lurked in their replies. They had noted the too frequent trips by the men, under cover of the night, to the wine barrels. One woman whispered she had crept to the sodded cellar and had seen eight huge barrels. The women choked with surprise, and reiterated this surprise by darting peevish glances at their husbands. For a few weeks the misgivings of the women hovered at the surface of their minds. Then they settled back into domestic tranquility. At just this stage, tumult broke out in Uncle Toocie's shack. Of course, the cause was a woman: Rosa Pravda.

Rosa Pravda, unfortunately, was not a good woman in the strictest Christian sense. Her very mode of dress was an affront to modesty. Rosa Pravda was a big

woman, well over six feet tall, and, as she herself boasted, "all meat". Despite her size and comely build, Rosa had an attractiveness which startled most men. Her brown eyes, continuously flashing with laughter or fire, made her seem more youthful than her forty-five years would have allowed. Rosa's dresses were colorful, bright as the strawberries in summer, and, rather than being tight as they actually were, seemed molded to her flesh. Rosa never walked; she flitted, danced, gamboled, jumped, and skipped. The men referred to her as "their happy one"; the women indignantly pointed her out as "that filthy one".

Rosa Pravda believed that sex was to be given as liberally and generously as one would, for example, donate to a church charity. This logic ruffled every woman in Karaly Park. Yet, to do her justice, Rosa was a magnificent woman; and few women could match her characteristics: she was amiable, generous, and just. When she laughed, her loud, heavy laughter could be heard in every home, and her laughter was of the spirit which made us smile, even though propriety forbade us to join her laugh. In time of need—and the depression was a continuous line of need—Rosa Pravda always managed to have the particular necessity which someone needed, and which she forced upon the needy person. To the shame of humanity, the women of Karaly Park were more piqued by the doubtful manner in which she obtained these necessities than appreciative of the spirit which made her so generous.

Rosa Pravda was always associated with her weaknesses, which were heartily condemned. First, she was just "an old pig", married, by the caprice of Fate, to a good husband and provider, and was the mother of six children. To Rosa's declarations that she was not promiscuous; that she chose her lovers with care, demanding that they have an infectious personality, an enticing physique, and, curiously, that they place little value upon money, which she considered a degenerate symbol of civilization;—to these lofty statements the women of Karaly Park would respond with grimaces, spittings of disgust, and hearty cuffs on the ears of youngsters who happened to be present at such philosophical dissertations. Pious ejaculations burst forth from the good women of Karaly Park when Rosa added, as if to settle the issue, that her husband could not satisfy her.

Secondly, Rosa Pravda was not a model housewife. She did not raise her children properly, did not tend the garden, wash the clothes, make dinner on time, cried the virtuous housewives. Actually, Rosa did accomplish all these chores in her own erratic manner, only she managed to make the day longer. When she went to the grocer's for soup meat, she used half an hour in making the purchase rather than the paltry few minutes the good women used. But in her half hour she gathered or passed on gossip; she learned or passed on a few more shady anecdotes; or she loudly discussed local politics, colorfully if not with exactitude. "As for my children," she would shout, "ask them if I am not a good mother!" This reference for qualification of good motherhood would be ignored by the virtuous women, for they knew how much her children loved her.

Thirdly, sniffed the good women of Karaly Park maliciously, Rosa swore too much. This was a sore point with Rosa. She was sincerely ashamed. It was the one thing which could make her cry in vexation. Rosa swore deliberately, but it was with the intention of making it smack of sophistication. Unfortunately, it brought cries of horror from the women and admiring chuckles from the men. Poor Rosa, if she had only known that it was this very profanity which lent such vitality to her personality.

In all truth, the good women of Karaly Park, deep within themselves, resented Rosa Pravda's astonishing adaptability to America. She was the first to attend evening school and to receive her citizenship papers. She attended all the parent-teacher meetings and was a favorite among the teachers. She knew the intimate details of almost every Hollywood star. In the presidential elections, her votes were based on careful thought and analysis, and, to the chagrin of Karaly Park, her choice always became president. To make matters worse, Rosa, playfully, aroused the enmity of the whole neighborhood by labelling them "peasants", and the people of Karaly Park were painfully conscious of this half-truth.

When Uncle Tooie came to Karaly Park, he and Rosa Pravda clashed immediately. Rosa, a disbeliever in property in any form, took her customary short-cuts through Uncle Tooie's potato plot. When he jovially asked her to refrain from using his garden as a public highway, Rosa insolently told him to erect a fence or some sort of capitalistic bulwark. Rashly, Uncle Tooie demanded that she move her big rear out of his way or else he would complain to the police. With all her massive weight, Rosa swung at Tooie and sent him sprawling among his potato plants. Rosa continued taking her short-cuts; Tooie continued insulting her from a distance. Tooie's cronies, with ulterior motives, supported Rosa; Karaly Park gleefully abetted Uncle Tooie.

One evening, Uncle Tooie excitedly aroused Karaly Park. After being soothed, he managed to give a coherent detail of his troubles. In brief, he had been evicted by his cronies and Rosa Pravda. At first no one would accept such a story; but music, song, and screams of laughter echoed from the shack, dispelling any thoughts of doubt. Neighbors poured from their homes and stood appalled by Tooie. The men, after some deliberation, refused to join Tooie's cause. At this decision, the women, of one accord, indignantly marched toward the shack, Tooie leading the outraged procession.

At the door of the shack, Uncle Tooie raised his voice in a plea to be admitted. The bawdy refrain of an old song told him what he could do if he wished. Furi-ously, Tooie hammered his fists upon the door, and was answered with derisive laughter. In anguish, he turned abjectly to the milling women. Immediately they picked up stones and flung them at the shack. Windows shattered, the kerosene lamp within the shack went out, and shouts and curses of pain were heard. The door opened. Rosa Pravda came out. There was something grand about Rosa as she stood in the doorway and glared at the women, while Shiga, violin under his arm, and Shunny, peered over her broad shoulders.

Tooie's cause was brought up, and a demand for justice was made. Isn't there a sense of decency, cried the good women, to make some people respect the privacy of a man's own home? This isn't the Old Country, you know. One can't be pushed around here, thank the Sainted Mary! Since when does an old woman think she can do what she wants to respectable people? What is she opening here, a bawdy house?

At this last question, Rosa swore furiously at the nosiness of old women, bare-footed peasants, who already had one foot in the grave. Facing Tooie, she shouted that any old fool who wouldn't keep his end of a bargain should be buried in the nearest dungheap. The women looked inquiringly at Tooie (at this new note). Watch out, you worn-out cow, sneered Tooie at Rosie, or I'll make you see all the stars with one slap. Didn't we draw cards, asked Rosa haughtily of Tooie, to see who would sleep here tonight? Didn't you agree to the deal? Now, you worm, what do you want?

At this information the women looked askance. An hesitating waver spread among them. What had unquestionably started as a demand for civil rights had degenerated into a questionable personal squabble. With a smirk of triumph, Rosa and Tooie's cronies imperiously went back into the shack, slamming the door with undue force. The good women returned home to be admonished and laughed at for their pains by the husbands. Uncle Tooie retreated into his sodded wine-cellar.

That night, at two o'clock in the morning, death horrified Karaly Park with tragedy. Hideous screams of agony wrenched the sleepers from their beds. As the people tumbled out of the doors, the truth of the nightmare was seen in the lighted sky. Tooie's shack was on fire. Flames writhed furiously; the dry tar-papered shack crackled as if it were a live monstrosity; and from the shack came the death-screams of three lost souls. Help was impossible. The door and the windows had been nailed from the outside with a criss-cross of boards. Surrounding the shack was a flank of assorted lumber already blazing madly. In front of the shack were scattered eight barrels of wine, the wine ironically flowing away from the fire. Suddenly a cry was given, a hand pointed, and the faces of Karaly Park looked upon the dead body of Uncle Tooie swinging from an apple tree.

Uncle Tooie is buried in Potter's Field. At rare intervals I visit his grave. The simple little numbered plaque stands lonely and dejected, as if ashamed that society has to show a trace of Christian humility by acknowledging his membership in the human race. And as I look at him there among the other anonymous hunks of humanity, I can hear my heart crying.



Autopsy

He lies on a shiny, white table,
 And stares at the ceiling.
 Naked, cold, dead.
 Unfeeling.
 Two lab techs, two doctors,
 Dress in white.
 Calmly, slowly,
 Everything right.
 A row of silvery instruments
 Nearby on a tray.
 Shiny, sharp, ugly.
 Polished that day.

Pick up the scalpel:
 The doctor points
 To a spot on the chest
 Near the shoulder joints.
 Cut across the pale white breast,
 Pull the flesh apart:
 Like peeling an orange.
 Good start.
 His wide eyes make you nervous,
 Staring and dull.
 (A young Marine. Got drunk.
 Cracked his skull.)

Get the big scissors,
 Try not to think
 While you snip through the ribs.
 The dead stink.
 Cut out the kidneys, the liver,
 The lungs, the heart.
 Weigh them. Record them.
 Keep them apart.
 Pull the large intestine up,
 Slowly, while the doctor cuts.
 Look away. Do the same thing
 With the other guts.

What did you have for dinner,
 Young Marine?
 Steak, Potatoes. Carrots.
 (He was nineteen.)

The doctors talk. Long medical terms.
 (Wonder how long these things last.)
 Start the suction pump to drain the blood.
 Two hours have passed.
 The watery blood in the hollow chest
 Looks like a wine people drink . . .
 Scoop it up with a bent soup ladle.
 Pour it in the sink.
 The intestines lie in a bucket
 Near your feet.
 Wipe up the blood on the deck.
 Must be neat.

Now, open the head.
 Mallet and chisel, above the ear.
 They hold his hair tightly.
 This feels queer.
 Hammer away. This takes long.
 Around in a circle . . . steady there . . .
 A man's head is hard.
 The eyes still stare
 The skull is open
 Examine the brains.
 Record the findings. Cleaning up
 Is all that remains.

Look at the cut-up thing on the table.
 Swallow hard. Look some more.
 You want to vomit.
 Run for the door.
 The doctors wash up and leave,
 The lab techs stay behind.
 Pour the guts back in any old way;
 This guy won't mind.
 Sew up the head and the body.
 Scrub the instruments. Wash the Marine.
 Scrub the deck.
 (Will you ever forget what you've seen?)
 Carry the limp form to the icebox.
 Wash up. Get yourself clean.
 Slide him into the cold, dark box.
 So long, Marine.

Irving Girschick

Silent Night

by HENRY MOZDZER

One might well expect that a room occupied by eighty young men would have all the home-like qualities of the Holland Tunnel. And rightly so, for on most evenings it was a bedlam of banging lockers, blaring radios, running feet, clattering wooden slippers, loud curses, or laughter provoked by delightful obscenities. But this night was different . . .

Profanity and groans of wrestling were strangely absent, and the riffling of a deck of cards betrayed only one pinochle game in progress. Here and there men in groups of two's and three's conversed in subdued, earnest voices which rose momentarily to blot out the drone of a solitary radio. Hurried pens scratched and punctuated numerous sheets of paper. Bathers, returning from the showers, for once made an effort to walk noiselessly so as not to disturb the men who lay staring at the ceiling, inhaling deep draughts of smoke. "Taps" drifted across the parade grounds, followed shortly by the sergeant in charge of the barracks. He omitted his usual gruff warning of "Lights out", clicked off the switch and departed.

Black, bottomless darkness gripped the room and lifted it unsteadily. The air grew tense—electric. A few unfinished conversations were quickly whispered to a close as if to righten the tottering structure, but to no avail. Now the silence itself was appalling . . . like a huge crypt entombed in the bowels of the earth resounding nothingness. Some one flicked a cigarette to the concrete floor. There was no echo . . . yet, one expected an echo. Wait! No one breathes. Like a trapped sub . . . no one breathes . . . for fear of wasting oxygen. The air is charged—dynamic. Eighty thoughts batter the impregnable walls . . . ricochet . . . collide in a mad effort to reach the minds of loved ones far away. Now nothing, only deafening, ear-splitting silence.

An hour passes . . . then two, yet no one sleeps. Suddenly, the stillness is shattered by the sound of oriental jabbering and the same voice, now unmistakably accidental, says reassuringly: "Yeah, yeah, Mac; I've got a wife and kid at home too." A hurricane of soul-lifting laughter acclaiming the mimic, sweeps out the oppressive air, and befriends the dark night. Peaceful sleep soon follows.

Shipping out tomorrow won't be so bad—not if you can still laugh.

The Lonely, Lonely Night

By HERMAN GLASS

She was elderly. She was poor, she wore rags and had the face of an infant, begging child. The rain beat softly on her tiny head. She stood still, still as the bare, lonely tree on a winter's eve; she stood, bent as the isolated tree across the home of knowledge—she waited, silently, silent as the falling drops and then he came, out of the gates of paradise, out of the channels of wisdom, from the fields of Romance, poetry, enchanting skies that bewildered his hungry, passionate eyes, into the streets, into the paths of hard, solid reality. She waited.

She waited patiently; it seemed that she had always been there since time began, she had the yearning, loving look, the look that he had seen on the eve of a new year, the eve when he walked into the great cathedral, the cathedral of pageantry, worship, splendor—and yet he saw her there in the eyes of the thousand kneeling mortals—their knees touching the vast, long, infinite—he saw her in dark night, the night he walked alone, wondering about the mysteries of life, wondering if there was a purpose, a pattern, a richness to it but all he saw was the fallen drops, the drops that gathered together and flowed silently down the naked streets, and he heard her when the bells sounded, echoing through the black night—

She stood there facing him, she seemed to come out of the night, she uttered a silent tune to him—he stopped and waited for the words to form, a meaning, a saga; he heard the sound of his feet as they touched the hard wet walk and as he neared her, he paused, for he heard her voice, low, unearthly, hungry.

"You boys haven't much tonight, have you for an old lady, have you? Things aren't so well, I guess, not so well."

He forced his hand into his pocket and then passed it over hers, uttered a sound to her thankful eyes and quickly departed. He walked silently on, trying to listen to the falling rain but heard nothing.

Ha, ha, bet she got more than we have all put together—

He paused, half turning, and noticed three students walking behind him. They had passed her, he heard their nauseating laughter.

The spell was broken, he heard the rain falling, he started to murmur disgusting sounds in the night.

The . . . ! he thought. The dirty . . . !

Yes it was reality, it was all true, he thought. It was all there and the rain kept falling. It never seemed to care. It gave a glow to the approaching streets. It fed the lonely trees, giving life to the naked streets.

He walked on and thought. She would always be there, always, for she was the daughter of loneliness, child of poverty. She was reality, he knew her well.

There was a silent laugh, too wild and mad to listen to. He quickened his pace and listened to the rain fall.

The Children's City

By LEONIDAS C. CONTOS

The warm light in the western sky had long since receded behind the rugged Attican hills when Taki made his way into the straggling village, slipping and stumbling on the loose stones, a prodigious bundle of faggots strapped to his thin back. He had stayed out as long as it was light, and as long as he dared, for with the men now gone, many of them perhaps forever, the invisible enemy was anxious to have boys like Taki. There were many stories alive in the village of how they—the vicious pronoun was all the identification needed—had swooped down onto village after village in the North and made off with scores of boys, yes, and many girls too. Aunt Eleni from nearby Ryaki had only last week come into the village with her little Antoni to stay. It was safer here she said. The village had accepted her matter-of-factly, as much as to say that two more mouths could hardly be considered an imposition any more; the fractions of food to be shared were too small to make the difference. Anyhow it had made many of the womenfolk feel better to think that it was safer here.

Taki wearily swung his bundle to the ground before the small fountain in the dusty square. It was one fountain the Germans had not destroyed in their northward retreat, for it did not depend, like so many of the others, on an intricate system of pipes and wells. It communicated by a short underground passage with a clear, violent little brook a few hundred yards away. The brook had never been known to stop, even in the hottest weeks of August when all down the range the priests sang litanies and the peasants prayed with exertion for rain. The passage, too, had been constructed many years ago—no one lived any longer in the village who could remember. In fact a legend had begun to grow about it, a legend cheerfully amplified and perhaps even invented by Yero-Yannis, the white-haired old sage who sat whitening in front of the coffeehouse from sun-up till sun-down.

Taki waited for a moment, stretching his back and swinging his long, thin arms. Then he stooped low into the hewn stone and drank long and deep of the sweet, cold water. When he had drunk as long as his boy's breath would hold, he cupped his hands under the ancient spigot and bathed his brown head again and again. In an ancient sycamore an anxious mother bird gave out a scolding little song, then all was still. Taki stooped once more to the trickling water, took another long draught, then swung his burden up, swayed for an instant under the weight, and turned for home.

In the swiftly gathering gloom a full dark figure came out of a doorway and nearly collided with him. It spoke:

"Where are you going, Taki?"

"Oh, good evening, Papouli." It was the village priest. "I have just come from the hill with this wood; I am going for the house."

"Good, do not stay. It is late and you should be more careful."

"Yes, Papouli. Good night, Papouli."

"Good night, my boy."

Taki had to turn his whole body with its load to watch the receding figure of the old priest. His full billowing robes of faded black alpaca always reminded Taki of Thesues' black-rigged galley returning from Crete. He had never quite found it in his small boy's heart to forgive the hero of Athens for forgetting to change to white sails after slaying the ferocious monster of the Labyrinth. And always he felt a deep pang of sorrow for the old king, slipping heartbroken into the azure, island studded sea that took his name. The priest also turned and waved the boy impatiently on to the tiny house of stone and clay at the top of the road.

As he dropped the wood noisily onto the cobbled pavement of the courtyard he was greeted first by a scrawny grey goat that came clattering toward him to the end of her tether.

"Good evening, Madame Iro," said Taki mockingly. "And what mischief have you been in today?" The goat cocked her saucy head at him, blinked her eyes stupidly and went around the corner of the hut again.

"Is that you, my boy? Taki, is it you?"

"Yes, Grammy, it's me." The door of the hut opened.

"You took so long, boy. You worried your grandmother. Don't you know we must be more careful? How do you know who waits in the mountains? Come, sit down. You must be hungry. Oh, you boys, you do not understand . . . when the old people talk. Come, sit down."

Taki sat down at the tiny table. He was hungry, very hungry, but he did not feel like eating. His stomach seemed to be asking for something it could not have. Somewhere at the very center there was a vague gnawing ache that seemed to diffuse itself in concentric rings of dull pain all through his being. He was very tired. The short grey woman who was his grandmother, his mother and his father to now, brought him a dish of thin brown soup, lentil soup. It was still warm. After soaking a chunk of crude bread in it and sucking it, he felt more like eating. He finished the soup quickly, then picked at a few boiled dandelions in another dish. They were tender and green, but without olive oil and lemon it was far from a tasty dish. His mouth puckered around the bitter greens and he ate no more. Chin in hand he gnawed at the hard black bread listlessly. The woman sighed with irritation. "Why don't you eat the greens; they are good. God knows there is little enough for us these days. It is a sin not to use everything we are given. Come, eat."

"I am not hungry, Yaya. Leave me be."

"Hear, hear! The gentleman is not hungry. What is the matter? Was business poor today, or are we to have a bridegroom in the family?"

Taki interrupted his grandmother with polite impatience, as if he had not heard her at the distance of his thoughts: "Yaya, how far is the fighting, now . . . from here?" The old face darkened.

"What do you mean, boy?"

"I mean . . . are they near . . . nearer than before?"

"I don't know, my son. How can we know? Today they are here, tomorrow ten hours away. Last week, the eve of the twenty-fifth, they got into Paliohori and did the devil's own work." She continued with visible agitation. "Sixty children they took with them, sixty! Where they take them, what they do with them . . . God only knows, and He does not tell. These are black days, Taki . . . black days."

As the boy quietly pondered this shocking news, no more shocking than dozens of similar incidents that were told of up and down the valley, there came a knock at the door, accompanied by a shrill voice: "Maro, are you here?"

"Come in, Eleni, come in." It was Aunt Eleni who had moved down from another village into her dead brother's house. She had come to share her mournful gossip with a friend.

Taki sat silent for a long time in the small dim room; the complaining monotones of the two widows became a lullaby that detached him and sealed him off into a melancholy of his own. Sadness had now become commonplace even in boys. There was laughter, yes, but rare. And not at huge jokes, for there were no huge jokes any more. It was a self-conscious laughter, a serious, cynical laughter at unimportant things. It did not seem that the battered, starving Greek nation could ever really laugh again, ever unbutton its vest and pat its round belly and laugh.

Outside, Iro, the goat, was impatient. She tapped her small hoof on the cobblestones and baaced at the shred of moon that had come up, not willingly, but by force of long habit, into the pale sky. Taki nodded and awoke. Then, as though by signal prearranged, he exchanged goodnights with the two women and went into the other room. He did not even undress, but lay wearily on the low cot that was his bed. The thin April night lay light upon him and the sad little boy, no longer a little boy, fell easily to sleep.

He did not know how long he had slept when he suddenly found himself sitting alert on his bed, awakened by something which had not yet explained itself. He listened for a long moment, then his mind, refreshed after many hours of sound sleep, darted into activity. He thought he heard voices, but when he strained his ears there seemed to be only an empty buzz in the night, unbroken by any sound that was not its own. By now he was wide awake, his whole being tingling with the sudden and unexplained liberation from sleep. He glanced over into the corner where his grandmother lay on a cot like his own. After a moment he could make out her form heaving rhythmically in deep slumber. He tiptoed to the window and stood looking up the road, then to the left up the range of hills, then to the white sliver of moon that would soon be hidden behind them. He turned to go back to his bed for it seemed much too early to be up; but his eye thought it caught something up the winding white road. He looked again—his whole being trembled. It was a light. What kind of light? Fire? Vision? A torch! And there another! And coming around the turn in the road a third! And suddenly, higher up, winding its way down into the sleeping valley, a stream of fire.

Taki's youthful mind drew a swift, deadly conclusion. They had come at last, the guerrillas, the andartes! To think that they would dare to venture so far down. Yet here they were, a fierce, vengeful, lusty army of dregs, the night scourge that already had burned and pillaged the homes of their kinsmen and carried off their children.

The sudden understanding of what was about to happen in the village shocked Taki into coherent action. He went quietly to the tired old woman's bed; he shook her, gently at first, then urgently, vigorously. She awakened quickly and spoke quietly, cautiously, as if by long habit: "What is it, boy? Why do you wake me?"

"Yaya, get up . . . look . . . look out at the window." Her movements nearly anticipated the boy's agitated words. In a step she was at the coarse casement, then she gasped and crossed herself.

"Panagia mou!" she whispered, invoking unconsciously the one she felt closest, the Holy Mother. "O, Christ! What is to become of us now?"

"Yaya, we must get out . . . we must hide somewhere. Quick!"

"No, son, we cannot hide. There is no place for us to hide. You will go alone. Here." And the woman pulled a small rifle from its hiding place in the wall. "You will take this; you know how to use it. I will run to Aunt Eleni's and anywhere else I am able . . ."

"No . . . you must come with me. I know many places in the hills; they will never find us . . ."

"It is only the children they want. The children we must save." Instinctively she seized and hugged the small boy for an instant. "Now go, run . . . do not stay . . . go! Quickly!"

By now the torches were no longer stringing down the side of the mountain; they were an ominous, swelling stream, flowing swiftly into the sleeping village by its only road. There seemed no escape possible, and indeed there was none. To one side of the road the clay huts crowded up the steep slope of the hill as far as they could keep their footing. On the other a few narrow fields, brilliant green from the extravagant beneficence of the mighty little brook, huddled together on a plateau which soon ended as suddenly as it began. Beyond was a deep split in the earth like a gaping Hades.

Taki hesitated for an instant outside the tiny courtyard. The she-goat rustled in her corner. The thing was happening, not at all as he had so many times imagined it, and he was now at a loss, confounded by terror. The wind carried the muffled voices of the raiders to his quivering ears, and Taki, trembling, dashed into the darkness. He ran without direction and plan away from the hills, knowing instinctively that the mountain, always impersonal and cruel, would not offer now a sanctuary. The road was no good, for surely a small supporting band would have cut in from the hills at some point below the village to seal off any possible escape. The andartes had mastered every trick of their terrifying trade.

Looking back from the shadows of the queer little church he could see his

grandmother run from one doorway across the street to another. A little swell of compassion rode under his boyish spirit and uplifted it for an instant—more pride than fear. At that moment his large black eyes reflected a sudden flash of light as what he sensed to be his own house burst into brilliant flame. He heard plainly the distressed baa of Iro, the goat, and knew that she had been the first victim of what would be a bloody night. Normally the guerillas would carry off any cattle or sheep. But Iro had met the knife he knew. They must be hungry, and if hungry they would be beasts tonight. Taki turned into the shadows of the church, leaned dizzily for a second against the cool stones, then crossed himself hurriedly, but with a fervor he had never known. Then he ran.

Presently he found himself in a small olive orchard where the low gnarled trees huddled together like gossiping old women, all but toppling into the broad crevasse. He hugged one of them and breathed hard until he thought his lungs would burst. Soon the breathing slowed, and as it did, he was able to control himself better. The trembling was now gone, his legs were firm and his mind clear. He looked about him cautiously to appraise his chances.

Another light flickered in the night sky, then flew into a rage of flames. This happened again and again until Taki knew that his village was doomed. As he watched, benumbed by horror, a vast, inarticulate rage welled up in him, and for the first time in his life he knew the urge to curse, violently and without constraint, but he did not know how. There were no words to give form to his massive boyish fury. Instead he gripped the small rifle furiously and wept. The hot tears stung his tired eyes, and the hopelessness of all he saw and could not see stung deeply into his weary spirit.

Out of the crackling and murmuring doom a long, mournful shriek rose and filled his ears. A voice he could not have mistaken anywhere, even distorted as now in one long plaint, compounded of a plea and a curse. It was his grandmother, to whom outlaw justice had come mercilessly, swiftly, with utmost economy at the point of the bayonet. It was not a scream of fear, for she had faced death many times; it seemed the scream of some mythical mother, suffering all mortal pain at the birth of ten thousand sons. Taki shuddered as he understood that terrible wail of grief, and he found himself praying. There were no words, no thoughts; only his attitude joined him distantly with something he distantly comprehended, and all around him was night.

Out of the night a form appeared. It was a treacherous form; its attitude betrayed it, and it was coming toward him, almost as though it possessed eyes and could see him there behind the gnarled trunk of the ancient olive tree. Taki froze with a thrill of fear. The village echoed with the roar of furious voices and the snapping and snarling of fire; it was a complete Gehenna of destruction. But here it was strangely quiet, unearthly, detached, horrible. The figure came on, almost directly toward the tree, and Taki noticed that it limped a little, even as it moved cautiously, and it staggered as though somewhat drunk. He was sure the man was

drunk, frequently they prepared themselves for burning and pillaging and killing by lighting small fires in their bodies. The man was drunk. But the limp, that was not part of the staggering. It was part of the man. And the man—a shiver of recognition ran suddenly through his consciousness—it was Stathis Markopoulos, the town's lost sheep, who had gone off into the hills to wreak a leisurely and heartless vengeance upon a people whom he had thought unkind because they would not countenance slothfulness, because to them laziness was immoral.

When Taki recognized him he knew that Stathis must be seeking him. He recalled intuitively the harsh words that had passed between his father and this strange man the last time he saw him. Why would he have left the raiding party unless he had sensed something? Perhaps he himself had discovered the old woman darting from hovel to hovel giving the word. Yes, he was the one . . . who else? Where could such hate sustain itself except in the tight-closed heart of Stathis Markopoulos. A new emotion took the place of every other in Taki's breast. A vehement rage blotted out every other feeling, and he desired as he had never desired any other thing to destroy this man.

The limping hulk was a scant dozen feet from the tree. He stopped short of the cliff and looked impatiently about him. He muttered to himself, "Where are you, you little monster?" Taki could scarcely contain his fear and passion. The harsh grey voice seemed to echo unnaturally in the thinning darkness. It startled nature with its cruelty, and in the olive tree above his head a thrush was frightened and spoke a shocked note. The killer's head turned quickly to the tree, and the fiery eyes saw first of all the dim white of Taki's shirt.

"Here you are then, you foul little bastard!" He lurched toward the trembling boy, one hand grasping a bayoneted carbine, the other outstretched to seize his valuable quarry. In the same instant Taki clutched his rifle with both hands and swung it madly before him. The stock cut a ghastly wound diagonally across the man's face, then bounced stiffly off the trunk of the tree. Taki's hands tingled painfully from the shock. The figure hesitated, swayed. Before it could recover, Taki, now possessed, crashed the heavy walnut stock down upon the drunken head. Quickly he swung his bludgeon about and shattered the grizzled jaw. Stathis moaned and went down. But Taki could not stop. He struck for life, blow after blow, first at the bloody head, then upon the huge back. In a final paroxysm of hate he crushed the hairy fingers still clutching at the carbine, then he stopped himself, almost by force. Panting and fainting he fell against the tree and stood there dumbly staring at the corpse he had made, for the man had long since ceased breathing. When the piercing hurt in his chest subsided, he dropped the shattered rifle to the soft ground, and kneeling beside the body he put his shoulder under it and urged it with difficulty to the brink of the crevasse. Then with his left foot he pushed at the legs until they hung oddly over the precipice. He kicked once more at the hips and slowly the corpse rolled over, hesitated for a moment, then went crashing and tearing into the ravine.

For a long time Taki stood there with his eyes shut and the shrieking in his ears deafened him. When he could stand it no longer he fell face down upon the earth and buried his throbbing head into the fragrant grass. When he awoke the grass was brilliant green. The thrush, unmindful of all that had happened, awakened his consciousness with a song. Taki darted into complete wakefulness, the awareness of danger took control of all his faculties. He turned his eyes toward the village, bright in the April sunlight, and saw in an awful glance what had been left of it. It did not shock him. Only a vague sadness flowed all over him and sub-merged him.

Now he could see people, his own people, moving slowly about the scarred, smouldering houses. Already a thin stream was making its way down the steep mountain road. Men and women, childless men and women, with here and there an infant squalling in its mother's arms. They were going south, always south, to safety. Taki wondered how many times they would have to move. He supposed he would have to move now too. Perhaps they would take him to the children's city on the coast; perhaps even one in Athens. Only last Sunday the priest had said something about the children. Taki suspected that whatever the priest might have been saying, it did not mean so much now.

A whinnying buzz down the road announced the arrival of a small army vehicle. And as the villagers scrambled out of its way several men in khaki uniforms got out of it, gesturing and talking with animation. A moment later a second appeared, then another. The soldiers had evidently arrived, the men who gave security and protection. Taki sensed the tragic irony of it and he felt no boyish thrill at the sight of so many soldiers in his humble little village. He stopped to pick up his rifle, instead he chose the shining carbine, then he set off wearily between the rows of olive trees glistening in the morning sunlight.

I Raised My Voice

The fog swirled by in heavy mists
As I stood there alone.
I lifted my head and raised my fist,
And the voice I heard was my own.
I raised my voice to heav'n and God,
Saw signs of the hereafter,
And from the stillness of the fog
There came a mocking laughter.

Melvin Kershner

Right or Left in Britain: 1950

by ARTHUR B. TOFT

Britain's experiment in Socialism, since it went into effect in 1945, has been a topic for discussion and speculation in all parts of the world. When the election results were published, the capitalist countries acted as though the "Hammer and Sickle" were flying from Buckingham Palace and Bolshevism had grasped the British Parliament by the throat. Now that nearly five years have passed and the Spring of 1950 will see another general election, people are again asking themselves whether Britain will remain Socialist or whether it will revert to Conservatism.

To be sure, it is a difficult question to answer in some respects, but there are other factors becoming increasingly evident which, in my opinion, come fairly close to showing the careful observer the trend that will be taken at the polls this year.

To begin with, the British 1945 election was a forced, hurried affair—forced and hurried by Churchill and the other Conservative Party members of the wartime coalition government. The necessity for a quick election after the war was created largely by Churchill's reputation for being an aggressive minister and the type of man who would not brook a repetition of the chaos which followed the 1914-18 war. To achieve this, it was thought that Churchill, the fighter, would institute a complete and prolonged occupation of the country which he had fought against so long and so stubbornly. Therefore, the troops, the largest part of whom were overseas, felt that to keep the Conservative Party in power would mean extended service with the Armed Forces; and as most of them had served since 1939, and had not been home for years, it is not surprising that they wished to avoid that contingency at all costs.

The Labor Party, during its pre-election "policy" campaign, infused the servicemen with the idea that if it should come to power, its primary object would be to reconvert industry from war-time to peace-time production. To do this, it would need all the man power that it could possibly assemble and would, therefore, speed up demobilization and rehabilitation.

On the other hand, the Conservative Party's bid for power lay in forcing an election before the servicemen's votes could come in and so win the election from the civilian population, who were largely in favor of Churchill. However, this they did not achieve, as the Force's ballots arrived on time. By this time also, the servicemen had written letters home and influenced people there, so that when the election results were published, the Labor Party had managed to defeat the Conservatives by an overwhelming majority. It was a well known fact that the most surprised persons in the country were the members of the Labor Party. The most for which they had hoped was a fair-sized opposition bench.

It was due in large part to this surprise victory that the Socialists did not accomplish what they had set down in their party program. They were prepared to

argue their points from the opposition bench, but not to put their plans into immediate action. Consequently, the servicemen were disillusioned. Where they had expected to be "demobed" by Christmas 1945, they found, many of them, that they would be eating their Christmas dinner out of a mess-tin in 1946, and still with no hope of demobilization.

The stevedores, coalminers, transport workers and the rest of the labor forces of the nation were no more prepared for Socialist control than the Socialists were to take that control, and the result was strike, stoppage, go slow campaign, and general dissension. The worker, feeling that his own men were sitting in the House of Commons, was sufficiently short-sighted to think that life would become Utopian for him immediately, and was equally discontented. To cap it all, the Socialistic foreign policy, although a noble one perhaps, seemed to be to give away the Empire as soon as possible, thereby offending the nationalistic pride.

Gradually, however, Clement Attlee and his associates managed to show some positive results in the place of the apparent continual negative, but many prior adherents to the party were, by this time, irretrievably lost. The first flush of victory and "peace at last" fervour had diminished greatly. The people had borne hardship, privation, bombing, and austerity silently since 1939. They had watched a strong, united government make one resolute decision after another and had backed and believed in that government against the skepticism of the whole world. Now all that was apparent was indecision, uncertainty and dissension throughout Parliament, and the Socialist Party's prestige began to ebb.

Meanwhile, the international situation was steadily deteriorating. The United Nations, the Western Powers' hope for lasting peace, could come to no definite agreements, and the people were drawing comparisons between the United Nations and the League of Nations. They also began to see differences between Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin and the ways in which both men handled foreign affairs. Together with this came the realization that in order to gain improvement in the depressing situation at home, the general world situation must be improved to a great degree.

A troubling question began to arise. Many years of extensive world influence has created the belief in the British people that their diplomats were among the finest and most capable. The record of British statesmanship, whether one is pro-British or not, has to be acknowledged as substantiating this claim. Therefore, the British nation felt that with the right men at the international conference tables, it could improve world affairs as well as its own. Had the Labor Party the necessary experience and diplomatic finesse to accomplish such an undertaking or was it incapable of coping with the aftermath of problems left by six years of war? On studying the records of both Parties, one is forced to conclude that if it is a question of proficiency and experience in world diplomacy, the Conservative Party undoubtedly leads the way, both in men and experience.

However, what of the twenty-five years of Tory rule, during which unemploy-

ment reached an all-time high, home affairs were disregarded, and the hunger march of northern workmen to the Capital could have precipitated something which would not have been solved with pen, paper and negotiation? Have the interposing war and apparent incompetence of the Socialists driven the memories of those difficult times from the minds of the people? Will the election policy of the Tories be such that it can swing the people's thinking back to the Right in 1950? Or will the Labor Party triumph again?

No one can answer these questions definitely, but from the different newspaper and radio accounts one may arrive at a probable conclusion. It appears that the general trend of thought which will ultimately influence the coming election, and perhaps subsequent elections, is favorable to the Tory hopes.

The people feel that although life was not what it should have been under the pre-1939 governments, neither is it what they want under the present system. They also hope and feel that the shock which the all too complacent Conservative Party received in 1945 has shaken it out of its lethargy, acquired by almost twenty-five consecutive years of power, and made it appreciate the fact that the government is still ultimately in the hands of the people.

Consequently the voters have more confidence in themselves, and although they still remember the pre-war years, they feel that now they have control of the situation and that they have shown the Conservatives what can happen should they again abuse the privilege afforded them. This fact, together with the growing belief that national prosperity can be attained only through international harmony, and that the Conservative Party's superior diplomatic experience has more chance of achieving this aim than the Socialist Party, will, I think, induce the electorate to return Churchill to Downing Street and his Party to the "House" in 1950.

Should the Conservatives fail to capture the people's confidence and be defeated, I believe that the margin of defeat will be very narrow, and that the opposition bench which will then be created will prove an effective block to Socialist policy. The voice that the Conservatives will have at their disposal will be much louder. Undoubtedly they will use it strongly and as often as possible with regard to foreign diplomacy. They will exert their increased influence to the utmost degree for the purpose of directing foreign relations, especially with the United States.

Now, how is this going to affect the course of international affairs? For one thing, the United States, the most powerful and influential single nation in the world today, has always exercised a policy of private enterprise and maintained a system based on capitalism. It is only natural, therefore, that the feeling of comradeship and brotherly love should have cooled somewhat, when Britain turned socialist. To a dyed-in-the-wool Conservative or Republican, or for that matter, any believer in capitalism and private enterprise, there is but one shade of red, and even to the most open-minded, socialism is used as a synonym for communism. In other words, the United States would be far more cooperative with a capitalistic Britain than it is with the present socialistic regime. This closer co-operation between the two

major nations of the Western World would increase their ability to deal more effectively with the spread of communism in Europe and would make it easier for the different member nations of the United Nations General Assembly to come to some lasting agreements.

It is true that as far as Europe is concerned, Britain and the United States work fairly closely together. But I strongly contend that the greater bond which would be formed between the two nations by the advent of a Conservative victory in Britain, this spring, would enable them to bring a far greater united influence to bear upon the European continent than is apparent at the moment. This influence could outweigh that exercised by Russia. Communism could be driven back behind its own Iron Curtain, and many of the smaller nations that are now frantically waving the red flag could be brought to realize the virtues of at least partly—free democracy, as opposed to completely autocratic, police governed, red dictatorship.

At the moment, as I have mentioned previously, the co-operation between Britain and the United States comes more from necessity and a common danger than from mutual understanding and genuine regard for each other, and I sincerely feel that this is due, in large part, to the unhappy fact that the present British government has labelled itself Socialist.

Ultimately, the English speaking world will realize that there is no solution to the ever increasing problems which it has to face while it remains divided in opinion and foolishly opposed in the methods of achieving its objectives. Our aims are almost identical, but so far, personal greed and individual hard-headedness have intervened to impede the progress of democracy, and served only as a loophole through which the "world domination through force and subjection" nations have insidiously operated.

This certainly was true of the years between the wars, when Britain was complacently talking disarmament to France, who was half-heartedly agreeing, while keeping one eye on the Ruhr and thinking fearfully of 1870 and 1914. America was playing the ostrich and trying to wrap the cloak of isolationism around herself even more tightly. She would not have anything to do with the armament or disarmament in Europe, but only shouted for her share of the reparations and return of war loans, and kept right on sending scrap iron to build the Japanese navy, which the British so obligingly trained, and loaned more and more to Germany, which ultimately found its way to Hitler.

Finally we are going to realize that the only way for the world to maintain peace is by Western unity.

This appears to be a far cry from the immediate results of the coming general election in Britain, but I am convinced that a Conservative victory and the subsequent strengthening of the Trans-Atlantic bond can assist materially in achieving this unity. While setting the example for the other Western nations, we may secure ourselves from the threat of yet another world war and perhaps the ultimate destruction of our civilization.

"... And It Must Follow ..."

by PETER BALSTRA



There are days in August when it is an effort to talk. This was one of them. Julian Lewis, from his position in his straightback chair watched Randolph, his colored presser, finishing the sleeves of a seersucker coat. When Randolph opened the valve of the presser, he disappeared diabolically in a shroud of steam and reappeared angelically, little wisps of steam circling his head. Doctor's orders had confined Julian's labors to simple tailoring, minor repair work, and the general business end of running his shop. With these orders he was quite willing to comply; not out of any particular concern for his health, but for the relief it gave him from work which he had

always thought burdensome.

Outside, some children from the neighborhood passed, but not before rattling and banging the screen door and following the act with their familiar sing-song chant of "Jew, Jew, ya big fat Jew." There was a time when this had made him white with rage—had set him in a blind fury. Now, he yielded by feigning deafness, for to challenge, to assert was to invite unending repetition. This truism of life the old man had learned from children.

It was always dark in the shop. There were only two crude lights in front, and one in the back. The three of them were supplied with electricity from the El above, and the current alternated so slowly, that the flickers were very noticeable. The dun-colored wall paper did not serve to make the place any brighter, and no color was afforded by the long line of black tuxedos which hung like bats from the pipes. They seemed to gather up the heat and to radiate it in blankets of musty, mildew-smelling air. Directly in front of this was Julian's counter from which he conducted every nickle of his business. It is amazing how he managed to work behind it. Every inch was covered with pins, tags of every shape, color, and size, pieces of change, scraps of wool material, newspapers, pamphlets from textile mills, blotters, bottles filled with more pins, stubs of pencils, and other items which he thought necessary for his trade.

Julian was tempted to close shop today. It was too hot to work—it was much

too hot to work. The place was buzzing with flies and the single strand of fly paper which hung from the light cord was so filled with them that there was no room for any more captives. He watched two of them struggling to get free. The more they struggled, the more firmly implanted they became in the sticky brown until at last their wings stuck, and then they were finished. When their wings stuck, they were as good as gone. Julian had to remind himself to get another roll of fly paper tomorrow. Fly-Stick was good; Sure-Death was fair, but it didn't hold the big horse flies.

The heat was not the sole factor in making Julian Lewis feel uncomfortable today. He had gotten up late to begin with and had tripped on his way to the bathroom, causing him to fall on his bad arm. On his way out, he had words with his landlady about the hot water, and she in turn had words with him about not taking his garbage out and stinking up the whole apartment. Then there had been the truck—that almost sickened him. It had sped past him as he was stepping off the curb, and the massiveness of it, the noise of its engine and horn had momentarily terrified him. But when he saw it rounding the corner and noticed the huge letters on it spelling out Altag Textiles, that sickened him. For seven years he had been fortunate enough to have avoided any reminder of the incident which changed the course of his entire life. For seven years he had avoided the newspapers and periodicals which advertised Altag Textiles. He had stayed away completely from the garment district in the city for fear of seeing a newly constructed warehouse with that hated name upon it. And then the truck had appeared that morning.

The manner in which he had been duped fifteen years ago by his newly-formed partner was never quite clear to him. He understood little of law, and less of human nature to have signed the contract without having offered it for scrutiny by his lawyer. At any rate, an obscure clause which was made cruelly manifest at the numerous court proceedings proved his undoing, and as the eagle is loth to forsake its nest, so was Julian loth to forsake his desk—his very life and being.

It was the pitifully farcical extrication from the nest that remained so vivid in Julian's mind and appeared with such brilliance in that flash when he had seen the truck. The sensation of the reenactment of the scene was strangely real. For a moment it seemed as though he again felt his fingers gripping the mahogany top and could hear the voice of one of the two plainclothesmen that approached him. "Now look, mister, all I know is that here are the papers, and that you don't own this place anymore. Now I don't want to have to . . . I know it's not the easiest thing in the world, but you gotta vacate. I'm just doin' my job, mister, I'm just doin' my job." Then that pressure under his armpits. Big hands—strong hands. Then his body light on his feet—then the feet dangling. Later the kicks, the shrieks, the curses . . . Outside, the crowd—massed as if at a carnival. "Step right up, folks. See the . . ." Those faces! Some sympathetic; most of them indifferent. That dirty kid rushing under legs, struggling to get a better look. "Hey, mister . . ." More curses, more kicks. "I'm just doin' my job, mister. Maybe you'd better go home

now." Seeing that scrub-woman entering the main door, right on time, as she had been for the past five years was almost too hard to take. That fat, straggly, corsetless scrub-woman going in now to clean up what was once *his* office. He could count the times he had even noticed her before. He remembered okaying a check for fifteen dollars to be given her at Christmas that same year. He had scooted her out of his office when he was working late numerous times, and now, there she was entering the massive door above which was the huge sign ALTAG & LEWIS TEXTILE COMPANY.

That night he had dreamt of an ape with the head of Altag climbing that huge sign, with he, Julian Lewis, trying vainly to follow. The black steel girders had suddenly become coated with grease and Julian's naked body had fallen. Altag, beating his chest furiously, was plucking the bulbs from the LEWIS part of the sign and raining them down on Julian sprawled helplessly on the sidewalk below. Upon striking Julian's body, the bulbs exploded and burned his skin with white heat. When the last bulb in the "S" was detonated, the remaining portion of the sign glowed with blinding intensity and burst into a cascade of luminous buttons, each bearing a small figure of Altag on the face. He awakened screaming into the night, and like an infant discovering himself alone in the dark, he clutched at a piece of cotton material and cried in it a full half hour before realizing that his wife was sitting there on the bed, and that he had been crying in her skirt.

Julian's house furnished enough money to pay his creditors and the ill-chosen lawyers who burned his ears with promises to have their client back in his office and Altag on his back. After four "new" trials, the case of Lewis *vs* Altag became a standing joke at city court. Cub reporters were assigned to cover the trial much the same as bewildered coeds are pledged into sororities. The case of "Shylock *vs* Shylock", as many jealous, would-be "Portias" preferred to term it was no longer news after the third trial. Following the fifth defeat in January, Julian collapsed on his way home and broke his arm. In the "Accidents Reported Today" column, they spelled his name "Louis". Altag swore a month later that that was the reason his former colleague landed in a sanitarium.

By the early part of that month, Julian was convinced that he wasn't insane, and became accustomed to the indifferent treatment of the nurses. He still talked a great deal, and although the nurses ignored him, there was one person willing to give her undivided attention—his wife. The sanitarium became a haven for him, and he was too frightened by reality and too devoted to the attention of his wife on the weekends, and to the pleasant walks and picnics on the grounds to dare conceive of renewed life in the city.

When the remainder of Julian's dwindling funds was invested in a dry cleaning establishment at the suggestion of his wife, the sudden and dreaded transition had to be made. Reverting again to tailoring at first proved humiliating until humility was displaced by the necessity of keeping bread on the table and it was only a matter of months before Julian became reconciled to this. The death of his wife three years later suddenly transformed life into a mere existence.

These were the things he pondered over now that had come to him in a flash when the truck appeared that morning. As he sat there in the straight-back chair gazing out through the dusty front window at passers-by slogging torpidly through the humid August heat, the hiss of the steam presser brought his mind back to the realm of the shop. The presence of Randolph was somewhat comforting. There was something about Randolph that provided Julian with a good portion of what little security the world now offered him. The very fact that Randolph was there presupposed safety from the danger of utter poverty and degradation. Randolph was as dependable as the presser he operated. It seemed as though he had always been there in the shop, and always would be there. Although his helper drank a good deal, Julian felt that mankind was entitled to its frailties.

Julian heard the screen door bang shut and thought that it was the children again until he turned and saw a customer approaching the counter. The man, who appeared well above the means of most of Julian's customers, handed his ticket over the counter with a terse smile and thrusting his hands into his pockets, bounced impatiently on the balls of his feet. Julian took it, and holding it up towards the naked light bulb, squinted in order to read the number. Scanning through the rack of finished suits on the left, it took Julian little time to realize that the suit had not come back from being cleaned.

"I'll have it ready for you tomorrow. Eleven o'clock," Julian mumbled, handing back the ticket.

"Tomorrow, I need the suit tonight! What did you tell me you'd have it today for?" the customer said hiding none of his displeasure.

It was Julian's fault. He realized it now. Oberman's never delivered on Thursdays, how could he have possibly had it ready? It was too late now, and he realized that, too. "You come in ten-thirty tomorrow morning, I'll have it ready for you." He said it with hope that it would effect a hasty dismissal, but the man appeared highly annoyed and striking a hands on hips pose of utter disgust made no pretense of being pleased at his plight. The expression on his face was that of a man who envisions the beginning of a tragic night. He stood there a full minute, and then, with a disgusted "Oh, for Christ's sake!" sped out the door. Julian fumbled aimlessly through the rack again when the man had left. He looked back at Randolph, neither knowing why he looked back, what he expected from the presser, nor why he was fumbling amongst the suits. He tried to say something loud enough about the mad, rushing pace that civilization keeps so that Randolph might hear him, but at that moment, the elevated train rumbled overhead leaving the words drowned in his mouth.

Randolph had viewed the scene, but remained impassive. On such occasions he usually left the presser to lend Julian moral assistance, to act as arbiter, to lie for Julian, to speak for Julian, or as happened more than once to throw a particularly unruly customer bodily out the door. Today, he could not be bothered. To leave the presser after becoming acclimated to the increased heat of the steam— to excite

himself, was out of the question. To add to this, the experience with an enraged woman yesterday who had smelt his breath, hurled a newspaper at him, and called him a drunken sot was still too fresh in his mind.

The next customer entered shortly after the incident. He was a stocky young colored man in work clothes. He bounded up to the counter and pulling out his ticket with a clumsy motion, flattened it on the counter and left it for Julian to pick up. While the latter was going through the rack, his customer thumbed through a week-old newspaper on the counter. Julian was relieved to find the man's sports coat in its proper place on the rack, and taking it down, placed it on the long metal hook which suspended from the ceiling. Before Julian could prepare it for wrapping, the man lifted it from the hook, and scrutinized every inch of his unconservative possession. It was just above the pocket that he detected a spot. It was anything but a large spot, but it was a spot, nevertheless. He held it directly in front of Julian's face for the old man to see. "Just look at that spot. There it is, just look at it. Man, I don't think that coat's even been cleaned." The Negro spoke excitedly, almost belligerently.

Julian could no longer control his nervousness and as he adjusted his glasses, they almost fell from his nose. The coat shook in his hand as he held it. He fingered the spot, rubbed it with his thumb, but to no avail. He made use of the lighter fluid on a shelf just above him, and that, although successful in dulling the spot, merely served to spread it over a larger area.

"If you think I'm payin' for a suit wid a spot in it like that, you're crazy." With that, he snatched the coat from the hook and left as hurriedly as the former customer. Julian's fright gave way to surprise and that to the realization that he had not been paid for the coat. This time the old man could not cope with the situation alone and he turned to Randolph. The presser again had viewed the scene and knew immediately what Julian would say.

"Never mind, Mr. Lewis," he hollered above the hiss of the presser. "Never mind, I know the guy. He was joking with you. I'll see him tomorrow night at Jerry's and get the money for you." Randolph did know the man and also knew that he was not joking, but he would get the money anyway. He passed the matter off easily, almost humorously.

Julian was partially consoled by his helper's promise, but could not fathom the joke which he considered sheer dishonesty. Had he now been capable of rage, it would have eased matter, but the excitement of the day left him muddled and numb. The truck was the wound, but the two customers were vitriol. The heat which ordinarily bothered him little now seemed to smother him. He was exhausted, but could not even doze, for when he closed his eyes his mind became filled with childishly phantasmal images of naked savages and giants which hurled huge boulders on him. He tried to think of something to say to the delivery boy from Oberman's tomorrow, but he was afraid that he would forget anyway. It had not been his fault that there was a spot on the coat in the first place and it was natural for a man to forget occasionally.

Then Julian remembered the letter. He had seen it on the counter when he had come in that morning. Randolph must have put it there when he opened up. Julian rummaged through the maze of articles on his counter until he found it amongst some of his pamphlets. The envelope was marked Special Delivery, and he almost tore the letter in two trying to open it.

Dear Mr. Lewis:

According to the estimator whom you met last Sunday, your store, and the two main pieces of equipment in the store are valued at \$1,600. I have not the vaguest idea what the tuxedos and rented suits would net you. Perhaps you had better consider an additional \$150 as an absolute maximum. Assuming that your business remains out of the red, your immediate beneficiary, whom I understand the textile school is to determine, would receive approximately \$1,500 towards his training at that school. I drove over to the school yesterday and made inquiries. They seem to have a sound training program with ample facilities. Found the whole trip very interesting. I shall explain the costs of entrance fees, tuition, etc., at a later date—let it now suffice to say that the \$1,500 will cover some young man's tuition and expenses through the two-year period.

I've had no trouble at all in writing up the will. As I understand it, your employee, Randolph Green, is to receive the sum of \$100. Upon the payment of all your debts, the remainder of your savings including the amount obtained from the sale of your store, etc., is to be donated to the Eastern School of Textiles for the purpose of establishing the "Julian Lewis Memorial Fund". I should like to add, Mr. Lewis, that it does one's heart good to know that . . .

Here it was before him. Here were the words which suddenly made a three-year-old secret dream a tangible reality which he could practically put his hands on. All he had to do now was to sign a piece of paper and die. Fifteen years had dragged him like a piece of seaweed through a vast ocean of trivialities—an ocean of buttons, pins, and credit slips. There were only two seasons: winter and summer. In the winter it was cold, and in the summer it was hot. In the winter it was seedy overcoats, in the summer it was loud, beer-stained, seedy sports jackets. But this would raise him. Yes, this would take him out of the sea, and he would emerge like Neptune. There was something big in changing the destiny of a fellow human being, and in this case, a pen in his hand could do it.

Julian felt the presence of some sort of senile genius in this plan for a will. It had in it the idealism of his early twenties, the soundness of his middle forties when things were going right. In exchange for the buffets the world had given him, he would offer his hand, and in it, a human being largely of his own making. How often these past few weeks he had sat in the very same chair he was sitting in now and had imagined the type of boy that would receive his help. The school would probably pick a very smart boy . . . maybe a Jewish boy. No, Julian thought, that didn't matter. When there was an ideal like this at stake, there was no room for

restrictions. But he would have to be serious . . . the school would see to that. Serious and quiet, but inside, a regular furnace of ambition. Yes, the boy was the means by which he would regain his human dignity, and once more possessed of that he was willing to seek his wife.

At six-thirty, Randolph turned down the steam of the presser and left for supper. Julian began to prepare his own in the back of the store. The pot which he cooked in had not been cleaned the night before, so he tapped the return pipe on the steam generator and swirled the rust-tinted water around in the pot and tossed it out the back door. The hot water must have accidentally splashed on a big tomato rummaging through the garbage, for the animal screeched and hurdled the fence. Julian closed the door quickly and cleaned out the pot with some old newspaper. He opened one of the cans of soup and pouring it into the pot, diluted it with a little more of the water from the return pipe. He then put it on a single burner stove and sat down while it heated. The shop seemed unusually quiet; the sound of the traffic seemed muffled. Julian could not account for it until he noticed that Randolph had closed the front door. He had noticed a chill in the air when he had opened the back door to throw out the water and remembered that the papers had predicted an early autumn this year. When he thought how hot it had been at noon he mused at the fickleness of nature. He wondered if his landlady had taken out the garbage. She had probably left it there out of sheer spite and he would probably be forced to contend with her again when he got home. He was sorry that he had not gone home earlier, but Mrs. Lesko promised to come in with the \$2.65 that she owed him. She was one of his best customers besides being a kind and understanding person. Perhaps she would chat with him tonight. She would notice that he was upset and he could feel free to tell her about all that had happened.

While he was getting up to remove the soup from the stove, Mrs. Lesko's young daughter entered. "Mama wants to know will you wait until Monday for the money," the girl said. Julian sat down again. "Yes," he answered without looking at the girl. "She wants to know will you clean these dresses, too. She said to tell you maybe she can pay for them next Friday." "Yes," Julian muttered. "Okay?", the girl asked without having heard him. "Yes," Julian repeated and scrawled out a ticket for her. When she left, Julian got up and turned off the gas stove. He was not hungry and would not eat the soup. He walked dazedly to the front of the shop and looked out of the front window.

It was the end of the day, but it seemed like the termination of a life. So much had happened—so many bad things had occurred. It was not right that a man should have to endure so much in one day. It was not good for a man of his age. It hurt his stomach; it hurt his arm. He looked out the window and viewed the cars speeding by. They were bright colored and gaudy and they were rushing. It seemed as though it was the first time he had seen cars before and they were going fast. The elevated train overhead also sounded loud and strange and the screeching brakes hurt his ears. The towering walls of the city made night come earlier and

swifter; a phenomenon which proved the power of the walls and of the city. When the street lights were put on outside they shone oddly and he thought he saw his imagined boy—the boy for the school scooting in the glow, but he wasn't sure. The boy turned and looked at him. He was eating a piece of bread and he stuck his finger to his nose and Julian hoped it wasn't the same boy. Then speed and movement gave way to expanse and grossness and he seemed to see massive fields that stretched without end, and the stars looked high in the sky. There was a tree in the middle of the field that touched the stars. Hanging from one of its branches was a huge price tag—a tag containing one figure with a thousand zeroes trailing it. He thought he heard a voice which asked him if he wanted to buy the tree and he in turn grunted an answer at which the voice laughed.

When the tree and the field and the stars had disappeared and the street scene reappeared, Julian found he was holding the letter in his hand and he looked at it and realized that it was to no avail, and above all, he was no genius. The will was to no avail, but he would let it stand, because he knew that you don't take it with you and there was satisfaction in that.

Randolph came back from supper and noticed Julian holding the letter. "Another bill, Mr. Lewis?" he asked jokingly. "It's about my will," Julian answered after a long pause. "You're a good man, but you shouldn't drink so much—I've taken care of you." He no longer desired to keep the matter a secret and he felt that Randolph should know that he had been included. One hundred dollars was a lot of money, but he deserved it. "You clean up and close the shop," Julian said, "I must go home."

Randolph said nothing, but went to the back of the shop and got Julian's hat. Julian was handling one of the tuxedos and mumbled something about one of the sleeves. He put on his hat and walked out of the store still mumbling. Randolph watched him until he disappeared around the corner.

Randolph was accustomed to the babbling and it didn't affect him any more. He could never imagine Julian as having been anything but an old man and he knew that someday he must die. One day Julian Lewis would die and there would be a place for him somewhere. Somewhere there would be a place for him where he could babble, and eat that funny kind of fish he's so crazy about. Maybe he's going to will me this shop when he goes. Jesus, maybe that's what he's gonna do—maybe this place is gonna be mine. The idea seemed logical to Randolph. Julian, he knew had no relatives—not even a friend that he even spoke of.

Somethin's gonna happen, he thought. Somethin's bound to happen, cause a guy don't work seven years for beans without somebody takin' care of him. The thought sounded good so he took a bottle from behind a hat block on the shelf in back of him and drank from it. He drank to himself. The idea of a toast made him laugh a little.

Sailor's Dream

In dreams and thoughts I can travel far,
And forget the world that is real,
Things change from what they really are,
And become just those things which I feel.
Imagination drives them on
Like a cloud in the vastness of space—
In a moment my wandering thoughts have gone
To a far-away, peaceful place.

Calm, white clouds in an ocean of blue,
Dots that are birds flying high;
Fertile fields of a golden hue,
And we are alone, you and I.
The wind whispers free

through a tall oak tree,
Disturbing the leaves as it goes.
You smile at me

and contentment I see
That only a lover knows.
Above, the flaming sun is bright,
And warms us, lying there:
Its golden beams send arrows of light
At your breast, your lips, your hair . . .
I touch your cheeks with cool fingertips,
You turn and close your eyes—
I kiss your warm, soft, sensuous lips,
As we listen to the wind's quiet sighs.
We speak of our love as a beautiful thing
That is true, and will always grow:
Birds on the wing

swoop low as they sing
To us: "It will always be so."
I caress your bright, black, shining curls,
Your soft and beauteous form—
The tumbling leaves dance by in swirls,
But the breath of the breeze is warm.
Your hair is as silk to my wandering hands,
Your skin is the finest of lace,
Your eyes bright as sparkling desert sands,
—and our thoughts become lost in space—

HELICON

I feel your heart beat
and its rhythm is sweet
As soft music which floats in the air—
As the shadows descend,
our spirits blend,
And forever, we wish to lie there—

The sweetest of dreams is over too fast,
And I come back from places unknown—
My romantic dream is a thing of the past
Unfulfilled, for I am alone,
But my love for you
shall make it come true,
And we'll spend many hours as in dreams:
Where the swift singing breeze
floats to us through the trees,
While we lie in the sun's dancing beams—

Irving Girshick

To My Son On His First Birthday

Where, tell me where has one year flown?
From a tiny infant you have grown
So fast. (And like a little, bright-eyed mouse,
You scurry through the house.)

You were, when I first saw you, one-half hour old.
(I didn't know you—I had to be told
That you were mine.) Babies of that age, you see,
Look pretty much alike to me.

Now with your head of long, blonde curls—
(Hair like that belongs on girls,
People say.)—Now with your bright and shining eyes,
You're a little man, I realize.

Swiftly, so swiftly you'll be a man,
(With troubles and problems that no one can
Escape.) But Steven, your life is yet to unfold:
Today, my son, you are One Year Old.

Irving Girshick

HELICON

Fifteen

by MAURICE McDONALD

The street life of the city, the realm of the civilized savage, the world of chaos, dreams and silent fears—fifteen years old. His day begins with a crescendo of oyster-grey light and a cascade of wild thought. He wakes to a world of silent sounds: the rumbling clatter of a morning street car, the glassy ring of empty bottles, the shuffling rush and come hither wail of a distant train; water is whispering noisily in the pipes. The dampness of the sleeping city spills slowly down his spine. He shivers.

Morning is filled with feverish hopes, exciting possibilities and a million delightful fantasies that fade with the passing of the day. Today fate will beckon and he will answer the call fearlessly, face peril unafraid and mete out justice with a staunch righteousness. Through an insane tangle of flashing swords and narrow-eyed villains shine the I-have-lived face of the boy, sometimes gay and reckless, sometimes brooding, sometimes flashing awful fury. This day will offer romance. Today the cellar must be cleaned.

Fifteen years old—a broken picket in a long grey fence, a sewer clogged with wet black leaves, the familiarity of a wooden doorstep, a cracked sidewalk—“Ted 3-4” fingered in the last block of cement. A world of dirty dungarees, too-tight sweaters, lowered eyelids, learned indifference, the studied smudge of dirt, the panther stance. The world of the “goddam” and “To Hell with it,” of words slipped out of the corner of the mouth, the brazen stare that cannot camouflage the hidden doubts, of determination and despair, of a curse and a prayer.

The empty lot and the broom handle, the sun and the dust—the crack of the bat as the ball heads for the left field fence, the explosion of applause from the packed stands as he lopes across home plate, team-mates thumping his back, a ninth inning—“Cheese it, the cops!”

A world without emotion, without affection—no one notices the sunset. It's pretty.

Red Box

Big red box
Doesn't rattle when you shake it
HMM,
Dropping on the floor won't break it
(Timmy tried it).

Smooth red sides
Now where's the catch?
Oh! There it is
Now pull!
Oops. Didn't work
Just made a scratch.

Inside
Nothing slides.
Must be full!
Or maybe c

m
p
t
y

Maybe, if I push . . .
Whee!!
Mommy??
Who's that little man I see??

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