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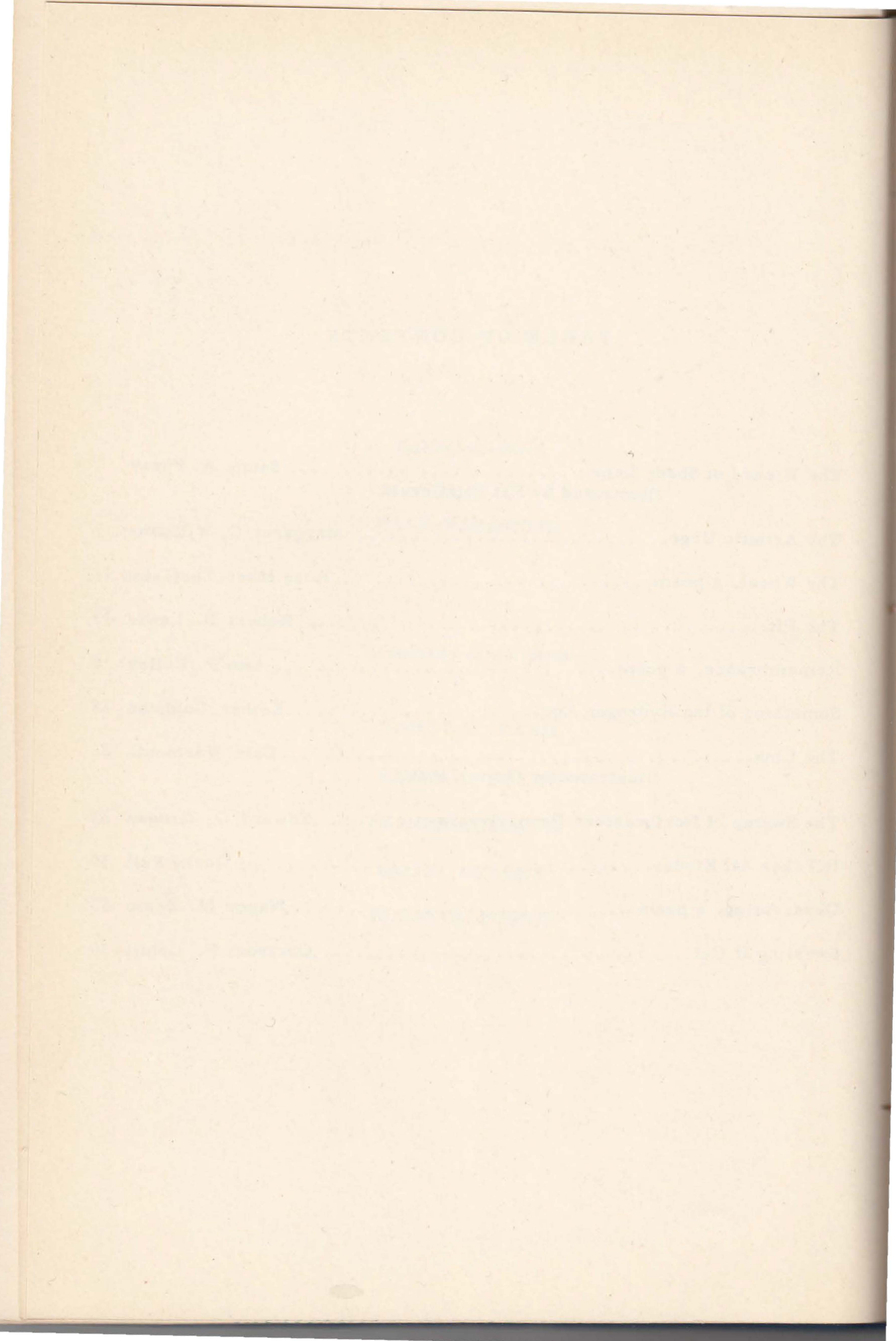


The Wizard of Shady Lane

Sandy A. Furey

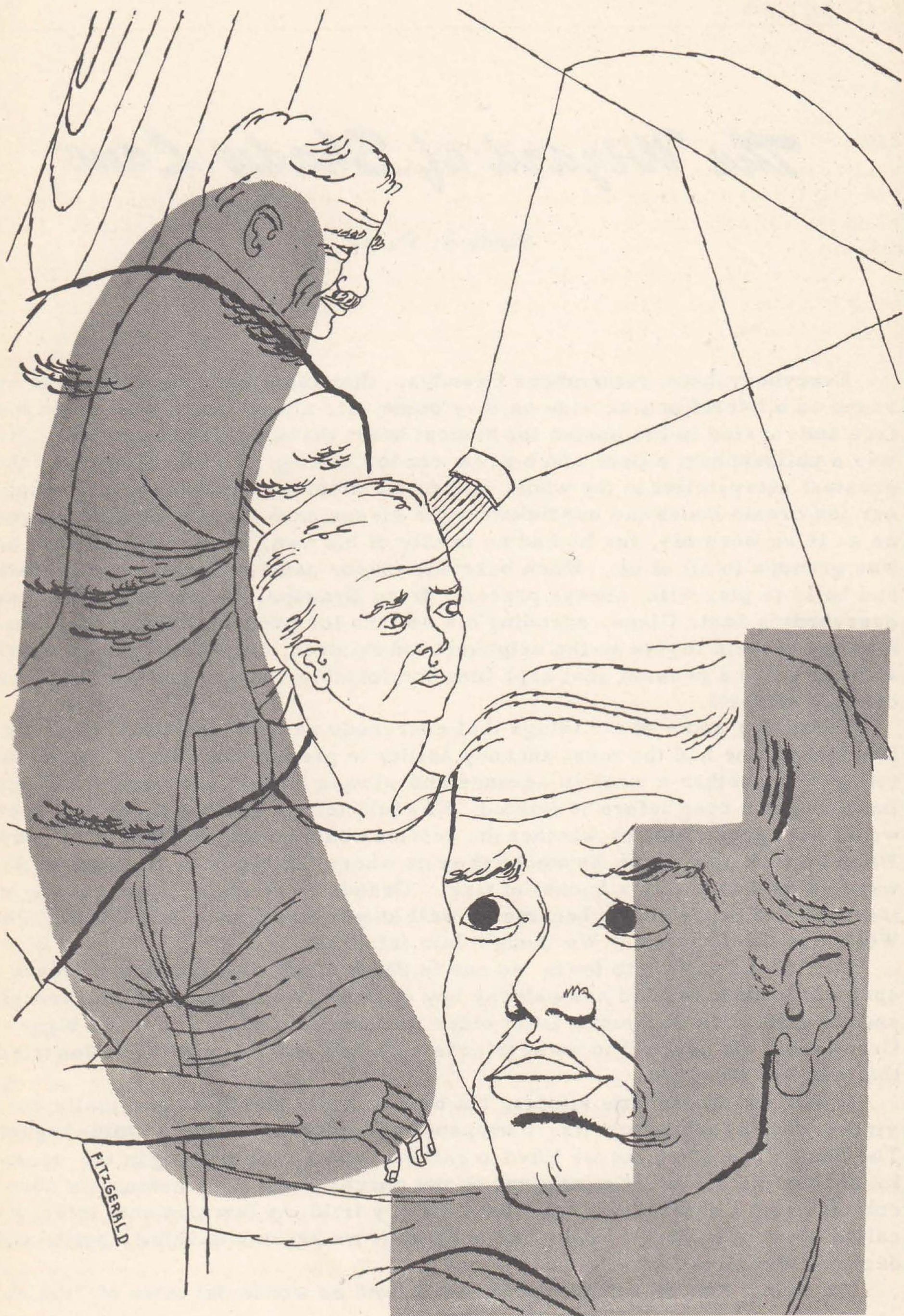
Everybody here remembers Grandpa, that short little man who was as round as a barrel and as wise as they come. He always wore a smile on his face and carried in his bosom the kindest heart that any man could have. He was a philosopher, a poet, and a great one for talking. To us kids he was the greatest story-teller in the whole world. He umpired our ball games, bought our ice cream cones and our tickets to the circus each spring. Grandpa loved us as if we were his, for he had no family of his own. Really a bachelor, he was grandpa to all of us. When baseball season came, there were new bats and balls to play with, always presents from Grandpa. On Christmas he was everybody's Santa Claus, spending his dollars for presents, and saving pennies and nickels to give to the neighborhood children. He was a retired miner and collected a pension that kept him comfortable though he never saved a cent for himself.

These are some of the things that everybody remembers about Grandpa In addition, he had the most uncanny ability to predict the future. He could tell us the weather a week in advance and always knew what team would win the ball game even before it started. He could tell us whether a certain tree would bear good fruit, or whether the beetles would get at the plants that year When he took us fishing, he would show us where the big ones lay, and we always came home with a bucket of fish. Grandpa's wisdom, born equally of intuition and experience, became so well known that people called him "The Wizard of Shady Lane." We thought him infallible.

Until Jud moved into town, no one in Shady Lane ever doubted or disrespected the old man. Jud was a stocky boy of fourteen, and a bully through and through. He was just a little older than the rest of us and much bigger. Grandpa did all he could to make friends with Jud, but the more Grandpa tried the less Jud liked him.

It was not through his efforts, but by a miracle that Grandpa finally convinced the boy of his merits. It happened one sultry afternoon in mid-August. The Shady Lane Gang, as we liked to call ourselves, was playing in the vacant lot across the street. Grandpa sat on the porch, leisurely smoking his corncob pipe as he watched us romp about the dry field. A few moments later, he called us over and fed us cake and soda until we became bashfully polite and declined any more.

We lounged on the porch a while as he told us wonderful tales of "the old


FITZGERALD

days." It was getting late when we began to leave, and as we went Grandpa said firmly, "Boys, it's going to rain today, and I don't want to see any of you playing around that old mine tunnel. You can never tell what'll happen when the timbers are wet." All of us took his word to heart-- all but Jud, that is.

When we got up the street, Jud sneered. "Hah, what does that old tub know? It ain't rained for a month, and that mine tunnel is safe as it ever was. Let's go down there now. The one who doesn't come is a sissy." None of us ever wanted to be called that, so we reluctantly followed him down to the abandoned mine and into the tunnel.

Thunder cracked over our heads and the rain suddenly began to fall furiously. We got scared, Jud too, and all of us wanted to make a dash for home. But Jud saw that this was an opportunity to display his bravery, so he said in a brazen but shaking voice, "He made a lucky guess, that's all. Go on home, you sissies. I'm going to stay here until the rain stops." There wasn't one of us who wanted to admit we were deathly afraid, so we stayed. In a few minutes we gathered up some old boards which were lying about and started a cozy fire. Our fears began to disappear as flames brightened the old tunnel.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by running footsteps. It was Grandpa, soaking wet, who burst into the tunnel. His eyes glittered and he was angrier than we had ever seen him before. "I thought I told you kids not to come here today. Git on out!" he said sharply. We scurried out of the mine quickly, mumbling apologies to Grandpa as we went, but Jud stayed in the tunnel. "Come on out, Jud," Grandpa called. The boy snapped back, "Who are you to tell me what to do? I'm staying here until the rain stops."

Grandpa knew then what sort of boy he was up against. When his commands failed, he resorted to psychology. "Jud, down in that mine are giant rats that'll swallow the leg of a man in one bite," he called. "You're a liar," replied Jud. "If there're giant rats, why don't you come down and show me?"

"That I will, young man," said Grandpa. "Just stay put, and I'll be right back."

Grandpa wobbled over the hill and quickly returned with a flashlight. He went back into the mine, with all of us tagging along behind him.

We walked cautiously down the damp dark tunnel until we heard Jud shouting, "You're crazy. There's no giant rats in here. I'm goin' on in." As he turned, a loud piercing shriek made all of us jump. There in the dimness before Jud glowed two pairs of shining green eyes that pierced the darkness like a bright moon in a dark sky. "It's the rats!" he screamed, and we ran from that tunnel as fast as our legs could carry us, with Jud leading the way.

A little while later Grandpa came puffing out, and we all stood glumly outside in the rain, trying to catch our breath. No one spoke, but Grandpa was softly chuckling. Suddenly there was a big crash, and before our eyes we

saw the tunnel, from which we had escaped just seconds before, come crumbling down into a mass of rock, dirt and rotten timber. We all looked at Jud. The only thing he managed to stammer was, "Gee, thanks, Grandpa." The old man looked back at him. "Don't thank me, Sonny. Thank the Lord."

The rain slowed up as we walked back in silence. It was Jud who spoke first. He had pulled a strange-smelling plant from his pocket, and he asked if anyone knew what it was or how it got there. Grandpa just laughed. "Maybe it grew there," he replied.

Well, no matter how it got there, Jud threw it away, and we went our way home to tell our experience.

The next day everybody in town knew how Grandpa had saved our lives. Months later, he told my father everything. "I don't know how I knew, but I just knew that the timbers would fall that day," he said. "As for the giant rats, they were my two cats. You see, when I went for a flashlight, I took a piece of catnip to make the cats follow me. When I got down in the mine, I nudged Jud, accidental-like, and sorta slipped the catnip into his gaping hip pocket, and naturally the cats were following him all the time. He must've stepped on one of them, so that accounts for the loud yowling it set up. My, I never saw kids more scared in all my born days, nor heard such caterwauling either."

Even Jud found out about it, but from that time on, nobody, absolutely nobody, ever doubted Grandpa.

The Artistic Urge

Margaret C. Williams

Every child has a secret ambition. Some children want to be doctors, or firemen, or movie actors. I wanted to be an artist. From the first time I held a pencil, that was my ambition; I wanted to draw.

Surprisingly, I had an artistic aptitude. As an infant, I had completed several colorful murals on various walls throughout our house, and my parents had early noticed my amazing proficiency at illustrating their favorite books and magazines.

As I grew older my ambitions increased. Scribbling on walls no longer pleased me. My talent was too great! One day it happened. The turning point in my life arrived; Mama gave me a coloring-book. That was my day of dedication. Thereafter I was always easy to find. My trail of broken crayons, dripping water colors and discarded drawings tattled on me. Still the flame of my ambition was fanned rather than suffocated. Grandma Moses might be satisfied with being a Primitive, but I wanted to be civilized. "Art lessons" was my cry. I pounced on my parents.

Climbing upon my father's knee and tweaking his ruddy cheek, I purred softly into his ear. "Popsy," I murmured, employing every ounce of my twelve-year-old femininity, "I have an artistic urge."

Popsy raised an eyebrow. "Urge? What kind of urge?"

"Artistic, Popsy, artistic."

"Oh."

"I want to be an artist. I want to learn how to paint, to draw, to... to be an artist."

"Oh?" retorted Popsy who had nursed me through previous dreams of being a lady doctor, a ballerina, and an English Channel swimmer.

"Please, dear sweet Popsy," I cooed, turning on the charm and tickling him under the chin, "May I take art lessons?"

"No."

"No?"

"NO!"

Tears filled my eyes, threatening a deluge. "Why not?" I groaned.

"I," said Popsy, "am a middle-class, mediocre, 105 I. Q. American Philistine and proud of it. No daughter of mine is going to be a nasty Bohemian artist. No siree!"

"Eh, gads!" I cried, flinging myself from his knee. "How could you?

Would you deprive society of a talent like mine just because you dislike Bohemians?"

"Please, Popsy," I entreated, "Let me take art lessons. I'll promise never to become a nasty old Bohemian." This was not a hard thing for me to promise, for my twelve-year-old ears had never before heard the word "Bohemian."

Popsy seemed to soften. "You promise?" he asked.

"Yep," I replied.

"Okay," was his retort, "you're in for it."

A few minutes later Popsy and I found ourselves in the darkened hall of an old building downtown. The eerie lighting in the entrance upset me, and by the time Popsy pushed the doorbell I was frightened. The electric lock on the door clicked open, and by the time we had climbed half-way up, I was no longer frightened. I was downright scared. A tall man was waiting at the head of the stairs. He led us into a small room blazing with light. Meekly I looked around. The walls were a dirty tan, almost completely hidden by huge sheets of drawings and a littered bulletin board. Perhaps five people, all older than I, were industriously making drawings of a young girl posing on the model stand.

The tall man who had been talking to Popsy turned to me. I followed him into the next room. I was still scared.

The man set up an easel, gave me some paper and charcoal, and told me to draw a statue of an elephant. I don't like elephants. I never have liked elephants. I never shall like the beasts. But I started to draw an elephant. Eventually my curiosity got the best of the elephant and I stopped drawing to start a visual exploration of the room.

The walls of this room were also covered with drawings, but there were plaster casts of old Romans too. Two low shelves ran the length of one end. Still-lifes, boxes of chalk, odd pieces of cloth and paper flowers were jumbled in groups all over the shelves.

The few people sitting there were all horribly ordinary-- except the youth seated next to me. He was an aesthetic-looking young man. Thin and pale, with high cheek bones, blond hair, and long lean hands, he fascinated me. At last we began to talk. Leo was his name. Puppets were his hobby. I hate puppets.

We hadn't talked about puppets much when Popsy came in to say good-by. Since I wasn't afraid any longer, only timid, Popsy retreated, leaving me to cope with the Bohemian world of art and artists as best I could.

As I proceeded to draw my elephant, Leo and I proceeded with our conversation. We talked about birds. I don't like to talk about birds, but I like talking about puppets even less, so we talked about birds. Leo was a storehouse of information. He told me all about prehistoric birds. Time flew as the birds do and the evening ended. The tall man liked my elephant even if he,

i.e., the elephant, defied the laws of anatomy. I guess I didn't learn much art at that first lesson, but I did learn how to spell pterodactyl, which was the large prehistoric bird we talked about.

All through my high school days I pursued the fine art of drawing. Sometimes the fine art of drawing pursued me, but anyway, I took art lessons two evenings a week for years. I did learn to paint and to draw, but I never did become an artist. True to my childhood promise at my father's knee, I did not turn Bohemian. The influences were always strong, but like a member of A.A., I resisted all temptations.

The Wheel

CASSIUS. This day I breathed first; time is come round,
And where I did begin, there shall I end.

Julius Caesar, V, iii, 23

Time is come round
to start again;
but first to end
what it began.

The heart of day,
the soul of night
dissolve into
a single grace.

All being does
from earth above
to dust below
revert itself.

The whole of hope,
of faith, of love
when prayers do meet
is consummate.

--Rose Mary Turissini

The Pit

Robert B. Lewis

The water was hip-deep, black and stagnant and very cold. It had probably saved him a broken leg or a badly sprained ankle. He rubbed his bruised left shin and the water felt thick and slimy on the back of his hand. Under his feet the rocks were treacherously slippery.

A moment before he had been hiking carelessly through the woods, enjoying his holiday in the warm sun, the newly leafed foliage, the shrill, inquiring call of the birds. The open glade had seemed a peaceful, safe place.

There was a black pit in the center of the glade, its mouth cunningly concealed by the slippery grass. When he felt himself falling he somehow contrived to keep his body in a vertical position, so that his face and head did not strike the sides of the pit. The water and his own reaction in bending his knees had broken the force of his fall.

Looking up toward the irregular circle of light above he guessed that he had fallen into an abandoned well. It was eighteen or twenty feet deep and the walls were laid up with fieldstone. Here at the bottom it was almost five feet wide, but the sides narrowed as they rose to the surface of the ground.

He cursed bitterly. His day was completely spoiled. He was wet to the waist and would have to return to the house to change his clothes. "But first I have to get out of this hole." Spoken aloud, the words were sonorous and deep; they reverberated from the circular wall about him and rang hollowly as they climbed to the mouth of the well.

He put out his hand to touch the wall. The rocks were cold and damp. He found a crack large enough for a fingerhold but wet earth crammed itself under his nails and he jerked the hand away. He was inordinately afraid of snakes and crawling things, and the thought came to him that there might be snakes living among these stones. He shuddered and drew back until he stood in the center of the well.

In the water beside him something moved, brushing his leg. He gasped and moved away. In the faint glow filtering down from above something bobbed in the water before him. He watched it, terrified, while it washed inertly about in the small waves the movements of his body had created, When he struck it with his hand it sank soddenly from sight and rose again moments later with a ponderous, bloated slowness.

He forced himself to touch it, knowing now that it was dead. It was furry and soggy. When he cupped his hand under it, lifting it out of the water, he

saw that it was the half-decomposed body of a squirrel or a chipmunk. He dropped it back, feeling his stomach convulse as if he had been struck a violent blow there. No wonder the water stunk.

He turned away from it. "I've got to get out of here," he told himself aloud for what courage he might draw from the sound of his own voice. It was little, but enough to start him searching the sides for deep crevices. He found a grip for one hand and scrabbled under water for a foothold. He drew his weight up, his muscles straining unnaturally, while he sought an indentation in the wall's surface for his other foot. His fingers gradually slipped and at the last moment he leaped clear. The water splashed about him and its coldness on his belly made him gasp.

He made several more attempts to climb the wall. He began confidently, but with each failure confidence ebbed a little. He scrambled furiously at the dank stones, panting and frenzied. He fell and lost his balance, and the water soaked him to the armpits.

Leaning against the wet stones, breathing hard, he rested. Above him in the glade something moved, rustling in the grass at the pit's mouth. He shouted and the sound ceased. When he called again he heard the patter of feet as some animal ran off into the woods. He continued to shout until the hopelessness of his own voice frightened him.

The floating body of the squirrel bumped his leg again and he stared down at the shadowy, decaying form. For the first time he let himself think, "What if I can't get out? I could starve here, or grow weaker and weaker, until I slip into the water and drown."

Wondering if he could drink the water he cupped some of it in his hands and raised it to his face. In the dim light it looked murky and smelled impossibly foul. He shuddered queasily and muttered, "Before I could drink that I'd have to be pretty far gone." The words moaned as they fled to the top of the well. In a fury of impotence he beat the invulnerable stones with the palm of one hand.

He thought, "They'll find me. They'll come looking for me." But then he thought, "Suppose they don't know about this well? Suppose they can't hear me if I call out?" He threw his head back and shrieked loudly. The clamor of echoes was tremendous and he sagged against the stones, sheepish at his own fright.

Coldly he applied his mind to the situation. There were matches in his pocket. They were wet and the heads had come off some of them but a few were still useable. He placed them in a shirt pocket where his body heat would help to dry them while he moved slowly around the wall, searching with his fingers for crevices which would serve as hand- and footholds.

He found a sharp corner of projecting stone and felt above it as high as he could reach. The rocks were uneven but dirt had filled the cracks. The surface was almost sheer but it was worth trying. He took one of the matches

from his pocket and rubbed it against the shoulder of his shirt, very gently, so as not to lose the softened head. When he thought that the friction had dried it sufficiently he scraped it carefully on the surface of the driest stone he could find. It spit, glowed phosphorescently for a moment, and died in sizzling mockery. Patiently he began the task again. There were six good matches. He must light one, he told himself, to see the rocks above, to discover where the ascent could best be made.

The last match hissed at the wet wood and died in a blinding, agonizing glare. He cursed the matches. He cursed the pit. He cursed the man who had built it and gone away and left it there, a trap for anyone who passed this way.

His knees ached and his feet were numb. He stamped about in the water until the sensation was restored, and then he attempted to climb again. He got both feet out of the water and, when the muscles and nerves of his fingers and forearms could stand the strain no longer, he fell, striking his head painfully against the stones. He crouched there, whining a bit, as a frightened, pained animal might. He was afraid to make another attempt, afraid he might fall and hit his head, slide into the water unconscious to drown there in the well.

Standing helplessly in the water he stared up at the small blue shape of light above. He could not read the numerals on his wristwatch dial, but he reckoned it must be well past noon. It had been ten o'clock when he left the house. He wondered how soon they would commence a search for him. Not until nightfall, probably.

"There's nothing I can do but wait," he groaned. The pit, captivated by the idea, sang that one word lengthily before letting it die away.

He leaned against the wall, resting his numbed legs and trying to erase time with his thoughts. In his mind he mocked the pit as if it were a live, threatening creature. He taunted the pit aloud, and it whispered his boast and self-assurances with awe, until the hollow repetition of the things he said sent him into a fit of frightened shivering.

He went at the wall again and found a foothold above the water level, where he clung for minutes. The weight of his body eventually weakened his arms and legs, and the wet, clammy rocks conquered again. He tore at the stones, breaking his nails and bruising his fingers before the burst of energy died in panting despair.

He cried, "I've got to get out of this!" and the pit sucked up the words and disgorged them in a sibilant echo that died away into eerie silence. He clenched his fist and drove it against the stones, sending pain flowing up his arm and throwing himself into a frenzy of weeping.

Now in his frenzy he began to see the pit as a living, malevolent creature of insatiable appetite. He was reminded of those weird plants that tempt the prey into their ascidia and trap it there until it is dissolved into food. Unless

he was rescued, unless he made his own escape, he would float here in the stinking belly of the pit, formless, his very identity as a man destroyed. He would breathe out his life here in this polluted alimentary, give his body to its rank putrescence and decay. The evil, vile and invisible organisms inhabiting the water would feed upon him as they had fed upon the carcass of the drowned squirrel.

Cramps twisted his belly in sudden spasms, and he thought, Suppose they get so bad I can't stand? He saw himself fighting to straighten up, to hold his mouth and nose above the murky, foul liquid. In a moment of swift insight he pictured himself as he was drawn under, sensed the horror of strangling and drowning, of grabbing futile breaths before sliding under again to breathe no more.

And the pit would have won its prey. His body would float here in the stagnant water beside that of the squirrel, and the pit would resume its patient wait for another careless victim.

He forced his shivering body to be still to conserve its energy. The ache in his legs and groin persisted. When he stamped his feet it disappeared, but when he was still for a few moments it deepened into a dull insensibility.

Resolutely he began a gradual, sure progress up the sides of the wall. He crept from handhold to handhold, working his way in a long upward spiral around the well. Sometimes he hung with all his weight by his fingers, his dangling feet searching for crevices. The stones were drier as he neared the rim, but he wished he had gotten rid of his soggy shoes. A fall now would be the end of him if he should strike his head. It would be the end anyway. He knew he could never climb so high again.

He was only a few feet from the top. The pit seemed to bend its wall inward as if, alarmed at his possible escape, it was closing its hungry maw upon him. A rock shifted under his weight and he moaned in despair. He was breathless and quivering with strain. The muscles of his legs and forearms felt taut and brittle, and his cramped fingers refused to straighten. His pulse thundered dizzily in his temples.

He made one last desperate surge toward the rim. His reaching hand caught at the gouging corner of a rock. It moved, sliding an inch or two toward the edge. He clawed frantically with the other hand, kicking his legs wildly as he forced his body upward.

Then he lay on the rim of the pit with his legs dangling above the dark water, the sharp edges of the stones pressing against his loins. He buried his face in the grass, the green, fragrant, living grass. A startled bird flew into a nearby tree and questioned him interminably with one difficult note. He groaned and stirred, rolling his body away from the pit's verge.

Raising himself on one elbow he stared at the black, disappointed mouth of the pit. The defeated jaws seemed to relax sullenly after the loss of their

prey. Already the camouflaging grass was slipping back to conceal the dark hole. Several disturbed flies returned to their monotonous flight above the opening.

He had cheated the pit. He had won. The evil, lurking creature was there within his arm's reach, but he was free and alive and the warm sun was drying his clothes, its warmth eating into the tired ache of his body.

He began to shake suddenly with the racking, hiccuping sobs of hysteria.

Remembrance

Out of the night's vast depth
Came the muted sound of a woman's laughter
Slipping almost unnoticed
Among the silent, sleeping trees.
Somewhere a love was beginning,
Shielded by the thin brocade
Formed by moonlight through the branches.
Love's laughter split into shimmering slivers
Gliding, glancing, darting here and there.
One entered my heart and one my brain,
Springing locks on long closed doors
From which memory spilled unchecked;
And I remembered the taste, bittersweet,
Of another love's beginning.

--Leo P. Kelley

Something of the Hydrogen Age

Esther Goldman

"And what could be bothering your little head? Eh?" Uncle Fival's ever-smiling face, with its myriads of tiny wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and the tar-stained teeth clenching his old pipe he claimed he had brought over on the boat from Poland, peered over the Polish paper he was reading.

Uncle Fival is my mainstay in a house of discordant personalities. I have a high-strung, nervous mother who feels that no one appreciates her and that a daughter should have nothing but dates and dances on her mind. My father is a proud, stubborn man who considers everything new or young as foolishness. (And when Dad says, "Foolishness!" --in Polish, of course-- it sounds more like "Fol-de-rol!" and you really feel the disdain in his utterance!)

Something was bothering me. My little head was mulling over a number of items that were all mixed up in my mind. I guess you know how it is-- every once in a while some incident sets you to thinking about big things and what they're all about. All of a sudden, the everyday existence you lead becomes meaningless and empty, and then you sit and wonder, and things begin to bother you.

Uncle Fival lifted himself ponderously from the easychair that my sister Marya and I had bought "specially for him last Father's Day." He put the paper down on the ottoman, marking his place with the old steel-rimmed reading glasses that he would perch so ceremoniously somewhere around the middle of his bulbous, plum-colored nose.

Then he lumbered over to where I sat in the middle of the living room floor, and, oh so gently mussed my hair. I appreciated the gesture and the wet kiss that came on top of it, but I wanted to be serious. I guess Uncle Fival understood. With a big sigh and a half-muttered comment on "not being so young any more" he lowered himself onto the floor next to me, peered into my face which wore its "thinking mask," and said,"So tell me about it too!" Maybe I still know something. Your Uncle Fival, you know, he was young once too! Sure, and not so long ago too. You know, how old can I be now? Thirty-six, eh?"

With this, he laughed aloud and poked my ribs. But then the soft, serious look came back into his eyes and he gently urged me, "Nu, Shaindela, I'm listening."

So my Uncle Fival listened while I tried to put into words the matters that weighed so on my mind.

You see, it had all started when I was on my way home from school that day. Having stopped in town to get some new records, I decided to pay the electric bill. Coming back, I passed one of those men that folks call "beggars."

This particular man was an old friend of mine. That is, he had located himself on Main Street for the past few years, and I had often stopped to empty my change purse into his battered hat with the colored pencils-- the badge of his trade. Frequently I exchanged a few words with him. Today, I had stopped as usual and this time he asked me to explain something to him. As I leaned over to catch his words-- for he sat on a wooden plank with the stumps of his thighs jutting forth in front of him-- he took out an old pencil stub from a vest pocket and wrote with an unsteady hand on a small tablet sheet "That that is is. That that is not is not." He then held the sheet out for my inspection, and asked, "Where would you put the commas?"

I was startled and nonplussed. This man, whom I had considered only a poor, unfortunate being, was human. He was alive and thinking. He was bitter, too. As I stood towering above him, I felt so insignificant, so inferior. He had lived. He knew what life was all about. He was aware of the pitying looks that all the passersby cast him, but maybe he himself felt sorry for all who didn't know yet the meaning of suffering. Yet, what had happened to him? Why were both his legs cut off above the knees? Why was he forced to make a livelihood through people's pity-- a public spectacle sitting in a public thoroughfare? Where was his family? Who took care of him after dark? What was the meaning of his existence? When had he had his share of the small amount of happiness to which we are all entitled?

Then I brought my attention back to the sheet of paper with the ten words on it. I knelt next to the man and showed him where I thought the commas ought to go. He only tilted his head and said scornfully, "As you say."

I took the sheet and left him. His image did not leave me though. The scorn in the few words he had spoken still filled the sound waves around me. What was the meaning behind this chance encounter? Was it chance? Is anything chance? Is there a design in the universe? Is God only an impersonal first cause that has set the natural laws in action? How do natural laws account for pencil peddlers without legs?

As I automatically walked home, more and more questions jostled each other in the smallness of my mind. Almost like molecules, which become active upon heating and begin to dart here and there in a search for newer horizons, so the long dormant thoughts were vivified by the catalytic impress of the encounter and jumped up and down in impatience for expression.

What is the purpose of life? I never doubted that a supreme being had created the world, but why? Does the hereafter explain the evils and pains of this world? What allegiance, if any, do we owe this creator? Toward

what end is one to fashion one's deeds?

Then war crept into my consciousness. What roles do nationalism and genocide and hydrogen bombs play in all this? What purpose does the East-West conflict of today have? For what is my brother Al fighting?

The law of gravity of the mind which brings everything down to earth soon forced my problems to sink to lower levels. What is the meaning of the gap between my parents and myself? Don't different ages ever understand each other? Am I to follow unquestioningly all the precepts they taught me and thus make them happy, or am I to think for myself and thus incur their wrath? What does duty mean in this respect?

And school? What do marks and credits and the pleasant, secure atmosphere of the classroom have to do with the real world? What meaning do the Liberal Arts have in a world where ruthless nature and the Isms can ordain the future?

But then again, all the inexpressible beauty of life! The renewal of Spring with its multifarious joys; birds in song; tender buds clothed in green and warmed by the sun; smells on a rampage with the sweet, sewage-heavy odor of the swollen river mingling with that of fresh-turned soil and new grass. The love that seems to spring up like a sudden spark of electricity between two unlike charges: sometimes it's the storage cell type as between mother and child; and other times it's the strange, battery type that so often needs recharging, as between boy and girl. . . .

I glanced at Uncle Fival. He had a far-away look in his eyes. When he realized that I had stopped talking, he shook himself as though to rid himself of the clinging cobwebs of old memories, restored the twinkle in his eyes, and queried, "But, Shaindela, you still wouldn't want to be a cow, eh?"

The Link

Dale Warmouth

He stood in the room that had been his in boyhood and looked down at the back yard. "All those weary miles," he muttered, traversing the distance between house and barn with his eyes. He was pleased to see that his brother Frank now owned a car that was every bit as good as his, though it was a year older. During his first visits to the farm, he had been ill at ease to note that the old pickup truck had been used for social purposes after working hours.

In the course of improvements that marked Frank's progress came a series of old, sometimes wretched, used cars. Then there had been a creditable second-hand model which was since replaced by a sparkling automobile that had always been his own, and not somebody else's to start with.

In past visits, it had always made him uncomfortable to come driving in with his car. He never knew whether to park it near Frank's, which made it look as though he were slyly inviting envious notice, or whether he should park at some distance, which in turn made it appear as though he didn't want his car too close to such a rattletrap. A small matter, perhaps, but one which bothered him no end.

Of course, Charles realized that the auto was a poor index of wealth, but it was still the most handy American rule-of-thumb. At any rate, with the jobs he had held, Charles always owned a good car while his brother had to invest an incredible amount of money in livestock, machinery and buildings.

Somehow the automobiles were inextricably tied up in the essential differences between the two brothers. Frank, owner of the land he worked, was content to make do with whatever he had. He was snug and happy, although he had to work every waking hour. He had a wife and two wonderful kids. Charles had always lived in a rented apartment, never very many yards distant from clots of roaring traffic and the frenetic pursuit of pleasure and security. He was still a bachelor and often lonely. Charles had been in every country that had made headlines in the last decade, while Frank seldom found occasion to leave the county. Still, Frank was happy, and he too was happy. The solution was the same, but the formula for one brother did not apply to the other.

Charles was even writing an apologetic, pedestrian novel to explain the difference that had always existed between them. He often thought back to an incident which did much to settle once and for all his longing to go away from the farm. He had even tried to put it into free verse that last year at home.

He and Frank had been hoeing side by side when a plane went over. He had looked up at the plane and marveled at its horizon-splitting might. He hoed on and on, and the stonewall at the end of the field seemed to be no closer.

. . . Steel overhead that spanned the world itself,
And two of flesh and blood below
Moving at a pace that shamed the snail. . . .

Charles found an arrowhead that day. He and Frank stopped a moment to admire it. They turned it over and over in their palms and commented on its lovely, deadly lines. It was a piece of perfect workmanship-- glistening black, razor sharp, translucent at the edges if one held it up to the sunlight.

He had carried it in his pocket ever since. Sometimes, as he sat in an airliner and looked down on the patchwork world, he rubbed his thumb and forefinger over its edges and muttered snatches of the incomplete poem. He never got around to admitting he believed it to be a good-luck charm, but he was equally unwilling to part with it. He used to clutch it before he went onto the beachheads with the troops, and the time he was hurt it was one of the first things he checked when he arrived at the hospital.

He took off his tie, picked up the presents he had brought for the family, and went down to lunch. Frank had come in from the fields, and they shook hands warmly. They talked about all the things that had happened since his last visit-- the rural matters around which Frank's life revolved and the exciting things Charles had witnessed in the arena of current events.

Agnes, Frank's pretty wife, asked Charles about his future.

"I think the Old Man," he replied, "is sending me to Korea. Art Tomlinson has been there quite a while now and needs a rest. Of course, I might end up in the Tokyo bureau."

Agnes appeared slightly alarmed. "Be careful," she said. "A lot of correspondents are getting killed there."

Charles was glad that the children were in school. He answered gravely, "A lot of other people are getting killed there too."

"But you should be careful. Remember what happened in Africa."

He wondered what mental images Agnes had of that day in North Africa. Perhaps she thought it was like one of those splendid technicolor documentaries with African sunsets gloriously framing heavy tanks, and gorgeous dun sand spurting into the air each time a shell landed. All he himself remembered was the black belly of a Stuka close over his head and a noise like Kahoosh. Later there was the field hospital and the deceptive narcotic feeling of pain-and-no-pain, followed by months of real pain and recuperation in England.

"I was lucky," he said. "And it never bothers me any more, Agnes."

"It's all in the game," Frank said. "Why I could get killed just as easily right here on the farm. Just as permanently too."

"But nobody's shooting at you," she said.

"Oh, I don't know. Hunting season starts in a few days," Frank retorted. He pushed his chair back and rose with a grin. "Back in our courting days, Chuck, she would have said, 'I think you're just too horrid,' but I guess she has become used to me by now. Come into the living room," he added. "I want to show you something."

"You told me," Frank went on, "that I needed a hobby last time you were home. Remember?"

"Yes," Charles replied. "We were standing down by the pasture, looking at your cows. You were telling me all about them with the zeal of a prophet. You told me all about their blood lines and the sires and so on. Rag Apple, Ormsby, and so forth. Fine thing... can you imagine a bull going around with a name like Rag Apple? So I thought, this man needs a rest. He can't go on making his farm his worry and his joy, his vocation and avocation, his work and his hobby. So I told you."

Frank opened the drawers of a desk and took out large sheets of plywood. Arranged in neat rows on them were Indian relics.

"Beautiful!" Charles exclaimed. "Where did they come from?"

Years ago, it was a rare thing to find an arrowhead, and Charles, Frank and their father did not own a dozen all told.

"Why, you know I bought the Owen farm, and when I plowed up that sod back by the swamp, lo and behold, they started turning up. They seemed to be pretty much in one spot, so I decided to mark them out, just for the heck of it. I even left some of the field unplanted. Father would have thought me crazy, wouldn't he? So after a while I got it pretty well plotted out and found that they should run right back to the swamp. There's a ledge back there, about twenty yards in. So I started digging around and found these. The Historical Society even borrowed them. See, arrowheads, spear heads, little love tokens, and some hatchets. I go out almost every Sunday now."

He continued drawing unmounted artifacts from another drawer. "I still don't know whether I've got hold of a camp or what. But Al Fellows of the Historical Society is showing me just what to do, so I don't ruin anything. And here's a map of the whole area."

"This is really interesting."

"And do you know what this is?" Frank asked. He held a rusted iron object, not unlike a child's jack, in his hand. It had four prongs, so arranged that one always pointed up.

"No."

"It's a caltrop. The settlers sprinkled them around so that the Indians would pierce their feet if they tried to-- to infiltrate. Some redskin probably brought it back with him. And here's a musket ball. And an English coin. 1732. I found some bones which Fellows is having examined. If they turn out

to be human, . . . well, I've got one of the best archeological finds in the county."

Frank brought out a small glass jar and poured the contents on the desk. "Beads. Real Indian beads. There are 216."

"They look like pieces of dirty macaroni to me," Charles said, smiling. "You know, I'd really like to see this place."

It was all the encouragement Frank needed. "Come on," he said, "I can spare the time."

They walked down to the old Owen Farm. From habit, and spurred by the subject of the Indian plot, Charles reached into his pocket and rubbed the old precious souvenir between thumb and forefinger. He recalled the day he found it, and how the airplane passing overhead had set the rudiments of a poem and the longing for escape spinning in his head. For a moment he thought of handing the arrowhead over. For the collection, Frank. . . .

After all, he thought, there wasn't a single artifact so delicately fashioned as this. It would be a prize which would give Frank as much pleasure as any he had found. Surely by now, his brother had forgotten all about it. . . .

Perhaps, he thought with a grin, he would play a little trick on his brother. He would leave the arrowhead on the Indian plot for him to find all by himself.

Some Sunday afternoon, his brother could find it and put another neat little mark on his chart. He would mount the arrowhead on a plywood board and give it a code number, museum fashion. When they got out on the Indian plot, it would be such a simple matter to slip it from his pocket. Or he could fling it aimlessly when his brother's back was turned. He visualized it falling in a long arc, striking the ground and raising a tiny puff of dust.

But then, this was a scientific hobby. It would not be, well, archeological cricket to put the arrowhead on a piece of ground where it had no business to be. Still, he wanted Frank to have it, for it would mean something to him. Perhaps he could just drop it somewhere else on the farm, hoping that Frank would eventually come across it.

But. . . it might get plowed under. Chance alone would bring it to the surface again. Maybe it wouldn't come back to the top in a century. It would be lost forever, or might just as well be. . . .

He continued to finger the arrowhead in his pocket as they walked about. He thought of all the places he had carried this souvenir of his farm days. It was really superstitious to hang onto it and keep it in his pockets for years. Besides, it chewed away the toughest fabric in time, far worse than a bunch of keys. He remembered all the times he had shown it to children in many parts of the world, exciting their imaginations as they thought of a wild, long forgotten America.

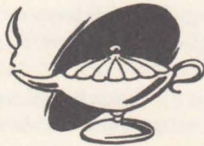
It symbolized his departure from the farm, he thought. And oddly enough

the same sort of objects, a *scattered handful of arrowheads left behind by a* race long gone from this place, that drew his brother closer and closer to his chosen life. There was something more than mere possesion to this.

Frank turned abruptly in the path and walked through a gate. Ahead of them, cornstalks stood in pyramids, and down toward the swampy land, a bare patch of ground stood out boldly.

"Kinda like the effect this time of year," Frank said. "Old, dead Indians left their civilization in that corner of the field, and all over the rest of it shocks of corn stand like ghost teepees. Especially in the moonlight."

Charles did not answer. Perhaps, he thought, giving the arrowhead a furtive touch, I'll just keep this.



The Swamp of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Edward G. Grogan

A mother worries because her daughter is an hour late. A pretty young secretary is furious because she has had to work a long, extra hour. A toothless, freckle-faced boy, kept after school, squirms restlessly waiting for the hour to pass. All are conscious of only one thing, the importance of an hour. Yet just how important is one hour? One hour, one twenty-fourth of a day, compared to the existence of earth, is as important as a particle of coal dust to all the coal in the world. If the entire history of the earth were scaled down to one week, human existence from the primitive caveman to man of 1953 could be counted as the last twenty-three seconds of the seventh day. But how much do you know of that almost incomprehensible time before man appeared? What happened during the millions of years the earth has existed? Why is there coal? Why are there mountains? Why is there a Wyoming Valley?

The creation of Wyoming Valley began millions of years ago. Imagine, if you can, this entire area a swamp surrounded by an inland sea, a swamp thicker than man has ever seen, hotter than any place on earth today, insects so numerous an animal could not have survived for one day. In fact, insects were the only form of animal life at that time. Man was not to appear for millions of years. Plants of a tropical kind which man has never seen covered the earth. They lived and died and fell into the stale, dark waters below where decomposition was retarded by the presence of certain acids. For centuries the layers of decaying plant life grew thicker and thicker. Then the swamp fell below sea level, and the surrounding waters flooded the area. Great deposits of sand and shells from marine life covered the vegetation. The pressure of the water squeezed all moisture from the decaying matter.

Carbon from the plants, acids in the water, tremendous pressure-- coal was born! Again the swamp rose. Vegetation fell into the waters for another cycle of centuries and again the sea flooded the swamp. This process repeated itself many times. The final result was seams of coal, inches to hundreds of feet thick, separated by layers of limestone.

A period of upliftings and foldings followed. Mountains rose forty to seventy thousand feet high, dwarfing Mt. Everest's twenty-nine thousand. Slowly these mountains folded back into the earth. Again they rose and again they folded. Seams of coal that once lay horizontal to the surface of the earth now reared up in vertical lines. Northeastern Pennsylvania would have been the

richest place on earth today were it not for this period. Had the coal seams remained horizontal, mining would have been a simple, inexpensive process. However, they are vertical. Deep shafts must be dug to find the coal. Expenses are so high that profits are usually low. Danger in the horizontal seams would have been at a minimum. Today, in the vertical seams, death is a constant companion. Northeastern Pennsylvania was blessed with the richest coal in the world and damned with the most hazardous means of mining. Then the rains came. Not ordinary rain but rain that lasted many hundreds of years. This was the rain that filled our oceans, cut river beds, and created natural lakes. Torrents of rain washed away the jagged peaks of the previous period and created here a plain five thousand feet above sea level. Coal deposits, far greater than all the coal mankind has ever mined, washed away in the floods that came with the rains.

Three times glaciers rumbled over this world of ours. Digging, pushing, gouging all the time, they crept over the face of the earth. When they had passed, gone was the plain and in its stead were many parallel valleys. The glaciers had covered the plain, scooping out soft limestone deposits. Great piles of limestone block the southern ends of the valleys today, left there as the great glaciers passed over on their way south.

The formation was done. Plants soon began to show green over the barren hills. A river slowly formed and threaded its way through one of the valleys. Forests grew up and soon the earth looked as it does today. All preparations for man were complete; his world was ready for him. He had not yet arrived, but he was coming.

It Takes All Kinds

Gerry Fell

Clancey Stevens braced his knee on the seat in front of him and cautiously let go of the railing over his head. Moving slowly so he wouldn't be thrown off balance, he started to jingle the change in his pocket, groping madly for a dime. Just as his fingertips contacted a small dime-sized coin, the bus ground to a halt, sending a shudder along the floorboards and jerking the heads of the passengers like wind-tossed tulips.

"Oops, sorry," muttered Clancey to the Crabby Lady whose toes he had crunched. "Bus stopped too fast. Lost my balance, heh heh. Sorry." She just looked at him over her glasses. "Bus is crowded, isn't it? Heh heh." She didn't seem to want to talk, so he apologized once more and resumed his frantic search for a dime.

After three false alarms, caused by a penny, an old streetcar token, and an Egyptian coin he had picked up somewhere, Clancey found the dime and relaxed. He ducked his head to peek out of the window, which was partially blocked by a fat woman in a faded print dress. As he ducked, a jab came from behind, and Clancey turned to watch the Crabby Lady pull her elbow out of his ribs.

"Oops, 'scuse me again," he smiled. Still she glared. Probably a school teacher, he thought.

He stood on his tip toes, half hanging from the hand rail, and surveyed the people around him with a professional air. People were Clancey's business. Well, his side line, anyway. They were closely connected with his job, and he liked to tell himself that he knew them pretty well. After all, he had seen enough of them.

Clancey had one pet phrase that he used when he was explaining people to his wife, Mame. "Yes, sir, Mame," he'd say, "there's one thing you've got to remember when you deal with people. Yes, sir, it's like I always say, 'It takes all kinds of people to make up the world.' It's a good thing to remember, Mame." And he'd sit back in his chair and pull at his suspenders while Mame looked at him with pride. Mame was proud of Clancey, and he was pleased that she recognized his superior knowledge.

Clancey was sure that it was his interest in people and his ability in sizing them up that made him so successful in his job. He had always liked to watch them, even when he was a kid. He could remember standing on a corner when he was twelve, eating an ice cream cone, just watching the people

and making up stories about them. Yep, that was what attracted him to the window trimming business, and that was what made him so good at it, too. "Why, Mame," he'd tell his wife, "a man in my business just has to watch what people like and what they wear. People are my bread and butter, Mame."

He bumped against the dapper Business Man who stood next to him and leaned over the stout Housewife to push the buzzer. Twice more he apologized to the School Teacher, once to a Secretary, and then to a Clerk. "Goodbye now, Jack," he said to the driver. "Don't take any wooden nickels, heh heh."

Wshoo! Someday, when I get a car, I'll be able to laugh at those buses, he murmured to himself. He never stopped dreaming of the time when he could afford to buy a car, and for twenty years he had said the same thing to himself. He twisted his bow tie back into shape, jerked at the brim of his hat, and walked jauntily toward Higgard Sons, Inc.

He slowed down as he approached the store and smiled with pleasure as he looked at the windows. They were his; he had trimmed those same windows for twenty years, but still he looked at them as proudly as a father peering through the nursery window at his first-born.

He caught a glimpse of his reflection in the window and straightened his shoulders. He had just started that habit; he hadn't always stooped. He could remember that twenty years ago his reflection had been that of a straight, slim, neatly dressed, eager boy. His face didn't look eager now, and his body seemed smaller and rounder, and his suit always appeared a little too wrinkled. He frowned slightly as he noticed the lint which had gathered on a velvet jewelry tray. That tray was important; it attracted a lot of people, interesting people.

He pushed open the door of the store and sniffed its familiar smell. All stores have a smell of their own-- hardware stores, grocery stores, drug stores-- but the smell of a department store was the one Clancey loved best. Sometimes it even lingered with him when he went home. When he was on vacation, he missed it. That smell was something Mame couldn't understand, and something he couldn't explain to her.

He walked down the aisle, waving and smiling to the clerks. They were all in a hurry, straightening their merchandise and counting money; but he didn't have to hurry too much. He was a skilled worker, and his time was his own.

"Hiya, Mabel," he greeted, as he rapped his knuckles on Mabel Smithley's back. She flushed and glared at him and went back to straightening her handkerchiefs, but he knew she liked his friendly poke each morning. She was a typical Old Maid, prim until you knew her.

He went to the cloak room in the rear of the store and put on his work clothes. He was just hanging up his coat when the bell rang to announce the

store's opening. He rather felt the silence that waved across the store. It was as though they were putting on a play, and the curtain had just gone up.

The little cubby hole which Clancey lovingly called his office was full of samples of merchandise -- old and new -- and his equipment. It was particularly cluttered today, and he had to crawl over ladders and rolls of crepe paper to get to his desk, but he didn't mind. He always loved the end of the month because there were sales, and sales meant that he would have to spend a lot of time in the windows.

It took him about two hours to get everything planned and set up the way he wanted it. He believed in planning ahead of time just which section of the window he would attack first, and he dre little sketches of what went where. Years ago he had had to keep a blue print of the window before him so he did not allow too much space to any one department, but he knew everything with his eyes closed now.

He remembered the dusty jewelry tray and decided to start there first. Besides, he liked that section. People always stood and watched him while he worked. He gathered up the jewelry price cards, his brushes and wiping cloths, and went to the jewelry department to get the merchandise.

A few minutes later he was in the window, in all his glory, patiently dusting and brushing the little shelves and trays. He handled the rings and bracelets tenderly blowing little specks of dust from them. He worked slowly, methodically, arranging and rearranging.

He worked for about three quarters of an hour and was disappointed because not many people stopped to watch. Finally he saw a man walking toward him. The man stood looking in, his eyes roaming slowly over the trays. He seemed particularly attracted by the bracelets, but he didn't pay much attention to Clancey, who examined the viewer under lowered lids.

This was what Clancey liked. It was someone who stayed long enough so that he could examine him. He watched slyly as the man, in a grey homburg and blue serge suit, looked over the jewelry. He carried a handsomely carved walking stick in one hand and kid gloves in the other.

Clancey had seen this type before. It didn't take long to classify him. He fell into the general category of Business Man, and, umh, prosperous and retired were the two subtitles. Dusting the platinum bracelet which the man was watching, Clancey mused, "He's probably a bachelor. No, he's got lines around his eyes, so he's unhappily married. Wants to buy a bracelet for his young fluffy girl friend. They're all alike."

The man took out a bright silver cigarette case and lit a cigarette. He seemed to lose interest in the show case for a moment as he watched a pair of trim ankles click by him. Clancey smiled in grim satisfaction; he knew how to call them. He started to turn toward another case when the man outside tapped the window. Clancey looked back, and the man was pointing to the bracelet and mouthing the words "How much?" Clancey showed him the

placard, with the price printed in small numerals, and blew a speck of dust off the bracelet. The man nodded his thanks and walked toward the entrance of the store.

Clancey worked on the jewelry display until noon. Then he decided to do the shoes and dresses after lunch. He climbed out of the window and started toward the drug store on the corner, smiling as he observed his morning's handiwork. There wasn't a speck of dust on the velvet now.

After lunch he began to rearrange and dust shoes. It was beginning to get warm. The sun was hot, and the reflections on the window hurt his eyes. He didn't enjoy doing the shoes, for they weren't so expensive as the jewelry and fewer people stopped to look.

Finally a woman stopped and looked in at the shoes, carefully and wistfully. Clancey couldn't help staring. She was tall and blonde and looked timid. He couldn't quite decide why she looked that way, unless she was a visitor to the city. Yep, that was it; she was a visitor, just window shopping, though she certainly could afford the money if the clothes she wore were any indication. Jersey dress, and those shoes! The blonde moved on, looking back over her shoulder as she walked.

Dressing the manikins quickly was an art in which Clancey took pride. He manipulated, twisted, turned, shoved, and pulled dresses on so fast that it looked as if the dummies were alive and helping him. The summer stock in dresses was good, and Clancey got great pleasure out of fussing around the models, straightening shoulders and sleeves, jerking hems into line. He imagined himself a great dress designer, showing his own creations.

Two or three women stood watching. Clancey noticed with disapproval that one of them stayed longer than the others. Pretty, if you liked the type, he thought. Wonder who she's trying to kid, staring in here as though she had money to buy something. Anybody could tell that that white fur around her neck was imitation rabbit and the jewelry right out of the five-and-dime. Probably a maid on her day off, and so common-looking. Thus Clancey dismissed her from his mind while he tugged at a skirt.

Clancey was glad when five o'clock came. He was tired. He changed into his street clothes and walked back down the aisle, waving good night to the clerks who were checking their money. He passed Mabel Smithley, and she grimaced and flinched, but he was too tired to notice.

He inspected his windows once more, grinned, and walked to the corner to catch his bus. He bought an evening paper and stood reading it while his stomach growled at him. Mame had promised him baked beans for supper.

***

William O. Pendleton swung his carved walking stick gaily as he neared his apartment house. He had bought a carnation for his buttonhole, and his blue serge had been pressed yesterday. He felt good. He let the door slam

after him, and he heard his wife call, "Bill, 'sat you?"

"Yeah, sure, 'course it's me. Who'd ya 'spect?"

"Nobody. Where ya been?"

"Come here, Marge. I picked up something for you today."

"What? What'd ya get?"

"Here. Look at this." He twisted the top of his cane off and let a silver bracelet fall on the table. "Ain't it a beauty?"

"Bill! It's beautiful! Where'd ya get it?"

"In Higgards. Some old coot was trimming the windows and I saw it. So I walked in and asked the clerk to show me some bracelets. I grabbed this while he fiddled around with someone else. It was a snap. Who'd suspect this serge suit and cane, huh?"

Susan Mihalic walked toward the servants' entrance of the Clifton Apartments slowly. The red shoes hurt her so much that she almost limped. She was tense as she tiptoed into the kitchen. She stood, holding her breath, listening to hear if her employer, Mrs. Southerland, had arrived home yet.

When she heard no noise, she half ran into Mrs. Southerland's bedroom and undressed quickly. She hung up the dress and carefully placed the red shoes side by side on the floor, just as Mrs. S. had left them. She went out and put on her uniform. It was time to start dinner.

Emily Hawkins, whose stage name was Dawn Casey, let her white fur wrap slide to the crook of her arm as she handed the taxi driver two dollars. "Thanks a lot, ma'am," he said. She dashed through the door of the night club, past a large picture of herself, and waved to the men who were setting up tables for the night's crowd.

"Hello, George. Sorry I'm late. I was window shopping."

"'S okay, Dawn. We're just starting rehearsal. Okay, everybody, let's go. We'll start with Dawn's first number."

The piano started to tinkle, and she threw her wrap over the back of a chair.

Observation

I paused amidst a crowd one day
To watch a small boy on his way
Through bustling crowds of young and old.
They saw him, but with eyes too cold
To see his anxious face.

I wondered then why he rushed so,
And I was curious to know
If he would reach his goal in time.
Why should a young lad in his prime
Have such a wistful air ?

Again-- my wandering glance curtailed--
I viewed a lady who was veiled
And beautified in perfect dress.
Yet, from her eyes no happiness
Shone forth in equal style.

So deeply moved was I in thought,
(A reason for her mood I sought)
That I was fully unaware
Of those about me. Need I care
If I was being watched?

And watched I was. For my own gaze
At passing people and their ways
Had been a wonder in the mind
Of someone else who tried to find
A reason, just as I!

--Nancy M. Beam

Sweating It Out

Carleton P. Cahill

"Well, here we go again," I said as I jumped into the foxhole. "If we spend many more nights in this place we'll have a first mortgage on it."

Sam was sitting on an ammunition box reading a pocket-size book. Lou was writing a V-mail letter with a stubby pencil.

"Yeah," grunted Sam as he turned the page of his book. Lou said nothing. He was too deeply engrossed in his writing.

"I see somebody has bailed this place out since I was here last," I said as I checked the gun to see if it was ready for business.

"Whoever it was, he must be new around here," offered Sam. "The water will be knee-deep by morning."

"I bailed it out before you guys showed up," said Lou. "I like to kid myself that one night it won't rain. At least we'll be dry for awhile."I don't see any clouds yet."

"Clouds," said Sam. "He wants clouds yet. In about thirty minutes you won't see anything."

That was one of the strange things about this part of the world, the South Pacific; there was never any evening. There was just night and day. One minute it would be light and the next it would be so dark that a man could not see his hand inches in front of his face.

There was the sound of footsteps and the first sergeant came up the path and over to the foxhole.

"You characters all set for the night?" he asked as he looked around at the gun and the ammunition.

I nodded my head.

"How much ammo you got?"

"Sixteen boxes," Sam said.

"Mmm," mused the sergeant. "Sixteen boxes. Two hundred to a belt. That's thirty-two hundred rounds. That a fresh belt in the gun?"

"Yeah," Sam said.

"That's two hundred more," said the sergeant. "That makes thirty-four altogether. That ought to last you. If anything happens, let me know."

"Yeah," Sam said with a laugh. "We'll send a singing telegram."

Giving Sam a withering glare, the sergeant stalked off down the path and out of sight.

"Well, that's that," said Sam. "We won't have him on our back any more tonight."

"Not likely," Lou replied as he folded the letter and placed it in his shirt pocket.

"We got company," Sam said, pointing to the path leading to the air strip

"I wonder what he wants," said Lou as he turned the gun on the dim figure moving along the path.

"Take it easy," I said when I heard the safety snap on the gun. "Let's see who it is."

"Don't shoot!" the figure shouted, now that he was close enough to see the gun pointed at him. He came up to the position, wiped his forehead with his cap. "It sure is hot for walking. I'm from the air strip and I came over to get the password in case we have to fall back during the night."

"Lalapalooza Lou," said Sam.

"Huh?" said the pilot.

"Lalapalooza Lou," Sam repeated. "That's the password for tonight."

"My God!" the pilot exclaimed. "Who thought that up?"

"I don't know who thought it up," said Sam. "But if you come around here tonight, you had better think it up."

"If that doesn't throw them, nothing will," said the pilot as he got to his feet. "Well, I've got to get going or I won't get back to the strip before dark, and some joker will be taking a shot at me." As he went down the path we could hear him muttering to himself, "Lalapalooza Lou, Lalapalooza Lou." Then he would shake his head. Soon he disappeared around a bend.

"Now maybe we can have some peace and quiet around here," said Sam, with a big yawn.

Suddenly it was pitch dark.

"I wonder if that guy got back to the strip yet," Sam murmured.

"If he didn't," I said, "he's apt to have a rough time with all the patrols that a[illegible] out.

"Man, did you ever see a place that got as dark as this?" asked Lou. Already it was so dark that we could not see each other although the foxhole was just six feet across.

"We should have been shipped to Europe," Sam growled. "Over there they got front lines and the rest can take it easy. In this cursed place anywhere you look is the front."

I could agree with him on the last part of his remark because we were just as heavily fortified on the back as on the front and both sides. It reminded me of the western movies in which the wagon trains form in a circle for protection against Indians.

"Yeah, but I'd rather freeze than rot." said Sam.

"What time is it?" Lou asked.

I opened my shirt pocket and looked at my watch. "Ten after nine."
It was necessary to keep a watch hidden away in a pocket if it had luminous

hands since the glow after dark could be seen for considerable distances.

"It's early yet," said Lou in a lame attempt to keep the conversation alive. Usually if there was going to be a raid, it came around two or three o'clock in the morning.

"How do you like them fireflies?" asked Lou.

"Just so long as they are fireflies," Sam said. Recently the Nips had come up with the idea of catching fireflies and squashing them on their fingernails. Then they used the glow to signal each other at night. The fellows in our outfit began to suspect every firefly of being an enemy.

The talk tapered off then, and we just stood there in the hole, Sam watching the rear, Lou keeping his eyes on the trees, and I looking toward the front into the darkness. I was thinking, if it weren't for the fact that I might end up with my throat cut, I might enjoy this.

The night was warm and damp. A slight breeze was moving the palm fronds ever so gently as night birds shrilled at one another. The crickets were chirping. There were hundreds of other sounds that go on and on all through the night.

Suddenly, as if someone had thrown a switch, all sounds stopped. The change from steady noise to deathly silence jerked me back from my reverie to actuality. There was not a sound from Sam or Lou, but I knew that they were straining their eyes against the murky black of the night, trying to detect some movement, straining their ears for the slightest rustle. They were old hands at this. They knew as well as I that as long as the noise goes on in the jungle everything is all right. The only reason noise stops is the presence of something alien to the vicinity.

In the midst of the quiet a twig snapped. My head jerked around to face in that direction. Was that something moving out there? It did not look quite the same shade of black as the rest. I moved back a couple of steps and swung the gun about to point in the direction I was looking. Then I tried the trick we were taught in jungle training back in Hawaii. They had told us that in order to see better at night, we should look to one side and beyond the object rather than directly at it. No matter, I still did not see a thing. I heard my watch ticking in my shirt pocket. I sneaked a look. Two twenty-five. On schedule again. One thing about the Nips, they were punctual.

A cricket chirped, and then another. Soon the whole place was alive again. I drew a deep breath. The first good breath in years, it seemed. Lou was next to me and whispered, "They must have gone toward the strip."

"That's their worry," said Sam.