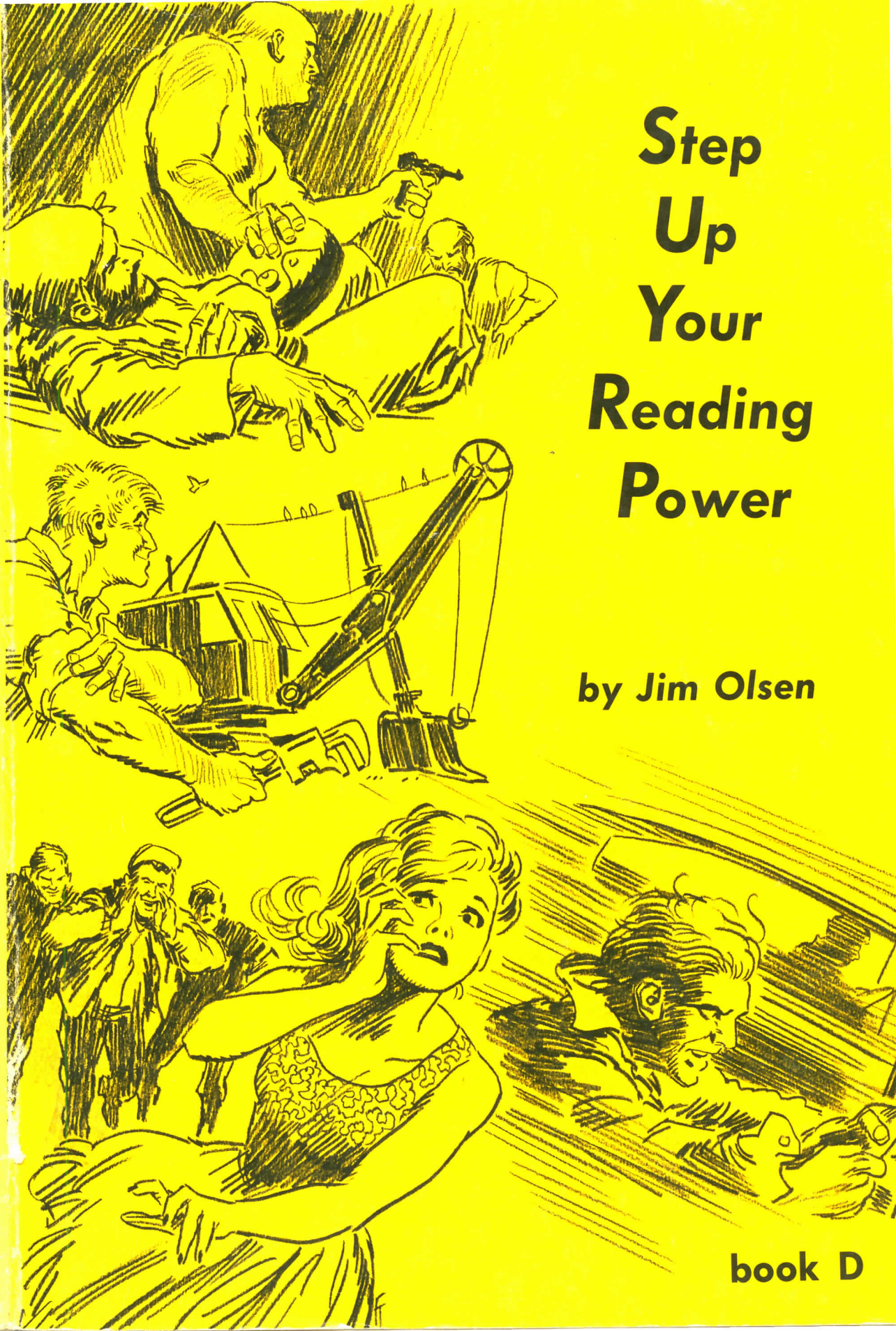


Step Up Your Reading Power

by Jim Olsen



book D

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Reading Power***

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To Peter

The Blanket



PETEY hadn't really believed that Dad would be doing it—sending Granddad away. "Away" was what they were calling it. Not until now could he believe it of Dad.

But here was the blanket that Dad had that day bought for him. And in the morning he'd be going away. And this was the last evening they'd be having together. Dad was off seeing that girl he was to marry. He'd not be back till late. They could sit up and talk.

It was a fine September night. When they'd washed up the supper

dishes they went out on the shanty porch, the old man and the bit of a boy, taking their chairs. "I'll get me fiddle," said the old man, "and play you some of the old tunes." But instead of the fiddle he brought out the blanket. It was a big, double blanket, red, with black cross stripes.

"Now, isn't that a fine blanket!" said the old man, smoothing it over his knees. "And isn't your father a kind man to be giving the old fellow a blanket like that to go away with? It cost something—look at the wool! And it will warm these

1

cold winter nights to come. There'll be few blankets the equal of this one."

It was like Granddad to be saying that. He was trying to make it easier. He'd pretended all along that he wanted to go away to the great brick building—the government place, where he'd be with so many other old fellows having the best of everything. . . . But Petey hadn't believed Dad would really do it, until this night when he brought home the blanket.

"Oh, yes, it's a fine blanket," said Petey, and got up and went into

the old house. He wasn't the kind to cry. He was too old for that, being eleven. He'd just come in to get Granddad's fiddle.

The blanket slid to the floor as the old man took the fiddle and stood up. It was the last night they'd be having together. There wasn't any need to say, "Play all the old tunes." Granddad tuned up for a minute and then said, "This is one you'll like to remember."

The thin moon was high overhead, and there was a gentle breeze playing down the gully. He'd never be hearing Granddad play like that



again. It was as well Dad was moving into that new house, away from here. He'd not want, Petey wouldn't, to sit here on the old porch of fine evenings, with Granddad gone.

The tune changed. "Here's something gayer." Petey sat and stared out over the gully. Dad would marry that girl. Yes, that girl who'd kissed him and slobbered over him, saying she'd try to be a good mother to him, and all. . . . His chair creaked.

The tune stopped suddenly, and Granddad said: "It's a poor tune." And then: "It's a fine girl your father's going to marry. He'll be feeling young again, with a pretty wife like that. And what would an old fellow like me be doing around their house, getting in the way, an old nuisance, what with my talk of aches and pains! And then there'll be babies coming. And I'd not want to hear them crying at all hours. It's best I leave, like I'm doing. One more song or two, and then we'll be going to bed to get some sleep. I'll pack up my fine blanket and in the morning leave. Listen to this, will you? It's sad, but it's a good song for a night like this."

They didn't hear the two people coming down the path, Dad and the pretty girl with the hard, bright face like a china doll's. But they heard her laugh, right by the porch, and the song stopped on a wrong,



high, startled note. Dad didn't say anything. But the girl came forward and spoke to Granddad prettily: "I won't be seeing you leave in the morning. So I came over to say good-by."



"It's kind of you," said Granddad, with his eyes cast down. And then, seeing the blanket at his feet, he stooped to pick it up. "And will you look at this," he said in embarrassment, "the fine blanket my son has given me to go away with!"

"Yes," she said, "it's a fine blanket." She felt the wool, and repeated in surprise, "A fine blanket—I'll say it is!" She turned to Dad, and said to him coldly, "It cost something, that."

He cleared his throat, and said defensively, "I wanted him to have the best."

The girl stood there, still looking at the blanket. "It's double, too," she said reproachfully to Dad.

"Yes," said Granddad, "it's double—a fine blanket for an old fellow to be going away with."

The boy went abruptly into the old house. He was looking for something. He could hear that girl talking to Dad. Dad was becoming angry in his slow way. And now she was suddenly going away in a huff. . . . As Petey came out, she turned and called back, "All the same, he doesn't need a double blanket!" And she ran up the path.

Dad was looking after her uncertainly.

"Oh, she's right," said the boy coldly. "Here, Dad"—and he held out a pair of scissors. "Cut the blanket in two."

Both of them stared at the boy, surprised. "Cut it in two, I tell you, Dad!" he cried out. "And keep the other half!"

"That's not a bad idea," said Granddad gently. "I don't need so much of a blanket."

"Yes," said the boy harshly, "a single blanket's enough for an old man when he's sent away. We'll save the other half, Dad; it will come in handy later."

"Now what do you mean by that?" asked Dad.

"I mean," said the boy slowly, "that I'll give it to you, Dad—when you're old and I'm sending you—away."

There was a silence. And then Dad went over to Granddad and stood before him, not speaking. But Granddad understood, for he put out a hand and laid it on Dad's shoulder. Petey was watching them. And he heard Granddad whisper, "It's all right, son—I knew you didn't mean it. . . ." And then Petey cried.

But it didn't matter—because they were all three crying together.

1. In "The Blanket," Petey is
 - (a) a small baby
 - (b) an old man
 - (c) eleven years old
 - (d) between seventeen and twenty-one
2. At the end of the story, Granddad
 - (a) was sent away
 - (b) left because he wanted to
 - (c) stayed with Petey and his father
 - (d) stayed with Petey but not with the father
3. The father was sending Granddad away because
 - (a) the father planned to get married
 - (b) Granddad wanted to leave
 - (c) Petey hated Granddad
 - (d) Petey couldn't stand hearing Granddad play the fiddle

4. This story takes place
 - (a) in an apartment
 - (b) in the city
 - (c) on a boat
 - (d) in a house in the country
5. Petey told his father that
 - (a) Granddad should leave
 - (b) the father should leave
 - (c) when his father grows old he will be sent away
 - (d) Granddad should have two blankets instead of one
6. The girl the father was going to marry felt that
 - (a) Granddad's blanket cost too much money
 - (b) Granddad ought to stay
 - (c) the blanket should be cut in two
 - (d) Petey should leave with Granddad

What Do You Think?

7. Why do you think Petey's father gave Granddad the blanket?
8. How do you think the father felt at the end of the story? How did Petey feel? How did Granddad feel? What do you think might happen next?

Split Cherry Tree

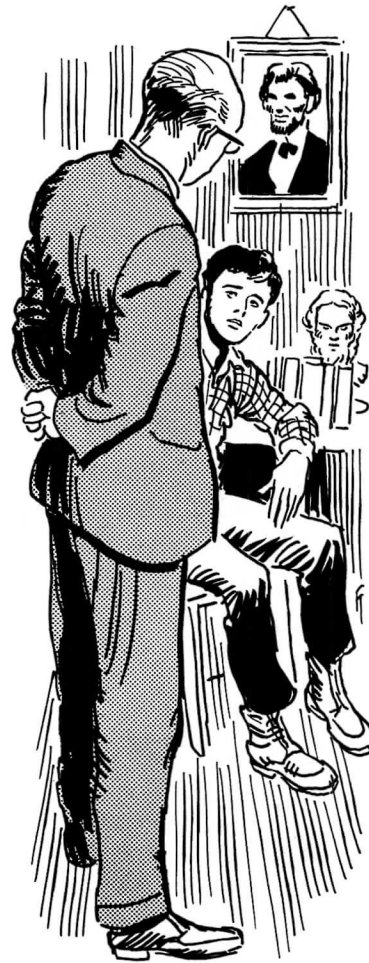
"I don't mind staying after school," I says to Professor Herbert, "but I'd rather you'd whip me with a switch and let me go home early. Pa will whip me anyway for getting home two hours late."

"You are too big to whip," says Professor Herbert, "and I have to punish you for climbing up in that cherry tree. You boys knew better than that! The other five boys have paid their dollar each. You have been the only one who has not helped pay for the tree. Can't you borrow a dollar?"

"I can't," I says. "I'll have to take the punishment. I wish it would be quicker punishment. I wouldn't mind."

Professor Herbert stood up and looked at me. He was a big man. He wore a gray suit of clothes. The suit matched his gray hair.

"You don't know my father," I says to Professor Herbert. "He might be called a little old-fashioned. He makes us mind him until we're twenty-one years old. He believes: 'If you spare the rod you spoil the child.' I'll never be able to make him understand about the cherry



tree. I'm the first of my people to go to high school."

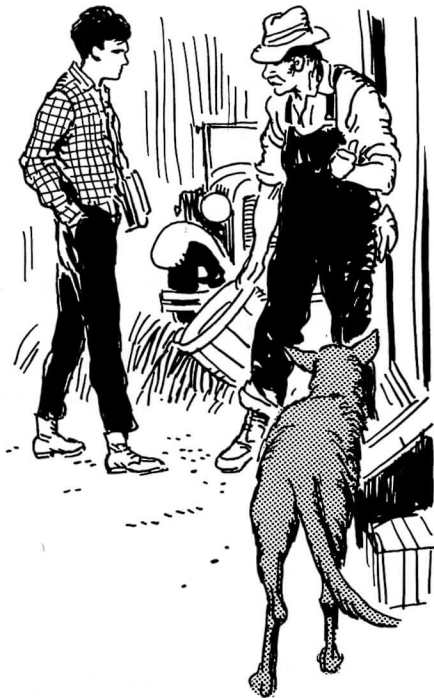
"You must take the punishment," says Professor Herbert. "You must stay two hours after school today and two hours after school tomorrow. I am allowing you twenty-five cents an hour. That is good money for a high school student. You can sweep the schoolhouse floor, wash the blackboards and clean windows. I'll pay the dollar for you."

I thought 'as I swept the floor:

2

"What will Pa do to me? What lie can I tell him when I go home? Why did we ever climb that cherry tree and break it down for anyway? Why did we run crazy over the hills away from the crowd? Why did we do all of this? Six of us climbed up in a little cherry tree after one little lizard! Why did the tree split and fall with us? It should have been a stronger tree! Why did Eif Crabtree just happen to be below us plowing and catch us in his cherry tree? Why wasn't he a better man than to charge us six dollars for the tree?"

When I got home at 6, Pa was waiting! "I see you are late," says Pa. He turned and looked at me.



His eyes danced fire. "What in th' world has kept you so? Why ain't you been here to help me with this work? Make a gentleman out'n one boy in th' family and this is what you get! Send you to high school and you get too onery fer th' buzzards to smell!"

I says: "Our biology class went on a field trip today. Six of us boys broke down a cherry tree out at Eif Crabtree's place. We had to give a dollar apiece to pay for the tree. I didn't have the dollar. Professor Herbert is making me work out my dollar. He gives me twenty-five cents an hour. I had to stay in this afternoon. I'll have to stay in tomorrow afternoon!"

"Are you telling me th' truth?" says Pa.

"I'm telling you the truth," I says. "Go and see for yourself."

"That's just what I'll do in th' mornin'," says Pa. "What was you doin' clear out in Eif Crabtree's place?" says Pa. "He lives four miles from th' County High School. Don't they teach you no books at that high school? Do they just let you get out and gad over th' hill-sides? If that's all they do I'll keep you at home, Dave. I've got work here fer you to do!"

"Pa," I says, "spring is just getting here. We take a subject in school where we have to have bugs, snakes, flowers, lizards, frogs and plants. It

is biology. It was a pretty day today. We went out to find a few of these. Six of us boys saw a lizard at the same time sunning on a cherry tree. We all went up the tree to get it. We broke the tree down. It split at the forks. Eif Crabtree was plowing down below us. He ran up the hill and got our names. The other boys gave their dollar apiece. I didn't have mine. Professor Herbert put mine in for me. I have to work it out at school."

"Poor man's son, huh," says Pa. "I'll attend to that myself in the mornin'. I'll take keer of 'im. He ain't from this county nohow. I'll go down there in th' mornin' and see 'im. Lettin' you leave your books and galavant all over the hills. What kind of a school is it nohow! Didn't do that, my son, when I's a little shaver in school. All fared alike too."

"Pa, please don't go down there," I says. "Just let me have fifty cents and pay the rest of my fine. I don't want you to go down there! I don't want you to start anything with Professor Herbert!" Pa didn't answer, and I knew he was going.

After I'd finished doing my work I went to the house and ate my supper. Pa and Ma had eaten. My supper was getting cold. I heard Pa and Ma talking in the front room. Pa was telling Mom about me staying in after school. "I aim to go



down there bright and early in the mornin' and get all this straight! I aim to see about bug larnin' and this runnin' all over God's creation huntin' snakes, lizards, and frogs."

I ate my supper. I slipped upstairs and lit the lamp. I tried to forget the whole thing. I could hardly study for thinking about Pa. "He'll go to school with me in the morning. He'll take a gun for Professor Herbert! What will Professor Herbert think of me! I'll tell him when Pa leaves that I couldn't help it. But Pa might shoot him. I hate to go with Pa. Maybe he'll cool off about it tonight and not go in the morning." Pa got up at about four o'clock.

"Now, Dave," says Pa, "let's get

ready fer school. I aim to go with you this mornin' and look into bug larnin', frog larnin', lizard and snake larnin' and breakin' down cherry trees! I don't like no sicha foolish way o' larnin' myself!"

Pa hadn't forgot. I'd have to take him to school with me. He would take me to school with him.

He put his gun in its holster. We started walking toward the high school across the hill.

It was early when we got to the County High School. Professor Herbert had just got there.

"You're th' Professor here, ain't you?" says Pa.

"Yes," says Professor Herbert, "and you are Dave's father?"

"Yes," says Pa, pulling out his gun and laying it on the seat in Professor Herbert's office. Professor Herbert's eyes got big behind his black-rimmed glasses when he saw Pa's gun.

"Jist a few things about this school I want to know," says Pa. "I'm trying to make a scholar out'n Dave. He's the only one out'n eleven youngins I've sent to high school. Here he comes in late and leaves me all th' work to do! He said you's all out bug huntin' yesterday and broke a cherry tree



down. He had to stay two hours after school yesterday and work out money to pay on that cherry tree! Is that right?"

"W-w-why," says Professor Herbert, "I guess it is."

He looked at Pa's gun.

"Well," says Pa, "this ain't no high school. It's a damn bug school, a lizard school, a snake school! It ain't no damn school nohow!"

"Why did you bring that gun?" says Professor Herbert to Pa.

"You see that little hole," says Pa as he picked up the long blue forty-four and put his finger on the end of the barrel. "A bullet can come out'n that hole that will kill a school-teacher same as it will any other man. It will kill a rich man same as a poor man. It will kill a man. But after I come in and saw you, I know'd I wouldn't need it. This fist could do you up in a few minutes."

"It jist don't look good to me," says Pa, "a-takin' all this swarm of youngins out to pillage th' whole deestricht. Breakin' down cherry trees. Keepin' boys in after school."

"What else could I have done with Dave, Mr. Sexton?" says Professor Herbert. "The boys didn't have any business all climbing that cherry tree after one lizard. One boy could have gone up the tree and got it. The farmer charged us six dollars. It was a little steep, I

think, but we had to pay. Must I make five boys pay and let your boy off? He said he didn't have the dollar and couldn't get it. So I put it in for him. I'm letting him work it out. He's not working for me. He's working for the school!"

"I jist don't know what you could a-done with 'im," says Pa, "only a-larruped 'im with a withe! That's what he needed!"

"And why work one and let th' rest out because they got th' money? I don't see what bugs had got to do with a high school! It don't look good to me nohow!"

Pa picked up his gun and put it back in its holster. The red color left Professor Herbert's face. He talked more to Pa. Pa softened a little. It looked funny to see Pa in the high school building. It was the first time he'd ever been there.

"You've heard of germs, Mr. Sexton, haven't you?" says Professor Herbert.

"Jist call me Luster if you don't mind," says Pa, very casual like.

"All right, Luster, you've heard of germs, haven't you?"

"Yes," says Pa, "but I don't believe in germs. I'm sixty-five years old and I ain't seen one yet!"

"You can't see them with your naked eye," says Professor Herbert. "Just keep that gun in the holster and stay with me in the high school today. I have a few things I want

to show you. That scum on your teeth has germs in it."

"What," says Pa, "you mean to tell me I've got germs on my teeth!"

"Yes," says Professor Herbert. "The same kind as we might be able to find in a living black snake if we dissect it!"

"I don't mean to dispute your word," says Pa, "but damned if I believe it. I don't believe I have germs on my teeth!"

"Stay with me today and I'll show you. I want to take you through the school anyway. School has changed a lot in the hills since you went to school. I don't guess we had high schools in this county when you went to school."

"No," says Pa, "jist readin', writin', and cipherin'. We didn't have all this bug larnin' and finding germs on your teeth and in the middle o' black snakes! Th' world's changin'."

"It is," says Professor Herbert. "And we hope all for the better. Boys like your own there are going to help change it. He's your boy. He knows all of what I've told you. You stay with me today."

"I'll shore stay with you," says Pa. "I want to see th' germs off'n my teeth. I jist want to see a germ. I've never seen one in my life. 'Seein' is believin',' Pap allus told me."

When we went to biology later

that day, Pa was in the class. He was sitting on one of the high stools beside the microscope. We went ahead with our work just as if Pa wasn't in the class. I saw Pa take his knife and scrape tartar from one of his teeth. Professor Herbert put it under the lens and adjusted the microscope for Pa. He adjusted it and worked awhile. Then he says: "Now, Luster, look! Put your eye right down to the light. Squint the other eye!"

Pa put his head down and did as Professor Herbert said: "I see 'im," says Pa. "Who'd a ever thought that? Right on a body's teeth! Right in a body's mouth! You're right certain they ain't no fake to this, Professor Herbert?"

"No, Luster," says Professor Herbert. "It's there. That's the germ. Germs live in a world we cannot see with the naked eye. We must use the microscope. There are millions of them in our bodies. Some are harmful. Others are helpful."

"We have a big black snake over here we caught yesterday," Professor Herbert goes on. "We'll chloroform him and dissect him and show you he has germs in his body too."

"Don't do it," says Pa. "I believe you. I jist don't want to see you kill the black snake. I never kill one. They are good mousers and a lot o' help to us on the farm. I like black snakes. I jist hate to see people kill

'em. I don't allow 'em killed on my place."

When our biology class was over I walked out of the room. It was our last class for the day. I would have to take my broom and sweep two hours to finish paying for the split cherry tree.

I got my broom and started to sweep. Professor Herbert walked up and says: "I'm going to let you do that some other time. You can go home with your father. He is waiting out there."

I laid my broom down, got my books, and went down the steps.

Pa says: "Ain't you got two hours o' sweeping yet to do?"

I says: "Professor Herbert said I could do it some other time. He said for me to go home with you."

"No," says Pa. "You are goin' to do as he says. He's a good man. School has changed from my day and time. I'm a dead leaf, Dave. I'm behind. I don't belong here. If he'll let me I'll get a broom and we both sweep one hour. That pays your debt. I'll help you pay it. I'll ast 'im and see if he won't let me hep you."

"I'm going to cancel the debt," says Professor Herbert. "I just wanted you to understand, Luster."

"I understand," says Pa, "and since I understand he must pay his debt fer th' tree and I'm going to hep him."



"Don't do that," says Professor Herbert. "It's all on me."

"We don't do things like that," says Pa; "we're just and honest people. We don't want somethin' fer nothin'. Professor Herbert, you're wrong now and I'm right. You'll haf to listen to me. I've larned a lot from you. My boy must go on. Th' world has left me. It changed while I've raised my family and plowed th' hills. I'm a just and honest man. I don't skip

debts. I ain't larned 'em to do that. I ain't got much larnin' myself but I do know right from wrong after I see through a thing."

Professor Herbert went home. Pa and I stayed and swept one hour. It looked funny to see Pa use a broom. He never used one at home. Mom used the broom. Pa used the plow. Pa did hard work. Pa says: "I can't sweep. Durned if I can. Look at th' streaks o' dirt I leave on th' floor! Seems like no work a-tall fer me. Brooms is too light or somethin'. I'll jist do th' best I can, Dave. I've been wrong about th' school."

I says: "Did you know Professor Herbert can get a warrant for you for bringing your pistol to school and showing it in his office! They can railroad you for that!"

"That's all made right," says Pa. "I've made that right. Professor Herbert ain't goin' to take it to court. He likes me. I like 'im. We jist had to get together. He had the remedies. He showed me. You must go on to school. I am as strong a man as ever come out'n th' hills fer my years and th' hard work I've done. But I'm behind, Dave. I'm a little man. Your hands will be softer than mine. Your clothes will be



better. You'll allus look cleaner than your old Pap. Jist remember, Dave, to pay your debts and be honest. Jist be kind to animals and don't bother th' snakes. That's all I got agin th' school. Puttin' snakes to sleep and cuttin' em open."

It was late when we got home. Pa sat before the fire and told Mom

he was going to take her and show her a germ some time. Mom hadn't seen one either. Pa told her about the high school and the fine man Professor Herbert was. He told Mom about the strange school across the hill and how different it was from the school in their day and time.

1. Who owned the split cherry tree?
 - (a) Eif Crabtree
 - (b) Professor Herbert
 - (c) Pa
 - (d) no one
2. When Pa first met Professor Herbert, he
 - (a) was very nice to the professor
 - (b) threatened him
 - (c) liked him
 - (d) told him he was happy to be at the school
3. When Pa first looked through the microscope, he saw
 - (a) a black snake
 - (b) germs
 - (c) a dead bug
 - (d) a worm
4. When Professor Herbert offered to forget Dave's debt, Pa
 - (a) agreed with the idea
 - (b) went home
 - (c) refused the offer and helped Dave to sweep
 - (d) said nothing
5. Dave's father was
 - (a) very young
 - (b) middle-aged
 - (c) sixty-five years old
 - (d) eighty-five years old

6. When Pa left the school, he felt Dave should
 - (a) quit school right away
 - (b) quit school very soon
 - (c) stay in school
 - (d) not go to Professor Herbert's classes again

What Do You Think?

7. In your own words, describe the kind of man Dave's Pa is.
8. Do you think that Dave's Pa learned anything by visiting the high school? What? Did Dave learn anything? What? Did Professor Herbert find out anything about Dave and his Pa? What?

No Petty Thief



MAYBE it was the coming of the rains that made the thing happen. For the rains came early that November to the mountains. They were cold rains as well as I remember, dropping from the black clouds that raced over the mountaintops. It was these early rains that stopped the work on the highway they were building through the mountains.

I guess I ought to 've been ashamed of myself, too, for it was the first road ever to be built in our county. It was a real road they were making. They were going down into the deep valleys and around the

rocky-walled mountains and over the mountains. Of course we had several log roads, cowpaths, goat paths, fox paths, rabbit paths, and footpaths. But you couldn't drive an automobile over one of these. And if the contractors could've only finished the big road and covered it with loose gravel before November, we'd a-had a real road that people could've driven automobiles over. It would've been a real road like I've heard a few counties in the mountains already had. I've only heard about these roads. I've never seen one of 'em.

3

Now if it wasn't the rains coming early or my love for wheels and machinery, I don't know what made me do it. I do know that I was raised in a decent home. My pa never used the word "raised" when he spoke about one of his ten young'ins. He allus said he didn't raise young'ins but he "jerked 'em up by the hair on the head." And Pa was about right in a way. He did jerk us up by the hair on the head but he didn't use any monkey business. He was a strict man in a fashion, belonging to the Old Fashion Church, and when he jerked us up by the hair on the head, he did it in decency and order. That's why I hate what I've done on account of Pa and Ma. They never learned us to lie, steal, gamble, cuss, smoke, and drink. And when I tell you what happened to me, I don't want you to blame Ma and Pa. They had nothing to do with it. And I'll regret what I done to my dying day just because of Ma and Pa.

As I have said, the rains came early to the mountains in that November. And before the Big Road got too muddy, the men got the machinery out. I mean they drove the dump trucks, the caterpillar tractors, and big graders back to Edensburg where they had started the road from in the first place. But one piece of machinery

they didn't take back with 'em was the big steam shovel. Maybe it was because it couldn't go back over the muddy road under its own power, and maybe it was too big for a caterpillar tractor to pull. Maybe they were afraid it would bog down even if pulled under its own power and with a tractor helping it. Anyway, they left it a-sittin' there lonesome-like in the November rain.

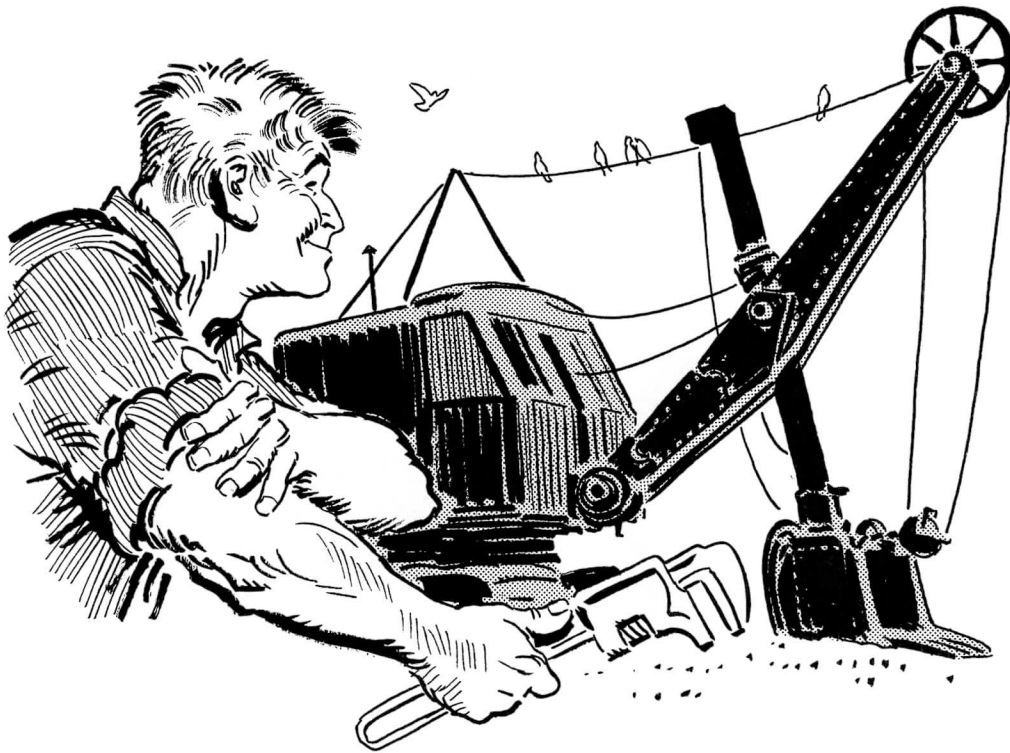
I didn't work on the road. I had too much work at home to do. And every time I had a chance to leave my farm, say fer a few hours, I would hurry over the mountain to watch 'em build the Big Road. I liked to watch a piece of machinery working like a man and I liked to watch the wheels roll. One of the pieces of machinery I loved most of all was the big steam shovel. And when it was left alone sitting in the rain, an idea popped into my head. And I went back home to get my monkey wrench.

You may think it was a hard job. But it wasn't too hard. I started taking off the little pieces first. I started stripping it like the wind and rain was stripping a big tree of leaves. Only I had a warm feeling for the steam shovel, and the wind and the rain didn't have any feeling fer the tree. There was something about this steam shovel that I loved. It was a beautiful thing to me. I

had the same love touching it that a lot of the mountain boys have fer their pistols. It was the touch of ownership; yet I knew it didn't belong to me. But it would belong to me. It would belong to me even fer a little while. I knew that it was mine. Fer I was going to take it. And I was taking it to a place where I didn't think it would ever be found. And if it was found, it would be a place that it couldn't move out under its own power plus a dozen caterpillar tractors pulling at it.

After I'd taken it apart I started

carrying the little pieces over the mountain. Maybe I'd better tell you what kind of strength I have. I'm not a little weakling what you might think. I'm not what you'd call a real tall man. I just measure a bit over eighteen hands high, which is a little over six feet. But I'm almost six hands across the shoulders. And my legs above my knees are about the size of tough-butted white oaks big enough for banks timbers and below my knees they are big as gnarled locust fence posts. My wrists are big as hand-spikes, tapering up to my arm



muscles, which are pretty powerful and I'm not a-lying. When I swell my arm muscles they're nigh as big as half-a-gallon lard buckets.

So I started carrying my steam shovel up over the mountain and down the other side to my barn that was built on the steep slope with a high lower side and a short upper side. I had a big open space in the middle of my barn with big brown walls all around that no human eye could see through. Right in the middle of my barn, I shoveled off a level place to set up my steam shovel.

You'd be surprised how many

parts there are to a steam shovel. The best way to find this out is to start taking one apart. It's a lot of work. And it would be awfully hard if a body had to do a lot of watching out fer somebody a-trying to catch him. But I guess the road builders thought a steam shovel would be safe to leave where they had stopped working on the road. They even guarded their trucks and tractors in Edensburg, but they didn't bother to guard the steam shovel or even send anybody back to look about it. So I didn't have anybody around to bother me. And I got in some good time.

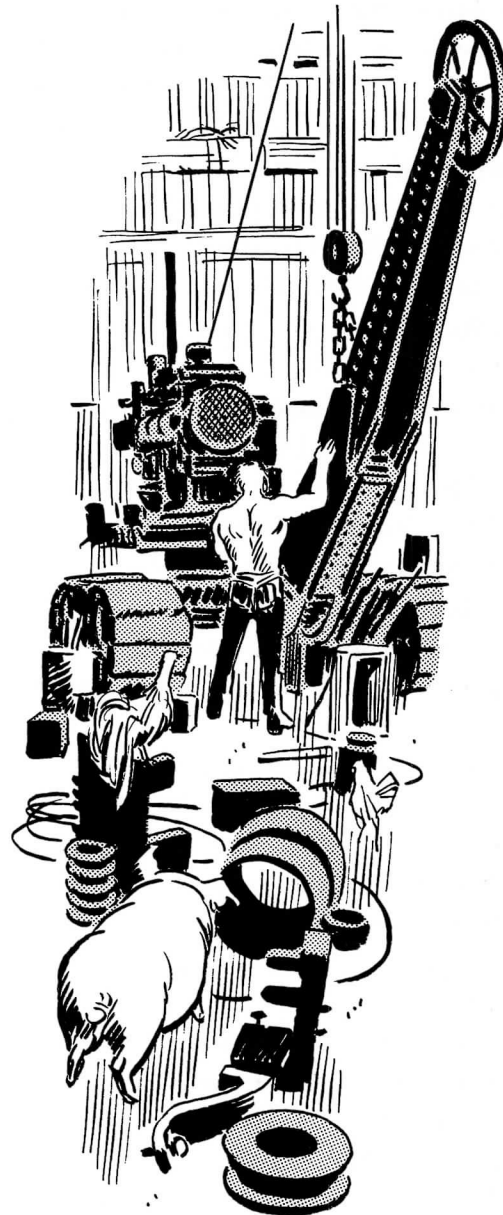


If I's to tell you how long it took me to take it down and take the parts apart, it would surprise you. I had it down in less than three days and had taken it apart. And I didn't let any dead leaves gather under my feet when I started carrying it over the mountain. I'd take a big load and I'd never set it down to wind a minute. I'd carry it right to the barn.

Then came the happiest hours I ever spent in my life. I was putting my steam shovel back together. I'd laid out all the parts careful not to get them mixed. First I put the wheels on good foundations and got up the framework. And then I used a block and tackle that I used at hog-killing time to swing up the beam and the shovel. I had by the end of November one of the prettiest things in my barn that ever my eyes looked upon when it come to machinery.

It was hard for me to believe that I had it. Sometimes it seemed like a dream. But I would pinch myself as I went to my barn to look at it again, again, and again to see if I was asleep and dreaming or if I was wide awake. But I wasn't dreaming. I was very much awake.

I would go to my barn in the morning and just stand and look at my steam shovel. And I'd think of the power it had. I'd think about the way I'd seen it bite into the dirt



and rocks easier than I could sink my teeth into a piece of squirrel or possum. And how it would lift a big bite of dirt and rocks onto the trucks. How graceful the long beam would swing around just by pulling

a little lever, and then there was another little lever a body pulled and it would unload its bite into the truck. And now I loved to put my hand onto it and I had a sense of ownership and power, a feeling that nearly lifted me to the skies.

But the November rains stopped falling. And as I had expected, the road builders came back and brought their machinery. Naturally, they didn't find the steam shovel.

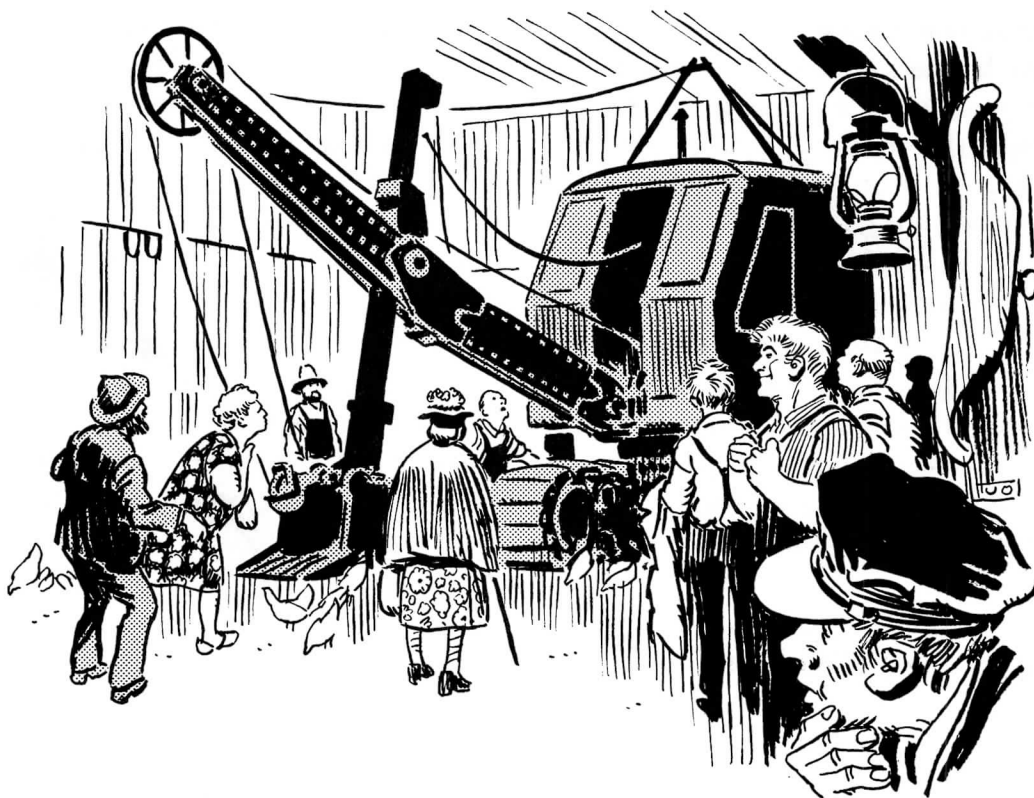
There was a lot of excitement. They had expected it to be right where they left it. And the day I walked over where I had taken apart the shovel, I found a crowd gathered around and I joined them to listen to their talk. I never saw a crowd of men so confused. Nearly every man on this road gang said the steam shovel had to be taken off under its own power and there wasn't any road for it to get out except going back through Edensburg.

One man laughed, said it had grown wings big enough to fly it over the mountain back to "civilization." The men said a lot of foolish things like that. But one of the old men with hard, cold, blue eyes said he didn't think it was impossible for a man to carry it away on his back and that was the only way he believed it could have got away. When he said these words he looked me over. He looked at my

shoulders and my big hands, forearms, and my legs that were cased in my overalls, stretching them like full mealsacks. Then he pointed out that the steam shovel tracks didn't leave the spot, and the ground had been tramped down like a floor around where the steam shovel had once been. But when he said these words everybody laughed and said that was impossible, but I could tell from the way this old man acted that he believed it had been carried away.

I didn't feel comfortable any longer around these men. And when I snuck away they were talking about bringing in an "expert" to find the steam shovel. I didn't go back the way I'd carried the steam shovel fer I thought they might get suspicious and come over the path to my barn.

And I guess I would have gotten along somehow if it hadn't been for the "expert" the boss-man of the road gang went out somewhere and got to help him find the shovel. And maybe it was the wind and the sun of that early December that were against me. Maybe it was the rain had failed to do its part. I could have laid it onto several things when I heard voices upon the mountain and peeped through a crack in the barn. I saw a big man in front, dressed in good clothes, whose face I'd never seen



with the road builders before. He was leading the men like a pack of hounds. He was out in front on my tracks. He was following the path I had made. The rain had never erased my deep shoe prints in the dirt and if the leaves had once covered them, the sun had dried the leaves and the wind had blown them off again, leaving my path clean as a whistle fer 'em to follow. And that old man with the cold, hard, blue eyes must have put the "expert" wise that a man could carry off a steam shovel. For they found it clean, dry, and purty in my barn.

No use to tell you more about it. Naturally I was arrested and tried in Edensburg. And people came in great droves to hear the trial. There was a lot in the papers about it. They even had my picture in the papers. And everybody wondered how I had carried away a steam shovel. Even the jurymen would hardly believe it until I told them the truth. When they swore me to God that I could tell the truth that is just what I done. I told 'em I wasn't no petty thief. I told 'em I'd never stole anything in my life before. I told them the whole story how I'd carried it. Even I had a

time convincing the jury against my lawyer's advice that I had done it. But I finally convinced them after the whole jury went to the spot. They followed me over the path to my barn where I showed them the shovel.

If you know the people and the laws in our state, it would've been better fer me to 've kilt a man. I would have stood a better chance of coming clear. Anyway I wouldn't have got but one or two years in the pen even if I hadn't done it in

self-defense. But when you steal something, even if it's just a chicken, let alone a steam shovel, you're a gone gosling. Why they let me off with only seven years and a day was, I was honest enough to tell the truth after they found the shovel in my barn. If I'd a-ried to got outen it, I'd been given life. The road builders fit me hard, too, fer they had to build a road to my barn to get the shovel. Not a one of the whole gang was man enough to carry it back.

1. This story takes place in the month of
 - (a) November
 - (b) January
 - (c) July
 - (d) October
2. The "hero" of this story hid the steam shovel
 - (a) in the woods
 - (b) in a cave
 - (c) on an abandoned farm
 - (d) in his barn
3. The title of this story, "No Petty Thief," is a good one because the hero
 - (a) goes to jail
 - (b) steals something very big
 - (c) is caught by the expert
 - (d) lives in the mountains
4. The man who stole the steam shovel was caught because
 - (a) his tracks over the mountain were not washed away
 - (b) he told everyone he had taken it
 - (c) his father told everyone his son had taken the steam shovel
 - (d) the men on the road gang figured out what happened

5. The thief in this story was
 - (a) freed
 - (b) sent to jail but released right away
 - (c) sent to jail for seven years and a day
 - (d) sent to jail for life
6. At the end of this story, how does the thief feel about his jail sentence?
 - (a) He feels angry.
 - (b) He is happy.
 - (c) He thinks he was lucky.
 - (d) He is proud of it.

What Do You Think?

7. Describe the kind of man you think the thief in this story is. Would you trust him? Why?
8. Why do you think the thief stole the steam shovel rather than something else?

Prelude

4



I was coming home from school, carrying my books by a strap, when I passed Gavin's poolroom and saw the big guys hanging around. They were standing in front near the windows, looking across the street.

When I passed the poolroom one or two guys came out. "Hey, Ike, how's your good-looking sister?" they called, but I didn't turn around. I hate those fellas and I hope every one of them dies under a truck. Every time I come home from school past Lake Street they jab me, and every time my sister Syl comes along they say things. So when one of them, Fred Gooley, calls, "Hey, Ike, how's your sister?" I don't answer. Besides, Ike isn't my name anyway, it's Harry.

I passed along the sidewalk, keeping close to the curb. Someone threw half an apple but it went over my head. When I went a little farther someone threw a stone. It hit me in the back of the leg and stung me but it didn't hurt much. I kept a little toward the middle of the sidewalk because I saw a woman coming the other way and I knew they wouldn't throw.

When I reached the corner under the Elevated two big new trucks were standing with their motors going, giving my father the latest editions. The drivers threw the papers onto the sidewalk with a nice easy roll so the papers wouldn't

get hurt. "All right Silverstein," a driver called out. "We'll give you a five-star at six," and both trucks drove off.

I stood around putting the papers on the stand and making a few sales. The first ten minutes after coming home from school and taking care of the newsstand always excites me. Maybe it's the traffic. The trucks and cars pound along like anything and of course there's the Elevated right up above you which thunders to beat the band. We have our newsstand right up against a big El post and the stand is a kind of cabin which you enter from the side. But we hardly use it, only in the late morning and around two P.M., when business isn't very rushing. Anyhow, I like it. I like everything about selling papers for my father.

The only thing I don't like is those guys from Gavin's. But since my father went to the police station to complain they don't come around so often. My father went to the station a month ago and said the gang was bothering him, and Mr. Fenway, he's the desk sergeant there, said, "Don't worry any more about it, Mr. Silverstein, we'll take care of it. You're a respectable citizen and taxpayer and you're entitled to protection. We'll take care of it." And the next day they sent over a patrolman who stood around almost

two hours. The gang from Gavin's saw him and started to go away, but the cop hollered, "Now listen, don't bother this old fella. If you bother him any I'll have to run some of you in."

Well, all this happened three or four weeks ago and so far the gang has let us alone. They stopped pulling my sixteen-year-old sister by her sweater and when they pass the stand going home to supper all they give us is dirty looks. During the last three or four days, however, they passed by and kinda muttered, calling my father a communist banker and me and my sister reds.

I am standing there hearing the traffic and thinking it over when my little fat old man says to me: "Well, Colonel," he says smiling, "how are you doing?" So we stand around, the two of us, taking care of the trade.

Then I see my sister coming from high school carrying her briefcase and heading this way. Why the heck doesn't she cross over so she won't have to pass the poolroom, I say to myself; why don't she walk on the other side of the street? But that's not like Sylvia; she's a girl with a hot temper, and when she thinks she is right you can't tell her a thing. I knew she wouldn't cross the street and then cross back, because according to her, why, that's giving in. That's telling those hood-



lums that you're afraid of their guts. So she doesn't cross over but walks straight on. When she comes by the pool hall two guys come out and say something to her. She just holds herself tight and goes right on past them both. When she finally comes up she gives me a poke in the side. "Hello, you mickey mouse, what mark did you get in your algebra exam?" I told her I got B, but the truth is I got a C.

"I'll check up on you later," she says to me. "Pa, if he's lying to us, we'll fine him ten years!"

My father started to smile and

said, "No, Harry is a good boy, two years is enough."

We were standing around when something hit me in the head, a half of a rotten apple. It hurt a little. I turned quick but didn't see anybody, but Syl started yelling. She was pointing to a big El post across the street behind which a guy was hiding.

"Come on, show your face," my sister was saying. "Come on, you hero, show your yellow face!" But the guy sneaked away, keeping the post between. Syl turned to me and her face was boiling. "The rats! It's

not enough with all the trouble over in Europe; they have to start it here."

Just then our old man came out of the restaurant across the street from the newsstand. When he saw Syl's face he asked what was the matter.

"Nothing," she says. "Nothing, I'm just thinking."

I could tell by my old man's eyes that he was nervous and wanted to smooth things over, but Syl didn't give him a chance. When she gets started and knows she's in the right not even the Governor of the State could make her keep quiet.

"Don't pay any attention to them," she said in a cutting voice while my old man looked anxious. "When men hide behind Elevated posts and throw rotten apples at women you know they're not men but just things that wear pants. In Europe they put brown shirts on them and call them saviors of civilization. Here they haven't got the shirts yet and hang around pool-rooms."

Every word cut like a knife and the guys ducked away. If I or my father would have said it we would have been nailed with some rotten fruit, but the way Syl has of getting back at those guys makes them feel like yellow dogs. I guess that's why they respect her even though they

hate her, and I guess that's why Gooley and one or two of his friends are always trying to get next to her and date her up.

Syl was about to say something more when Hillman's cocoa factory up the block let out and the men started coming up the street. The 4:45 rush was on and we didn't have time for anything. Me and Syl were busy handing out the papers and making change and our Pa helped us while the men took their papers and hurried for the El. It started to get darker and colder and the traffic grew heavier along the street.

In a little while it was after five and Syl had to go home and make supper. "I'll be back in an hour," she told me. "Then Pa can go home and rest a bit and me and you can take care of the stand." I said all right.

After she was gone it seemed kind of lonesome. There was still a lot of traffic and a few people came up for papers, but from my old man's face I could tell he felt as sad as I did.

But pretty soon some more editions began coming and we had to check and stack them up. More men came out from factories on Walnut Street and we were busy making sales. Just then another factory let out and we were swamped for a while. "Hi, there, Silverstein,"

some of the men called to him, "what's the latest news, you king of the press?" They took the papers, kidding him, and hurried up the stairs to the Elevated.

Then the guys from Gavin's pool-room began passing the stand on their way home to supper after a day of just killing time. At first they looked as if they wouldn't bother us. One of two of them said something mean to us, but my old man and me didn't answer. If you don't answer hoodlums, my father once told me, sometimes they let you alone.

But then it started. The guys who passed by came back and one of them said: "Let's have a little fun with the Yids." That's how it began. A couple of them took some magazines from the rack and said they wanted to buy a copy and started reading.

In a flash I realized it was all planned out. My father looked kind of worried but stood quiet. There were about eight or nine of them, all big boys around twenty-five or twenty-six, and for the first time I was scared. It was just after six o'clock and they had picked a time when the newspaper trucks had delivered the five-star and when all the factories had let out their help and there weren't many people about. Finally one of them smiled at Gooley and said, "Well, this

physical culture magazine is mighty instructive, but don't you think we ought to have some of the exercises demonstrated?" Gooley said, "Sure, why not?"

So the first fella pointed to some pictures in the magazine and wanted me to squat on the sidewalk and do the first exercise. I wouldn't do it. My father put his hand on the fella's arm and said, "Please, please." But the guy pushed my father's hand away.

"We're interested in your son, not you. Go on, squat."

"I won't," I told him.

"Go on," he said. "Do the first exercise so that the boys can learn how to keep fit."

"I won't."

"Go on," he said, "do it."

"I won't."

Then he came over to me smiling, but his face looked nasty. "Do it. Do it if you know what's good for you."

"Please boys," said my Pa. "Please go home and eat and don't make trouble. I don't want to have to call a policeman. . . ."

But before I knew it someone got behind me and tripped me so that I fell on one knee. Then another of them pushed me trying to make me squat. I shoved someone and then someone hit me, and then I heard someone trying to make them stop. While they held me



down on the sidewalk I wiggled and looked up. A customer, who had come for the blueflash edition was bawling them out.

"You let him alone! You tramps, you hoodlums, you let him alone!" She came over and tried to help me, but they pushed her away. Then the customer began to yell as two guys twisted my arm and told me to squat.

By this time a few people were passing and we called at them to help. But the gang were big fellows and there were eight or nine of them, and the people were afraid.

Then while they had me down on the sidewalk Syl came running up the street. When she saw what was happening she began kicking them and yelling and trying to make them let me up. But they didn't pay any attention to her, merely pushing her away.

"Please," my Pa kept saying. "Please let him up; he didn't hurt you, I don't want to have to call the police. . . ."

Then Syl turned to the people who were watching and yelled at them. "Why don't you help us? What are you standing there for?"

But none of them moved. Then Syl began to scream:

"Listen, why don't you help us? Why don't you make them stop picking on us? We're human beings the same as you!"

But the people just stood there afraid to do a thing. Then while a few guys held me, Gooley and about four others went for the stand, turning it over and musing and stamping on all the newspapers they could find. Syl started to scratch them, so they hit her, then I broke away to help her, and then they started socking me too. My father tried to reach me, but three guys kept him away. Four guys got

me down and started kicking me and all the time my father was begging them to let me up and Syl was screaming at the people to help. And while I was down, my face was squeezed against some papers on the sidewalk.

Then someone yelled, "Jiggers, the cops!" and they got off of me right away. Someone had called the station, and the guys let me up and beat it away fast.

But when the cops came it was too late; the stand was a wreck. The newspapers and magazines were all over the sidewalk and the rack that holds the Argosy and Western Aces was all twisted up.



My Pa, who looked sicker than ever, stood there crying and pretty soon I began to cry. The people were standing around looking at us like we were some kind of fish, and I just couldn't help it, I started to cry.

Then the cops came through the crowd and began asking questions right and left. In the end they wanted to take us to the station to enter a complaint, but Syl wouldn't go. She looked at the crowd watching and she said, "What's the use? All those people standing around and none of them would help!" They were standing all the way to the second El post, and when the cops asked for witnesses none of them offered to give their names. Then Syl looked at Pa and me and saw our faces and turned to the crowd of spectators and began to scream.

"In another few years, you wait! Some of you are working people and they'll be marching through the streets and going after you too! They pick on us Jews because we're weak and haven't any country. But after they get us down

they'll go after you! And it'll be your fault; you're all cowards, you're afraid to fight back!"

"Listen," one of the cops told my sister, "are you coming to the station or not? We can't hang around here all evening waiting for you."

Then Syl broke down and began to cry as hard as me. "Oh, please leave us alone. What good would it do?"

By this time the crowd was bigger, so the cops started telling people to break it up and move on. The people went away slowly and then, as the crowd began to dwindle, it started to snow. When she saw that, Syl started crying harder than ever and turned her face to me. But I was down on my hands and knees trying to save some of the magazines. There was no use going after the newspapers, which were smeared up, torn and dirty from the gang's feet. But I thought I could save a few, so I picked up a couple of them.

"Oh, leave them be," Syl wept at me. "Leave them be, leave them be!"

1. Harry's father owns
 - (a) a candy store
 - (b) a pool hall
 - (c) a diner
 - (d) a newsstand

2. When the police asked for witnesses to the fight,
 - (a) no one would give his name
 - (b) many people stepped forward to give their names
 - (c) the people started to scream
 - (d) Gooley and his gang returned
3. Harry, Sylvia, and their father are
 - (a) Jewish
 - (b) Irish
 - (c) Negro
 - (d) Puerto Rican
4. Sylvia is the type of person who
 - (a) fights against what she thinks is wrong
 - (b) is afraid most of the time
 - (c) will not fight for what she believes in
 - (d) is always sad
5. Gooley and one or two of his friends would like to
 - (a) date Sylvia
 - (b) help out Harry but not his father
 - (c) help Harry's father but not Harry
 - (d) leave the gang
6. Sylvia leaves the newsstand to
 - (a) go home
 - (b) go out on a date
 - (c) sell papers in the cocoa factory
 - (d) fight Gooley and his gang

What Do You Think?

7. If you had been present when Gooley and his gang were wrecking the newsstand, what would you have done?
8. Why do you think no one would give his name as a witness to the police?

Chicken!



Four boys were lounging against the side of Danny's car at the drive-in, and their girls were sitting inside. The male talk was about cars.

Suddenly Ricco, a slim, blond-haired boy smiled thinly at Danny.

"You still chicken to drag?" he asked.

Danny smiled, but there was a little nervousness in the smile. "I'm not chicken," he said. "I can take you in that car of yours any time. So why bother?"

"Big talk," Ricco said, still smiling. The kids felt a tenseness in the

air, and the girls stopped talking. Everyone was watching the two boys. "Chicken?" Ricco asked again, a sharp challenge in his voice.

"No," Danny said quietly. "I'm not chicken."

"Okay? How's about it?"

For a second Danny hesitated. He glanced at Florence, his girl, and she suddenly appeared to be frightened. She shook her head a little. Danny shrugged his shoulders and managed a tight grin.

"It's on," he nodded. "Mill Highway?"

A twenty-mile stretch of highway



to a mill was a favorite for drag racing. It had light traffic, with only occasional trucks going to and from the mill. At night the highway was deserted, and seldom did a state

patrol car drive it. It included a straight stretch, curves, hills, and a hair-raising half mile along the edge of a hundred-foot-deep canyon. The highway was so located that a car at the far end of the racing strip, on top of a hill, could be seen from the starting point. A lookout from there could see almost ten miles down a straightaway toward the mill. When the highway was clear, he could signal for the start by flashing his headlights toward the waiting racers.

"Don't do it, Danny." Florence was almost crying. "Please. He's dirty. You know he is. It's not that you aren't a better driver—it's just that . . . well, you can't trust him. Danny, I'm afraid."

"It's okay," he told her. "I'm not afraid. I can take him."

"But Danny—"

"Look, Flo—I can't be chicken, can I?"

"You're not chicken. Everyone knows that! Ricco's just trying to—"

"Forget it, honey. He's needled me once too often. Somebody's ripe to take him."

Florence looked up at him, started to say something, and then closed her lips tightly when she saw the expression on his face. She tried not to let the tears come to her eyes, and she stood on her toes and kissed him before she turned and



hurried to the carload of youngsters waiting for her.

Twenty minutes later Danny and Ricco waited side by side in their cars, engines running, eyes glued to a far hilltop where the lookout car was stationed.

A light flashed twice on the hilltop—the signal. They were doing well over a hundred miles an hour when they went into the first curve, side by side. Danny was on the inside. He let up on the gas before hitting the curve, and then hit the gas pedal when he was into the curve to whip the car around. Ricco was using the same tactics.

They roared down a long, straight descent for a mile, gunning their cars for the first climbing grade.

They were still even as they topped the rise, and now Ricco edged close to Danny.

Danny recognized the maneuver. He narrowed his eyes, held his wheel steady, and jammed the gas pedal to the floorboard. Ricco was not going to force him off the highway or to fall back. He wasn't chicken. Ricco pulled away.

Both drivers clamped hard on the gas again. The speedometer needles climbed—105, 108, 109... Danny felt the steering wheel grow slick under the sweat of his hands. He hunched over. Faster—faster—the roar of the car engines, the wail of wind around the windshield—faster—faster.

They tore into a downgrade and





were on the canyon rim. Ricco was next to the drop. Slowly he began to edge toward Danny—just inches—a steady, speed-mad pressure. Danny set his mouth. There was a soft shoulder off the blacktop on his side. He couldn't give more.

Ricco edged again. The fenders touched and the cars bounced apart. Danny felt his car sway, and he fought the wheel. He saw Ricco sway toward him and the cars touched again, and this time Danny felt the car careen wildly as he fought the wheel to hold his place on the highway.

From the corner of his eye, he saw Ricco's headlights cast a light

toward the far side of the canyon, and a few seconds later he dimly heard a faraway crash. Ricco no longer was beside him, and he was strangely alone on the highway. But now he couldn't control the car. He was off the blacktop and on the soft shoulder. All this in seconds, and then his own car lights were sweeping crazily off the highway, and a tree loomed straight ahead. There was a grinding crash, then darkness closed down on Danny.

He awoke in a hospital three days later. He had a broken shoulder, a ruptured stomach where a spoke from the steering wheel had penetrated, a concussion, four teeth

knocked out, and a back that would eventually call for three operations. The total cost to his parents would run into thousands of dollars. He would lose two years of school.

Ricco was not so lucky. His car rocketed one hundred feet to the bottom of the canyon, landing on huge boulders. Death was instantaneous.

1. If you are “chicken,” you are
 - (a) brave
 - (b) honest
 - (c) generous
 - (d) afraid
2. Ricco
 - (a) was killed
 - (b) was stopped by the police
 - (c) was hospitalized
 - (d) was unhurt and won the race
3. Danny’s car
 - (a) crashed into the canyon
 - (b) did not crash
 - (c) crashed into another car
 - (d) crashed into a tree
4. Florence
 - (a) told Danny to race Ricco
 - (b) asked Danny not to race Ricco
 - (c) didn’t care about the race one way or another
 - (d) wanted to race Ricco herself
5. How long was the stretch of highway used for the race?
 - (a) ten miles
 - (b) twenty miles
 - (c) a hundred miles
 - (d) it’s not stated

6. The signal for the race to begin was
- (a) a gunshot
 - (b) a loud noise
 - (c) the flashing of a light
 - (d) the sound of a whistle

What Do You Think?

7. Suppose Danny had refused to race Ricco. Do you think Danny would have been “chicken”? Why? Or why not?
8. What would you have done if Ricco had challenged you like that?

A Secret for Two



6

No one knew Edward Street as well as did Peter Michaelson, for Pete had delivered milk to the families on the street for thirty years now.

During the past fifteen years the horse which drew the milk wagon used by Pete was a large white horse named Joseph.

After a year of working for Pete, Joseph knew the milk route well. Pete used to say that he didn't need to guide his horse Joseph. Each morning Pete arrived at the stables of the Provincale Milk Company at five o'clock. The wagon would be loaded and Joseph hitched to it. Pete would call "Good morning, old friend." As he climbed into his seat, Joseph would turn his head and the other drivers would smile and say that the horse would smile at Pete. Then Jim, the foreman, would say, "All right, Pete, go on," and Pete would call softly to Joseph, "Let's go, fellow," and down the street they would go.

The wagon, without any direction from Pete, would roll three blocks down St. Catherine Street, then turn right two blocks along Roslyn Avenue; then left, for that was Edward Street. The horse would stop at the first house, allow Pete thirty seconds to get down from his seat and put a bottle of milk at the front door. And then he would go on, skipping two houses



and stopping at the third. So down the length of the street. Then Joseph, still without any direction from Pete, would turn around and come back along the other side. Yes, Joseph was a smart horse.

Pete would talk proudly at the stable of Joseph's skill. "I never touch the reins. He knows just where to stop. Why, a blind man could handle my route with Joseph pulling the wagon."

So it went on for years—always the same. Pete and Joseph both grew old together. Jim, the foreman of the stables, never saw that

they were both getting old until Pete appeared one morning carrying a heavy walking stick.

"Hey, Pete," Jim laughed. "Maybe you are not feeling well, eh?"

"Yes," Pete said. "I'm getting old. My legs are tired."

"You should teach that horse to carry the milk to the front door for you," Jim told him. "He does everything else."

He knew every one of the forty families he served on Edward Street. The cooks knew that Pete couldn't read or write. So instead of following the usual way of leaving a note



in an empty bottle if another quart of milk was needed they would sing out when they heard the sound of his wagon wheels over the street, "Bring an extra quart this morning, Pete."

"So you have company for dinner tonight," he would call back gaily.

Pete had a wonderful memory. When he got to the stable he'd always remember to tell Jim, "The Jones' took an extra quart this morning; the Franks' bought a pint of cream."

Jim would note these things in a little book he always carried. Most of the drivers had to make out the weekly bills and collect the money, but Jim, liking Pete, had always excused him from this task. All Pete had to do was to arrive at five in the morning. He would walk to his wagon, which was always in the same spot at the curb, and deliver his milk. He returned some seven hours later, got down stiffly from his seat, called a cheery "See you tomorrow" to Jim and then walked slowly down the street.

Pete worked for more than thirty years. "We are two old men," he said to Jim one day. "Let us wear out together. When Joseph is ready to retire—then I, too, will quit."

Jim understood. There was something about Pete and Joseph which made a man smile tenderly. It was as though each drew some hidden



strength from the other. When Pete was sitting in his seat, and when Joseph was hitched to the wagon, neither seemed old. But when they finished their work, then Pete would walk down the street slowly, seeming very old. And the horse's head would drop and he would walk slowly to his stall.

Then one morning Jim had terrible news for Pete when he arrived. It was a cold morning and still pitch-dark.

"Pete, your horse, Joseph, did not wake up this morning. He was very old, Pete, he was twenty-five

and that is like being seventy-five for a man."

"Yes," Pete said, slowly. "Yes. I am seventy-five. And I cannot see Joseph again."

"Of course you can," Jim said. "He is over in his stall, looking very peaceful. Go over and see him."

Pete took one step forward then turned. "No . . . no . . . you don't understand, Jim."

Jim clapped him on the shoulder. "We'll find another horse just as good as Joseph. Why, in a month you'll teach him to know your route as well as Joseph did. We'll . . ."



The look in Pete's eyes stopped him. For years Pete had worn a heavy cap, the peak of which came low over his eyes. Now Jim looked into Pete's eyes and he saw something which surprised him. He saw a dead, lifeless look in them. The eyes showed the sadness that was in Pete's heart and his soul. It was as though his heart and soul had died.

"Take today off, Pete," Jim said, but already Pete was walking off down the street, tears streaming down his cheeks. Pete walked to the corner and stepped into the street. There was a warning yell from the driver of a huge truck that was coming fast. And there was the scream of brakes, but Pete did not hear anything.

Five minutes later an ambulance

driver said, "He's dead. Was killed instantly."

Jim and several of the milk-wagon drivers had arrived and they looked down at the old man.

"I couldn't help it," the driver of the truck said, "he walked right into my truck. He never saw it, I guess. Why, he walked into it as though he were blind."

The ambulance doctor bent down, "Blind? Of course the man was blind. See those cataracts? This man has been blind for five years." He turned to Jim, "You say he worked for you? Didn't you know he was blind?"

"No . . . no . . ." Jim said, softly. "None of us knew. Only one knew—a friend of his named Joseph. . . . It was a secret, I think, just between those two."

1. The "secret" in this story is that
 - (a) Pete was blind
 - (b) Joseph was blind
 - (c) Pete was fired from his job by Jim
 - (d) Jim was very old
2. In this story, Jim is
 - (a) another driver
 - (b) the foreman
 - (c) Pete's enemy
 - (d) a horse
3. Pete's horse
 - (a) died
 - (b) left the company
 - (c) was hurt
 - (d) was shot

4. Pete
 - (a) was run over by a truck
 - (b) died of old age
 - (c) retired when Joseph died
 - (d) was made a boss
5. Pete worked as a driver for
 - (a) ten years
 - (b) twenty-five years
 - (c) more than thirty years
 - (d) seventy-five years
6. Which ending to this sentence could not be true: Pete didn't go over to see the dead horse because
 - (a) he was blind
 - (b) he was too sad
 - (c) he hated the horse
 - (d) he loved the horse too much to see him dead

What Do You Think?

7. At the end of the story, what does Jim mean when he says, "It was a secret, I think, just between those two."
8. How do you think Pete felt as he walked down the street after he learned Joseph was dead?

"HELLO. That you, mom? . . . Oh, I'm sorry, operator, I thought I was connected with . . . No, I'm trying to get long-distance . . . What? Centerville, Ohio, twelve ring five, I told that other operator . . . What? . . . I am holding it."

He dug nervously in his pocket for a pack of cigarettes, pulled one cigarette out of the pack with his thumb and forefinger, and stuck it swiftly between his lips. He looked at his watch. The game had been over for a half hour. The snake dance would be coming down the street this way any minute now. With his free hand he tore a match from the paper safe, and propped the telephone receiver for a moment between shoulder and ear while he struck the match on the flap. As he put the match to the tip of the cigarette, he heard a thin voice inside the receiver, and he whipped out the match.

"Hello. Mom? . . . Oh, I'm sorry," he mumbled. "How much?" He took a handful of silver from his pocket and began to drop the coins into the slot of the pay telephone.

"What? Oh, mom? Hello, mom. This is Jerry. I say, this is . . . Can you hear me now? . . . Sure, I can hear you fine . . . Sure, I'm all right. I'm fine. And you? . . . That's fine.

"Mom"—and his voice seemed to stop for a second. Then: "How is he? Is there any change?"





There was a tiny silence.

"Oh." His voice was a little duller when he spoke again. "I see. Yeh. This afternoon, eh? And that other doctor, he said the same thing? um-hmm . . . Oh, sure, sure. No, of course, mom, there's nothing to worry about. No, I'm not worried; I only just called to find out if there was any change, that was all . . . Did they say if he could ever—I mean, can he move his arms any yet?" He gulped. "Well, that doesn't mean anything, really . . . No, of course, all those things take time. Sure a year, or maybe even less . . . What?"

He took a second cigarette out

of his pocket and put it between his lips nervously. He lit it from the stub of the first one and ground it under his heel.

"What money? Oh, you mean what I sent you last week? Now, mom, I told you all about that already in the letter, didn't I? . . . Sure it's a scholarship. I got it for playing football. And so I didn't need all that money you and pop had been saving up for me to go to college, and so I just thought maybe, with pop being laid up now for a while and all . . .

"Where? Why, right here. No, honest, mom, it doesn't cost me a cent for my room. It's on account of my football."

He opened the folding door a little. He thought he could hear the band in the distance.

"Who, me? Homesick? Not so you'd notice it." He laughed. "I'm having the time of my life here. Everybody's so swell. I know practically everybody here at Dover already. They even all call me by my first name. He looked through the glass door of the phone booth.

"Every night the fellows sit around and we drink beer and chew the fat till . . . Oh, no. No, mom. Just beer. Or usually we just go down to Semple's for a milk shake . . . No, that's only the drugstore . . . No." He smiled slowly. "I promised you I wouldn't drink, mom."

Now he could hear the sound of the band coming closer.

"Well, mom, I gotta hang up now. The gang'll be here in a minute. We're having a celebration after the game today. We played Alvord—took 'em sixteen to nothing . . . Sure I did, the whole game; you oughta seen me in there. I made two touchdowns. Everybody's going down to Semple's after the game, and I gotta be ready, because they'll all want me to be there too. Can you hear the band now?"

It was growing louder, and the voices in the snake dance could be heard above the brasses, saying the score of the game in time with the band.

"Now, listen, mom. One other little thing before they get here. Mom, see, I'm going to be sending you about ten or twelve dollars or so each week from now on until pop is better . . . No, mom. Heck, I got plenty. Sure, they always fix you up with a soft job if you're a good enough player . . . Here they are now. Hear them?"

The band had stopped outside. Someone led a cheer.

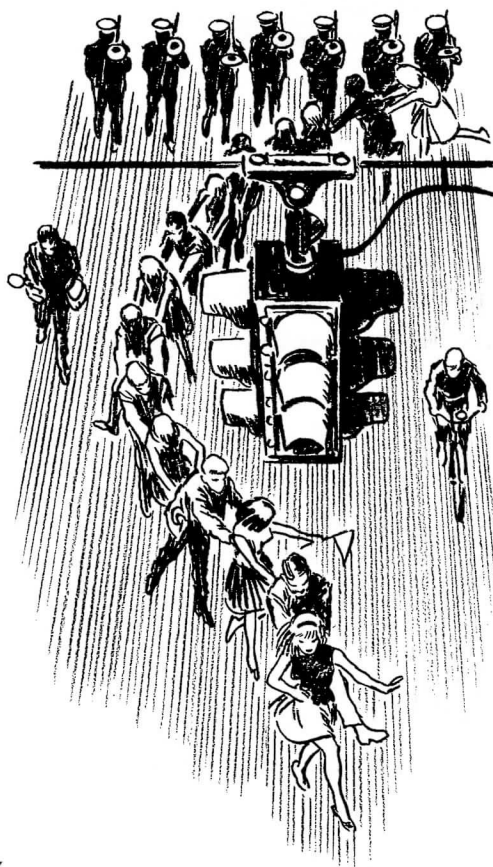
"That's for me, mom. . . . Sure. Didn't I practically win the game for them today? Hear that?" He kicked open the door of the phone booth.

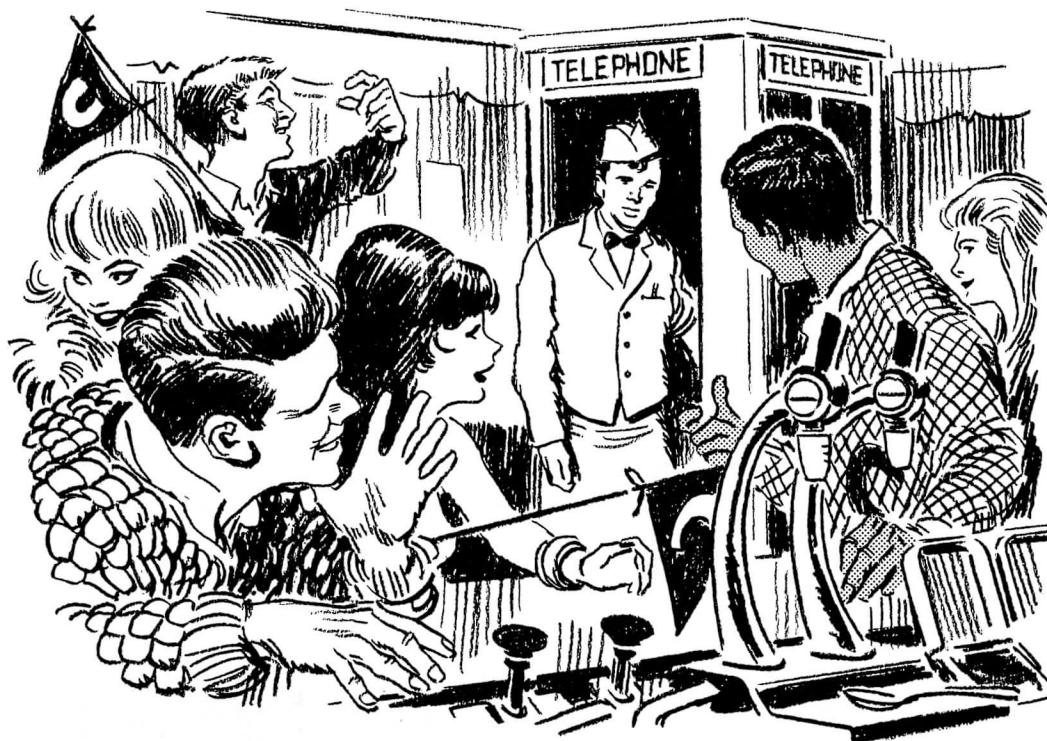
He held the receiver toward the open door of the phone booth.

They were calling, "Jerry!" "Hey, Jerry, hang up on that babe!"

"Hear that, mom? Now good-by. And look, by the way, if you should ever happen to see Helen," he added, "tell her I'm sorry I couldn't ask her up to the freshman dance like I'd planned, but with the football season and my scholarship and all. . . . Tell her, mom. She . . . she didn't answer my last letter. O.K., mom. Tell pop everything's O.K., see? Now don't worry . . . 'By."

He put the receiver back slowly





on the hook. As he opened the door and stepped out of the booth, he could see his reflection for a moment in the tall mirror behind the soda fountain—the familiar

white cap, the white jacket with “Semple’s” stitched in red letters on the pocket. The crowd was lined along the soda fountain, shouting, “Jerry!” “Milk shake, Jerry!”

1. When the story begins, Jerry is
 - (a) making a milk shake
 - (b) talking to his father on the phone
 - (c) making a long-distance call to his mother
 - (d) making a date with a girl friend

2. Jerry’s father was
 - (a) healthy and happy
 - (b) healthy but poor
 - (c) sick
 - (d) angry with Jerry

3. Jerry
 - (a) was still in college
 - (b) told his mother he was working as a soda jerk
 - (c) told his mother he was in college, but he really wasn't
 - (d) hated his mother and father because they wouldn't give him any money for college

4. Semple's is
 - (a) a bar
 - (b) a football player
 - (c) Jerry's friend
 - (d) a drugstore with a soda fountain

5. Jerry is
 - (a) a college student
 - (b) a football player
 - (c) a soda jerk
 - (d) a college student and a football player

6. Jerry told his mother that
 - (a) he had left school
 - (b) he was coming home
 - (c) he needed money
 - (d) he would be sending her ten or twelve dollars a week until his father was better

What Do You Think?

7. Describe the kind of person you think Jerry is. Would you want to be that kind of person? Why? Why not?

8. Why do you think Jerry's girl friend, Helen, might not have answered his last letter?

Take Over, Bosun!



8

Hour after hour I kept the gun pointed at the other nine men. From the lifeboat's stern, where I'd sat most of the twenty days of our drifting, I could keep them all covered. If I had to shoot at such close quarters, I wouldn't miss. They realized that. Nobody jumped at me. But in the way they all glared, I could see how they'd come to hate my guts.

Especially Barrett, who'd been bosun's mate; Barrett said in his harsh, cracked voice, "You're a dope, Snyder. Y-you can't hold out forever! You're half asleep now!"

I didn't answer. He was right. How long can a man stay awake? I hadn't dared shut my eyes in maybe seventy-two hours. Very soon now I'd doze off, and the instant that happened, they'd pounce on the little water that was left.

The last canteen lay under my legs. There wasn't much in it after twenty days. Maybe a pint. Enough to give each of them a few drops. Yet I could see in their bloodshot eyes that they'd gladly kill me for those few drops. As a man I didn't count any more. I was no longer third officer of the wrecked "Mon-

tala.” I was just a gun that kept them away from the water they craved. And with their tongues swollen and their cheeks sunken, they were half crazy. . . .

The way I judged it, we must be some two hundred miles east of Ascension. Now that the storms were over, the Atlantic swells were long and easy, and the morning sun was hot—so hot it scorched your skin. My own tongue was thick for a single gulp of water.

But I was the man with the gun—the only authority in the boat—and I knew this: once the water was gone we’d have nothing to look forward to but death. As long as we could look forward to getting a drink later, there was something to live for. We had to make it last as long as possible. If I’d given in to the curses and growls, if I hadn’t brandished the gun, we’d have emptied the last canteen days ago. By now every man in the boat would be dead.

The men weren’t pulling on the oars. They’d stopped that long ago, too weak to go on. The nine of them facing me were a pack of bearded, ragged, half-naked animals, and I probably looked as bad as the rest. Some sprawled over the gunwales, dozing. The rest watched me as Barrett did, ready to spring the instant I relaxed.

When they weren’t looking at

my face, they looked at the canteen under my legs.

Jeff Barrett was the nearest one. A constant threat. The bosun’s mate was a heavy man, bald, with a scarred and brutal face. He’d been in a hundred fights, and they’d left their marks on him. Barrett had been able to sleep—in fact, he’d slept through most of the night—and I envied him that. His eyes wouldn’t close. They kept watching me, narrow and dangerous.

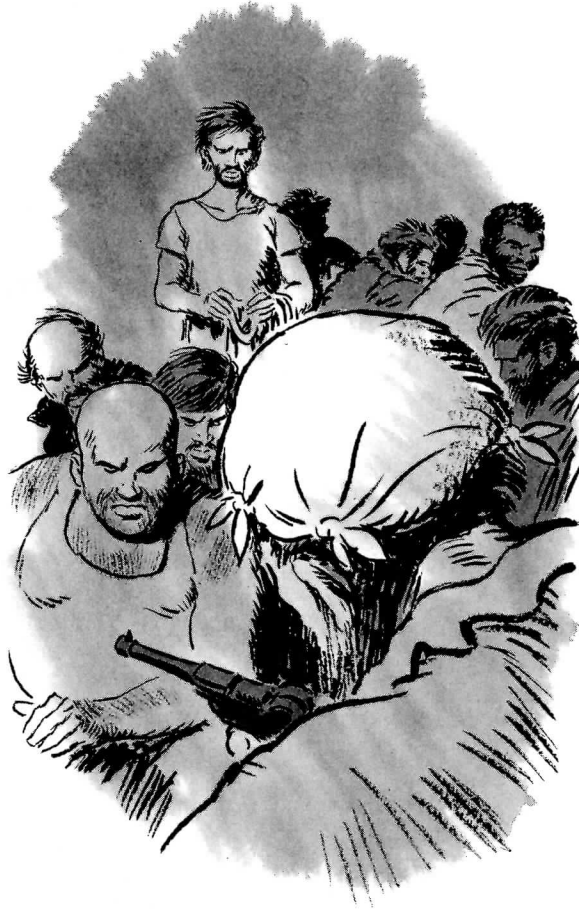
Every now and then he taunted me in that hoarse, broken voice:

“Why don’t you quit? You can’t hold out!”

“Tonight,” I said. “We’ll ration the rest of the water tonight.”

“By tonight some of us’ll be dead! We want it now!”





"Tonight," I said.

Couldn't he understand that, if we waited until night, the few drops wouldn't be sweated out of us so fast? But Barrett was beyond all reasoning. His mind had already cracked with thirst. I saw him begin to rise, a calculating look in his eyes. I aimed the gun at his chest—and he sat down again.

I'd grabbed my Luger on instinct, twenty days ago, just before

running for the lifeboat. Nothing else would have kept Barrett and the rest away from the water.

These fools—couldn't they see I wanted a drink as badly as any of them?

But I was in command here—that was the difference. I was the man with the gun, the man who had to think. Each of the others could afford to think only of himself; I had to think of them all.

Barrett's eyes kept watching me, waiting. I hated him. I hated him all the more because he'd slept. He had that advantage now. He wouldn't keel over.

And long before noon I knew I couldn't fight any more. My eyelids were too heavy to lift. As the boat rose and fell on the long swells, I could feel sleep creeping over me like paralysis. It bent my head. It filled my brain like a cloud. I was going, going. . . .

Barrett stood over me, and I couldn't even lift the gun. In a vague way I could guess what would happen. He'd grab the water first and take his gulp. By that time the others would be screaming and tearing at him, and he'd have to yield the canteen. Well, there was nothing more I could do about it.

I whispered, "Take over, bosun."

Then I fell face down in the bottom of the boat. I was asleep before I stopped moving. . . .

When a hand shook my shoulder, I could hardly raise my head. Jeff Barrett's hoarse voice said, "Here! Take your share o' the water!"

Somehow I propped myself up on my arms, dizzy and weak. I looked at the men, and I thought my eyes were going. Their figures were dim, shadowy; but then I realized it wasn't because of my eyes. It was night. The sea was

black; there were stars overhead. I'd slept the day away.

So we were in our twenty-first night adrift—the night in which the tramp "Groton" finally picked us up—but now, as I turned my head to Barrett, there was no sign of any ship. He knelt beside me, holding out the canteen, his other hand with the gun steady on the men.

I stared at the canteen as if it were a mirage. Hadn't they finished that pint of water this morning? When I looked up at Barrett's ugly





face, it was grim. He must have guessed my thoughts.

"You said, 'Take over, bosun,' didn't you?" he growled. "I been holdin' off these apes all day." He

hefted the Luger in his hand. "When you're boss man," he added, "in command and responsible for the rest—you—you sure get to see things different, don't you?"

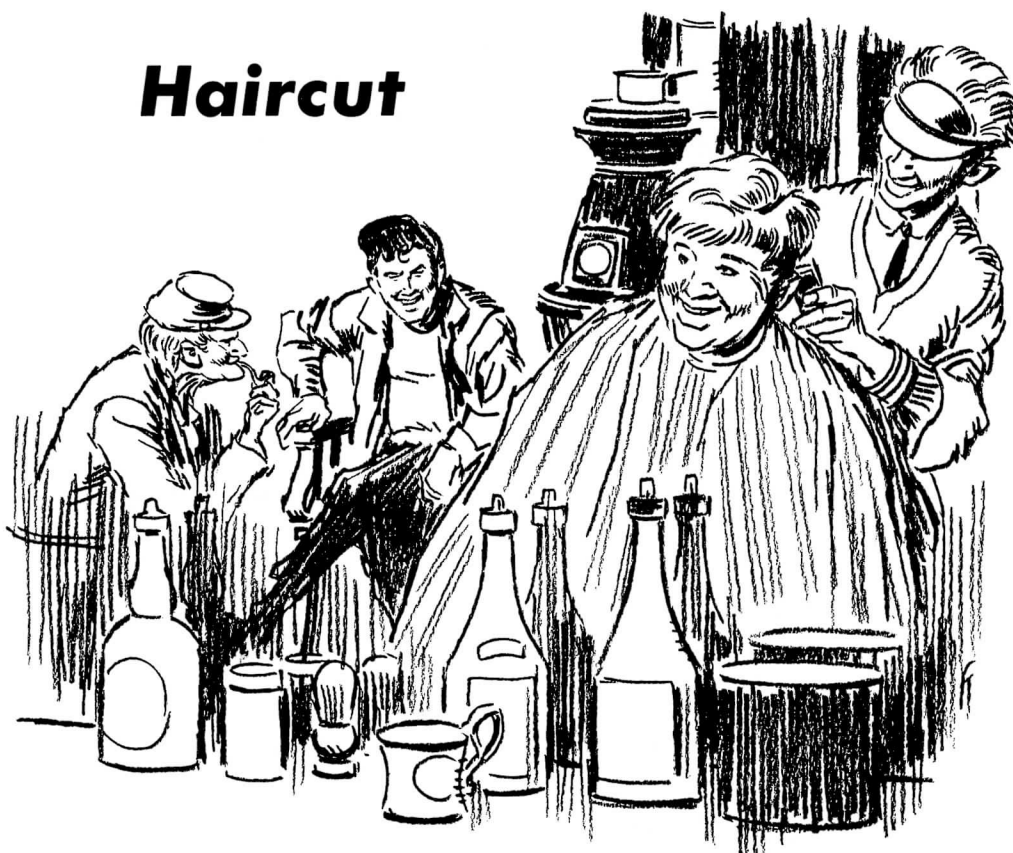
1. "Take Over, Bosun!" takes place
 - (a) on an island
 - (b) in an airplane
 - (c) on a train
 - (d) in a lifeboat
2. When the story begins, the officer in the boat hadn't slept for
 - (a) twelve hours
 - (b) two days
 - (c) three days
 - (d) eighty hours

3. Snyder, the officer, would not give the other nine men the remaining water because
 - (a) he wanted to punish them
 - (b) he liked to see men suffer
 - (c) he knew the water would not be good for them
 - (d) he wanted them to have something to live for
4. The men were in the lifeboat for
 - (a) two weeks
 - (b) three weeks
 - (c) seventy-two hours
 - (d) one night
5. When Snyder said, "Take over, bosun!" Barrett thought Snyder was telling him to
 - (a) take command
 - (b) give everyone water
 - (c) kill the crew
 - (d) row the boat
6. At the end of the story, Barrett had learned
 - (a) how to drink water
 - (b) how to handle a gun
 - (c) how to handle apes
 - (d) what it means to be responsible for others

What Do You Think?

7. What would you have done in Officer Snyder's place? Why?
8. At the end of the story, what did Barrett mean when he said, "When you're boss man, in command and responsible for the rest—you—you sure get to see things different, don't you?"

Haircut



I got another barber that comes from Carterville and helps me out Saturdays, but the rest of the time I can get along all right alone.

9

You're a newcomer, ain't you? I thought I hadn't seen you round before. I hope you like it good enough to stay. We have pretty good times. Not as good, though, since Jim Kendall got killed. When he was alive, him and Hod Meyers used to keep this town in an uproar. I bet they was more laughin' done here than any town its size in America.

Jim was comical, and Hod was pretty near a match for him. Since Jim's gone, Hod tries to hold his end up just the same as ever, but it's tough goin' when you ain't got nobody to kind of work with.

They used to be plenty fun in here Saturdays. This place is jam-packed Saturdays, from four o'clock on. Jim and Hod would show up right after their supper, round six o'clock. Jim would set himself down in that big chair, nearest the blue spittoon. Whoever had been settin' in that chair, why they'd get up

when Jim come in and give it to him.

You'd of thought it was a reserved seat like they have sometimes in a theater. Hod would generally always stand or walk up and down, or some Saturdays, of course, he'd be settin' in this chair part of the time, gettin' a haircut.

Well, Jim would set there a w'ile without openin' his mouth only to spit, and then finally he'd say to me, "Whitey,"—my right name, that is, my right first name, is Dick, but everybody round here calls me Whitey—Jim would say, "Whitey, your nose looks like a rosebud tonight. You must of been drinkin' some of your aw de cologne."

So I'd say, "No, Jim, but you look like you'd been drinkin' somethin' of that kind or somethin' worse."

Jim would have to laugh at that, but then he'd speak up and say, "No, I ain't had nothing to drink, but that ain't saying I wouldn't like somethin'. I wouldn't even mind if it was wood alcohol."

Then Hod Meyers would say, "Neither would your wife." That would set everybody to laughin' because Jim and his wife wasn't on very good terms. She'd of divorced him only they wasn't no chance to get alimony and she didn't have no way to take care of herself and the kids. She couldn't never understand

Jim. He was kind of rough, but a good fella at heart.

Years ago, Jim used to travel for a canned goods concern over in Carterville. They sold canned goods. Jim had the whole northern half of the State and was on the road five days out of every week. He'd drop in here Saturdays and tell his experiences for that week. It was rich.

I guess he paid more attention to playin' jokes than makin' sales. Finally the concern let him out and he came right home here and told everybody he'd been fired instead of sayin' he'd resigned like most fellas would of.

It was a Saturday and the shop was full and Jim got up out of that chair and says, "Gentlemen, I got an important announcement to make. I been fired from my job."

Jim didn't work very steady after he lost his job. What he did earn, doin' odd jobs round town, why he spent pretty near all of it on gin and his family might of starved if the stores hadn't of carried them along.

But I was goin' to tell you about a poor boy we got here in town—Paul Dickson. He fell out of a tree when he was about ten years old. Lit on his head and it done somethin' to him and he ain't never been right. No harm in him, but just silly. Jim Kendall used to call him cuckoo; that's a name Jim had for anybody



that was off their head, only he called people's head their bean. That was another of his gags, calling head bean and callin' crazy people cuckoo. Only poor Paul ain't crazy, but just silly.

You can imagine that Jim used to have all kinds of fun with Paul. He'd send him to the White Front Garage for a left-handed monkey wrench. Of course they ain't no such thing as a left-handed monkey wrench.

They wasn't nothin' in the way of gags that Jim couldn't think up, when he put his mind to it.

Poor Paul was always kind of suspicious of people, maybe on account of how Jim had kept foolin' him. Paul wouldn't have much to

do with anybody only his own mother and Doc Stair and a girl here in town named Julie Gregg. That is, she ain't a girl no more but pretty near thirty or over.

But I was goin' to tell you about Julie Gregg. Old Man Gregg was in the lumber business, but got to drinkin' and lost the most of his money and when he died, he didn't leave nothin' but the house and just enough insurance for the girl to skimp along on.

Her mother was a kind of a half invalid and didn't hardly ever leave the house. Julie wanted to sell the place and move somewheres else after the old man died, but the mother said she was born here and would die here. It was tough on Julie, as the young people round this town—well, she's too good for them.

One day I took my wife to Doc Stair's office for an examination. While I was waitin' for her in the reception room, in come Julie Gregg. He left my old lady inside and come out to the front office and that's the first time him and Julie met and I guess it was what they call love at first sight. But it wasn't fifty-fifty. She went wild over him but to him she was just a young lady that wanted to see the doctor.

She'd come on about the same business I had. She'd heard they was a new doc in town and decided

to give him a try. He promised to call and see her that same day.

I said a minute ago that it was love at first sight on her part. I'm not only judgin' by how she acted afterwards but how she looked at him that first day in his office. I ain't no mind reader, but it was wrote all over her face that she was gone.

Now Jim Kendall, besides bein' a jokesmith and a pretty good drinker, well, Jim was quite a lady-killer. I guess he run pretty wild durin' the time he was on the road for them Carterville people, and besides that, he'd had a couple little affairs of the heart right here in town. Like I told you, his wife could of divorced him, only she couldn't.

But Jim was like the majority of men, and women, too, I guess. He wanted what he couldn't get. He wanted Julie Gregg and worked his head off tryin' to land her. Only he'd of said bean instead of head.

Well, Jim's habits and his jokes didn't appeal to Julie and of course he was a married man, so he didn't have no more chance than, well, than a rabbit. That's an expression of Jim's himself. When somebody didn't have no chance to get elected or somethin', Jim would always say they didn't have no more chance than a rabbit.



He didn't make no bones about how he felt. Right in here, more than once, in front of the whole crowd, he said he was stuck on Julie and anybody that could get her for him was welcome to his house and his wife and kids included. But she wouldn't have nothin' to do with him; wouldn't even speak to him on the street. He finally seen he wasn't gettin' nowheres with his usual line so he decided to try the rough stuff. He went right up to her house one evenin' and when she opened the door he forced his way in and grabbed her. But she broke loose and before he could stop her, she run in the next room and locked the door and phoned to Joe Barnes. Joe's the marshal. Jim could hear

who she was phonin' to and he beat it before Joe got there.

Joe was an old friend of Julie's pa. Joe went to Jim the next day and told him what would happen if he ever done it again.

Meanw'ile everybody in town was wise to Julie's bein' wild mad over the Doc. I don't suppose she had any idea how her face changed when him and her was together; of course she couldn't of, or she'd of kept away from him. And she didn't know that we was all noticin' how many times she made excuses to go up to his office or pass it on the other side of the street and look up in his window to see if he was there. I felt sorry for her and so did most other people.

Hod Meyers kept rubbin' it into Jim about how the Doc had cut him out. Jim didn't pay no attention to the kiddin' and you could see he was plannin' one of his jokes.

One trick Jim had was the knack of changin' his voice. He could make you think he was a girl talkin' and he could mimic any man's voice. So, Jim waited till he had Doc Stair's voice down pat; then he went after revenge.

He called Julie up on a night when he knew Doc was over in Carterville. She never questioned but what it was Doc's voice. Jim said he must see her that night; he couldn't wait no longer to tell her

somethin'. She was all excited and told him to come to the house. But he said he was expectin' an important long-distance call and wouldn't she please forget her manners for once and come to his office. He said that couldn't nothin' hurt her and nobody would see her and he just must talk to her a little w'ile. Well, poor Julie fell for it.

Doc always kept a night light in his office, so it looked to Julie like they was somebody there.

Meanw'ile Jim Kendall had went to Wright's poolroom, where they was a whole gang amusin' themselves. The most of them had drank plenty of gin, and they was a rough bunch even when sober. They was always strong for Jim's jokes and when he told them to come with him and see some fun they give up their card games and pool games and followed along.

Doc's office is on the second floor. Right outside his door they's a flight of stairs leadin' to the floor above. Jim and his gang hid in the dark behind these stairs, waitin' for the fun to start.

Well, Julie comes up to Doc's door and rung the bell and they was nothin' doin'. She rung it again and she rung it seven or eight times. Then she tried the door and found it locked. Then Jim made some kind of a noise and she heard it and waited a minute, and then she

says, "Is that you, Ralph?" Ralph is Doc's first name.

They was no answer and it must of come to her all of a sudden that she'd been bunked. She pretty near fell downstairs and the whole gang after her. They chased her all the way home, hollerin', "Is that you, Ralph?" and "Oh, Ralphie, dear, is that you?" Jim says he couldn't holler it himself, as he was laughin' too hard.

Poor Julie! She didn't show up here on Main Street for a long, long time afterward.

And of course Jim and his gang told everybody in town, everybody but Doc Stair. They was scared to

tell him, and he might of never knowed only for Paul Dickson. The poor cuckoo, as Jim called him, he was here in the shop one night when Jim was still gloatin' yet over what he'd done to Julie. And Paul took in as much of it as he could understand and he run to Doc with the story.

It's a cinch Doc went up in the air and swore he'd make Jim suffer. But it was a kind of delicate thing, because if it got out that he had beat Jim up, Julie was bound to hear of it and then she'd know that Doc knew and of course knowin' that he knew would make it worse for her than ever.



Well, it was a couple days later when Jim was here in the shop again, and so was the cuckoo. Jim was goin' duck-shootin' the next day and had come in lookin' for Hod Meyers to go with him. I happened to know that Hod had went over to Carterville and wouldn't be home till the end of the week. So Jim said he hated to go alone and he guessed he would call it off. Then poor Paul spoke up and said if Jim would take him he would go along. Jim thought a w'ile and then he said, well, well, he guessed a half-wit was better than nothin'.

I suppose he was plottin' to get Paul out in the boat and play some joke on him, like pushin' him in the water. Anyways, he said Paul could

go. He asked him had he ever shot a duck and Paul said no, he'd never even had a gun in his hands. So Jim said he could set in the boat and watch him and if he behaved himself he might lend him his gun for a couple of shots. They made a date to meet in the mornin' and that's the last I seen of Jim alive.

Next mornin', I hadn't been open more than ten minutes when Doc Stair come in. He looked kind of nervous. He asked me had I seen Paul Dickson. I said no, but I knew where he was, out duck-shootin' with Jim Kendall. So Doc says that's what he had heard, and he couldn't understand it because Paul had told him he wouldn't never have no more to do with Jim as long as he lived.

He said Paul had told him about the joke Jim had played on Julie. He said Paul had asked him what he thought of the joke and the Doc had told him that anybody that would do a thing like that ought not to be let live.

I said it had been a kind of a raw thing, but Jim just couldn't resist no kind of a joke, no matter how raw. I said I thought he was all right at heart, but just bubblin' over with mischief. Doc turned and walked out.

At noon he got a phone call from old John Scott. The lake where Jim



and Paul had been shootin' is on John's place. Paul had come runnin' up to the house a few minutes before and said they'd been an accident. Jim had shot a few ducks and then give the gun to Paul and told him to try his luck. Paul hadn't never handled a gun and he was nervous. He was shakin' so hard that he couldn't control the gun. He let fire and Jim sunk back in the boat, dead.

Doc Stair, bein' the coroner, jumped in Frank Abbott's flivver and rushed to Scott's farm. Paul and old John was down on the shore of the lake. Paul had rowed the boat to shore, but they'd left

the body in it, waitin' for Doc to come.

Doc examined the body and said they might as well fetch it back to town. They was no use leavin' it there or callin' a jury, as it was a plain case of accidental shootin'.

Personally I wouldn't never leave a person shoot a gun in the same boat I was in unless I was sure they knew somethin' about guns. Jim was a sucker to leave a new beginner have his gun, let alone a half-wit. It probably served Jim right, what he got. But still we miss him round here. He certainly was a card!

Comb it wet or dry?

1. At one time, Jim Kendall was
 - (a) a salesman
 - (b) a clerk
 - (c) a truck driver
 - (d) a barber

2. Julie Gregg
 - (a) was in the lumber business
 - (b) was an old woman
 - (c) loved Doc Stair
 - (d) liked Jim Kendall

3. Jim Kendall went duck shooting with
 - (a) Julie
 - (b) Doc Stair
 - (c) the barber
 - (d) Paul Dickson

4. Jim Kendall played a trick on
 - (a) Julie
 - (b) Doc
 - (c) the barber
 - (d) no one
5. Paul probably did not like Jim Kendall because
 - (a) Paul was crazy
 - (b) Kendall played a trick on Julie Gregg
 - (c) Jim Kendall's wife was mean
 - (d) the barber liked Kendall but not Paul
6. The barber's nickname is
 - (a) Jim
 - (b) Doc
 - (c) cuckoo
 - (d) Whitey

What Do You Think?

7. Do you think Paul killed Jim purposely? Why? Or why not?
8. How do you think Julie, Doc Stair, and Paul felt about Jim Kendall's death?

THE Switzers were running around to get Daisy ready by the time that Elmer Kruse should get through in town. They had known all week that Elmer might be in for her any-day. But they hadn't done a thing until he appeared. "Oh, it was so rainy today, the roads were so muddy, they hadn't thought he'd get in until maybe next week." It would have been the same any other day.

Mrs. Switzer was trying now at the last moment to get all of Daisy's things into the battered suitcase that lay on the bed. The bed had not "got made." Just as soon as Daisy was gone, Mrs. Switzer would have to hurry off to the Woodworths, where she was to clean to-day. . . . They all slept in this room—Mrs. Switzer and Dwight in the bed, the two girls in the cot against the wall.

"Mama, I can't find the belt to that plaid dress."

"Oh, ain't it somewheres around? Well, I guess you'll have to let it go. If I come across it I can send it out to you. Someone'll be going past there."

She had meant to get Daisy all mended and "fixed up" before she went out to the country. But somehow . . . oh, there was always so much to see to when she came home. Gone all day, washing and cleaning for other people; it didn't

A Start In Life



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leave her much time for her own home.

"What's become of all your underclothes? They ain't all dirty, are they?"

"They are, too. You didn't wash for us last week, mama."

"Well, you'll just have to take along what you've got. Maybe there'll be some way of getting the rest to you."

"Kruses come in every week, don't they?" Daisy asked.

"Yes, but maybe they won't always be bringing you in.

"Daisy, you get yourself ready now."

"I am ready, mama, I want to put on my other ribbon."



"Oh, that's 'way down in your suitcase somewhere. You needn't be so anxious to fix yourself up. This ain't like going visiting."

Daisy was so proud. She thought it was quite a thing to be "starting in to earn." She thought she could buy herself so much with her dollar and a half a week. The other children stood back watching her, round-eyed and impressed. They wished they were going away, like Daisy.

They heard a car come splashing through the mud on low. "There he is back! Have you got your things on? Goldie—go out and tell him she's coming.

"Well, I guess you'll have to go now. He won't want to wait. I'll try and send you out what you ain't got with you." She turned to Daisy. Her face was working. There was nothing else to do, as everyone said. Daisy would have to help, and she might as well learn it now. Only, she hated to see Daisy go off, to have her starting in. She knew what it meant. "Well—you try and work good this summer, so they'll want you to stay. I hope they'll bring you in sometimes."

Daisy's homely little face grew pale suddenly, at the sight of her mother crying. They went out to the car.

"I guess you'll bring her in with you some time when you're com-

ing," Mrs. Switzer said, when they go to the car.

"Sure. We'll bring her."

He started the engine. It roared, half died down as the wheels of the car spun in the thick wet mud.

The car went off slipping on the wet clay. She waved frantically, suddenly understanding that she was leaving them. They waved at her.

Mrs. Switzer stood there a little while. Then came the harsh rasp of the old black iron pump that stood out under the tree. She was pumping water to leave for the children before she went off to work.

Daisy looked at Elmer's back, the old hat crammed down on his head, the back of his neck with the golden hair on the sunburned skin above the blue of his shirt collar. Strong and easy and slouched a little over the steering wheel that he handled so masterly. Elmer and Edna were just young folks; but people said that they had more to start with than most young farmers did. Daisy felt that the pride of this belonged to her too, now.

"Here we are!"

"Oh, is this where you folks live?" Daisy cried eagerly.

The house stood back from the road, beyond a space of bare yard with a little scattering of grass just starting—small, modern, painted a bright new white and yellow. The

barn was new, too. There were no trees. A raw, lonely wind blew across the back yard as they drove up beside the back door.

Edna had come out on the step. She said kindly enough:

"Well, you brought Daisy. Hello, Daisy, are you going to stay with us this summer?"

"I guess so," Daisy said importantly. But she suddenly felt a little shy as she got out of the car. She stood on the bare ground in the chilly wind.

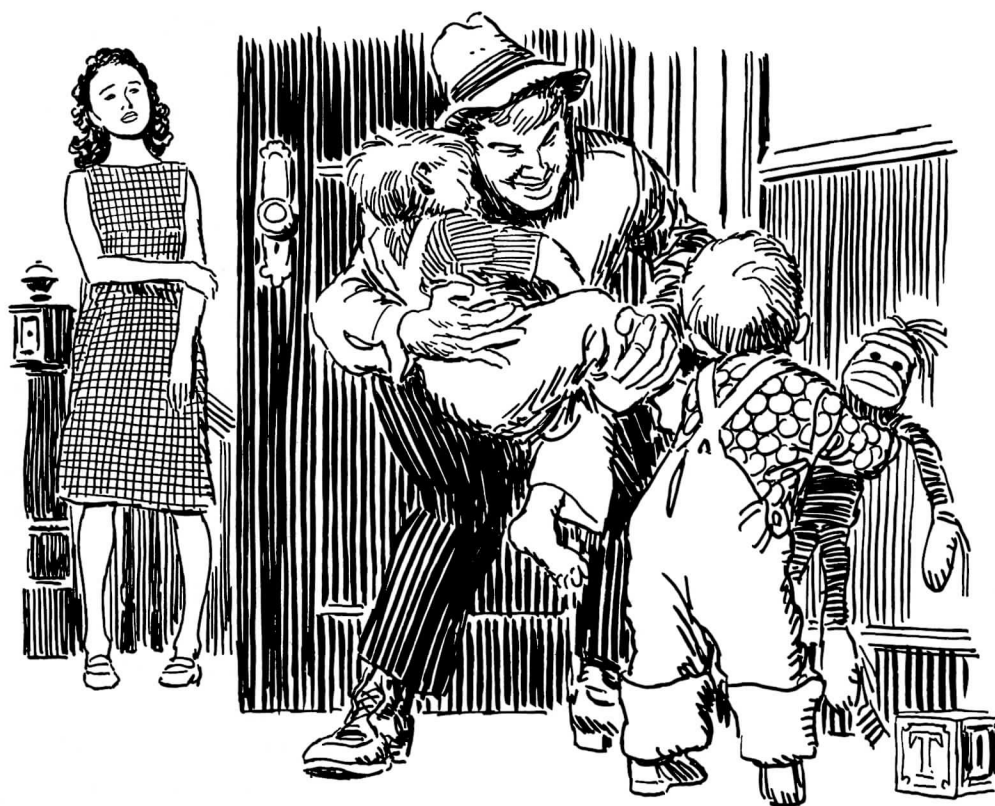
"Yes, I brought her along," Elmer said.

There was a cry of "Daddy, daddy!" Elmer grinned. "Who's this? What you shoutin' 'daddy' for? You don't think daddy's got anything for you, do you?"

Daisy stood, a little left out and alone. Billy, the older of the two babies, climbed all over Elmer, demanding candy. The little one toddled smilingly about.

Edna said absently, "You can go up with Elmer and take off your things, Daisy. You can stop and unpack your suitcase now, I guess, if you'd like to. Then you can come down and help me in the kitchen. You know we got you to help me," she reminded.

Daisy followed Elmer up the bright new stairs. In the upper hall, two strips of very clean rag rug were laid over the shining yellow of



the floor. Elmer had put her suitcase in one of the bedrooms.

"There you are!"

She looked about her room. She had a bed all her own—a small, old-fashioned bed, left from some old furnishings, that had been put in this room that had the pipes and the hot water tank. She had to see everything. She tiptoed about, started to open the drawers of the dresser, looked out of her window. She put her coat and hat on the bed.

Later Elmer came into the house for dinner.

"Now, we're ready for dinner, Daisy, we'll have to hurry. You must help me get on the dinner. You can cut bread and get things on the table. You must help me get on the dinner. That's what you are supposed to do."

Daisy looked startled, a little scared and resentful. "Well, I don't know where you keep your bread."

"Don't you remember where I told you to put it this morning? Right over in the cabinet, in that big box. You must watch, Daisy, and learn where things are."

Elmer, a little embarrassed at the

look that Edna gave him, whistled as he began to wash his hands at the sink.

"How's daddy's old boy?" he said loudly, giving a poke at the baby's chin.

As Edna passed him, she shook her head and her lips just formed, "Been like that all morning!"

Little by little Daisy started to feel a queer difference between the position of herself and of Edna's two babies, a faint idea of what mama had meant when she had said that this would not be visiting.

"I guess I'm going to have the toothache again," she said faintly.

No one seemed to hear her.

Edna whisked off the potatoes, drained the water. "You might bring me a dish, Daisy." Daisy searched a long time while Edna turned impatiently and pointed. Edna put the rest of the things on the table herself. Her young, fresh capable mouth was tightly closed, and she was making certain resolutions.

Daisy stood hesitating in the middle of the room, a scrawny, unappealing little figure. Billy, the baby—fat, blond, in funny dark blue union-alls—was trotting busily about the kitchen. Daisy swooped down upon him and tried to bring him to the table. He set up a howl. Edna turned, looked astonished, severe.

"I was trying to make him come to the table," Daisy explained weakly.

"You scared him. He isn't used to you. He doesn't like it. Don't cry, Billy. The girl didn't mean anything."

"Here, daddy'll put him in his place," Elmer said quickly.

Billy looked over his father's shoulder at Daisy with tearful, resentful blue eyes. She did not understand it, and felt strangely at a loss. She had been left with Goldie and Dwight so often. She had always made Dwight go to the table. She had been the boss.

Edna said in a cool, held-in voice, "Put these things on the table, Daisy."

When Daisy had finished the supper dishes she went into the dining room where Edna was sewing on the baby's pants. Edna went on sewing. Daisy sat down disconsolately. A queer low ache went all through her. She said in a small voice:

"I guess I got the toothache again."

Edna bit off a thread.

"I had it awful hard awhile ago. Mama come pretty near taking me to the dentist."

"That's too bad," Edna murmured politely. But she offered no other condolence. She gave a little secret smile at the baby asleep on

a blanket and a pillow in one corner of the couch.

"Is Elmer going to drive into town tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow? I don't suppose so."

"Mama couldn't find the belt of my plaid dress and I thought if he was, maybe I could go along and get it. I'd like to have it."

Daisy's homely mouth drooped to the corners. Her toothache did not seem to matter to anyone. Edna did not seem to want to see that anything was wrong with her. She had expected Edna to be concerned. But it wasn't toothache, that strange lonesome ache all over her. Maybe she was going to be terribly sick. Mama wouldn't come home for supper to be told about it.

She saw mama's face as in that last glimpse of it—drawn with crying, and yet trying to smile, under the old cleaning cap, her hand holding her coat together.

Edna glanced quickly at her. The child was so ugly. Edna frowned a little, but said kindly:

"Now you might take Billy into the kitchen out of my way, Daisy, and amuse him."

"Well, he cries when I pick him up," Daisy said faintly.

"He won't cry this time. Take him out and help him play with his blocks. You must help me with the children, you know."

"Well, if he'll go with me."

"He'll go with you, won't he, Billy boy? Won't you go with Daisy, sweetheart?"

Billy stared and then nodded. Daisy felt a thrill of comfort as Billy put his little fat hand in hers and trotted into the kitchen beside her. He had the fattest hands, she thought. Edna brought the blocks and put the box down on the floor beside Daisy.

"Now, see if you can amuse him so that I can get my sewing done."

"Shall you and me play blocks, Billy?" Daisy said.

He nodded. Then he got hold of the box with one hand, tipped out all the blocks on the floor with a bang and a rattle, and looked at her with a pleased proud smile.

"Oh no, Billy. You mustn't spill out the blocks. Look, you're too little to play with them. No, now—now wait! Let Daisy show you. Daisy'll build you something real nice—shall she?"

Daisy set out the blocks on the bright linoleum. She had never had such blocks as these to handle before. Dwight's were only a few old, unmatched broken ones. Her spirit of leadership came back, and she firmly put away that fat hand of Billy's whenever he fooled with her building. She could make something really wonderful with these blocks.

"No, Billy, you mustn't. See,

when Daisy's got it all done, then you can see the lovely building."

She put the blocks together with great interest. She knew what she was going to make—it was going to be a new house; no, a new church. Just as she got the walls up, in came that little hand again, and then with a delighted smile Billy swept the blocks to the floor. Then he sat back.

"Oh, Billy—you mustn't, the building wasn't done! Look, you've spoiled it. Now, you've got to sit 'way off here while I try to build it over again."

Billy then set up a tremendous howl. He had never been set aside like that before. Edna came hurrying out. Daisy looked at Edna for justification.

"Billy knocked over the blocks. He spoiled the building."

"Wah! Wah!" Billy gave loud heartbroken sobs. The tears ran down his fat cheeks. He held out his arms toward his mother.

"I didn't hurt him," Daisy said, scared.

"Never mind, lover," Edna was crooning. "Of course he can play with his blocks. They're Billy's blocks, Daisy," she said. "He doesn't like to sit and see you put up buildings. He wants to play, too. See, you've made him cry now."

"Do' wanna stay here," Billy cried.



"Well, come in with mother then." She picked him up, wiping his tears.

"I didn't hurt him," Daisy said.

"Well, never mind now. You can pick up the blocks and then sweep up the floor, Daisy. You didn't do that when you finished the dishes. Never mind," she was saying to Billy. "Pretty soon daddy'll come in and we'll have a nice ride."

Daisy soberly picked up the blocks and got the broom. What had she done to Billy? He had tried to spoil her building. She had always made Dwight keep back until she had finished. Of course it was Daisy, the oldest, who should lead and manage. There had been no

one to hear her side. Everything was different. She winked back tears as she swept, poorly and carelessly.

Then she brightened up as Elmer came tramping up on the back porch and then through the kitchen.

"Edna!"

"She's in there," Daisy offered.

"Want to go now? What? Is the baby asleep?" he asked blankly.

Edna gave him a warning look and the door was closed.

Daisy listened hard. She swept very softly. She could catch only a little of what they said—"Kind of hate to go off . . . I know, but if we once start . . . not a thing all day . . . what we got her for. . . ." She didn't understand. She hurried and put away the broom. She wanted to be sure and be ready to go.

Elmer walked out, straight past her. She saw from the window that he was backing the car out from the shed. She could hear Edna and Billy upstairs, could hear the baby cry a little as he was wakened. Maybe she ought to go out and get her coat, too.

Elmer honked the horn. A moment later Edna came hurrying downstairs, in her hat and coat, and Billy in a knitted cap and a red sweater. The baby had on his little coat, too.

Edna called out, "Come in and get this boy, daddy." She did not

look at Daisy, but said hurriedly, "We're going for a little ride, Daisy. Have you finished the sweeping? Well, then, you can pick up those pieces in the dining room. We won't be gone so very long. When it's a quarter past five, you start the fire, like I showed you this noon, and slice the potatoes that were left, and the meat. And set the table."

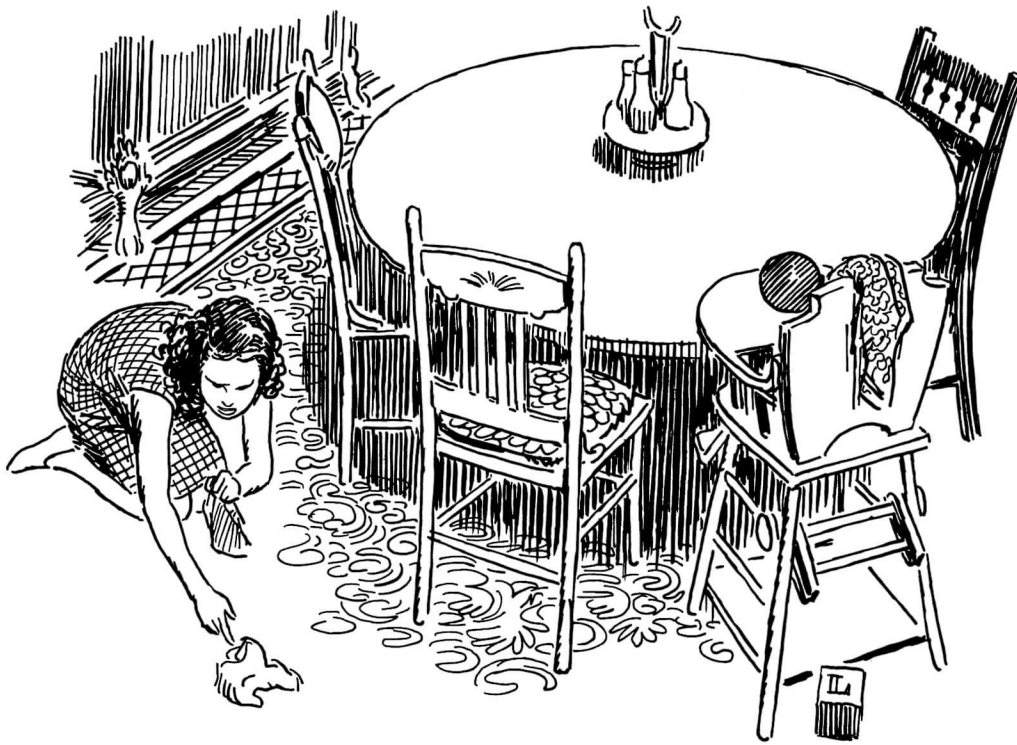
The horn was honked again.

"Yes! Well, we'll be back, Daisy. Come, lover. Daddy's in a hurry."

Daisy stood looking after them. Billy wanted to sit beside his daddy. Edna took the baby from Elmer and put him beside her on the back seat. There was room—half of the big back seat. There wasn't anything, really, to be done at home. That was the worst of it. They just didn't want to take her. They all belonged together. They didn't want to take anyone else along. She was an outsider. They all—even the baby—had a freshened look of expectancy.

The engine roared—they had started; slipping on the mud of the drive, then going straight ahead, around the turn, out of sight.

She went sadly into the dining room. The light from the windows was dim now in the rainy, late afternoon. The pink pieces from the baby's clothes were scattered over the gay rug. She got down on



her hands and knees, slowly picking them up, sniffing a little. The clock in the kitchen ticked loudly.

That dreadful ache came back. No one would ask about it. No one would try to comfort her. Before, there had always been mama coming home. Scolding sometimes, but worried over them if they didn't feel right, caring about them. Mama and Goldie and Dwight

cared about her—but she was away out in the country, and they were at home. She didn't want to stay here, where she didn't belong. But mama had told her that she must begin helping this summer.

She started to cry; then she wept. But silent weeping, without any tears. She already had the cold knowledge that no one would notice or comfort her.

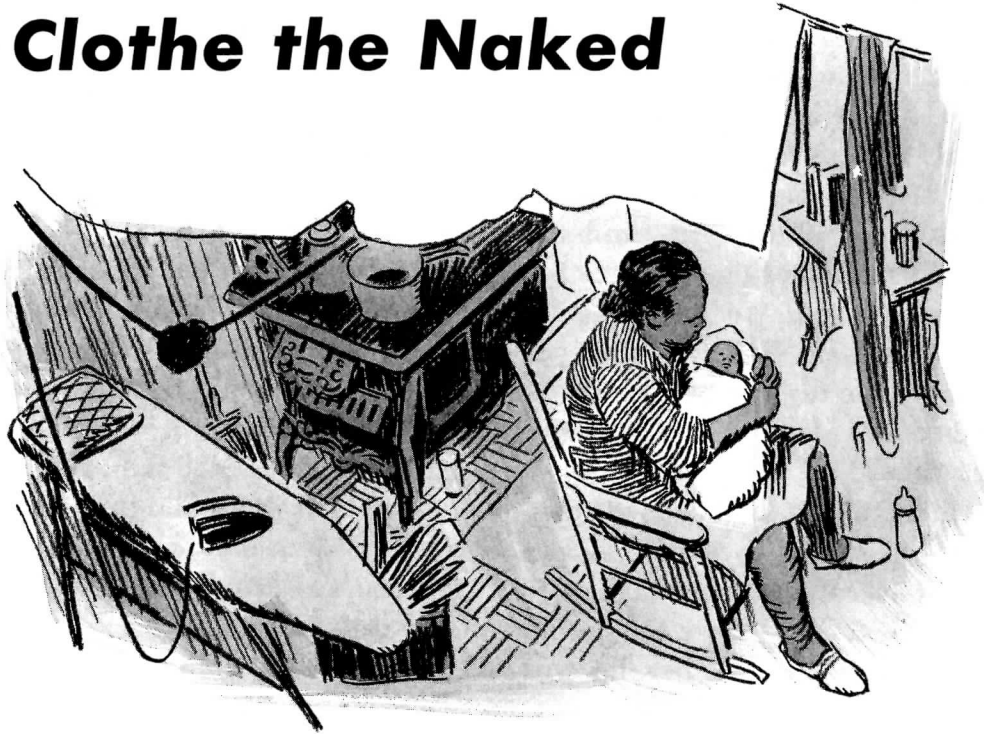
1. Daisy's mother, Mrs. Switzer, is
 - (a) a clerk
 - (b) a model
 - (c) a cleaning woman
 - (d) a dressmaker

2. The story takes place in the
 - (a) late summer
 - (b) late spring
 - (c) fall
 - (d) winter
3. The name of the Kruse's baby is
 - (a) Daisy
 - (b) Billy
 - (c) Elmer
 - (d) Goldie
4. When Elmer and Edna went for their car ride,
 - (a) Billy was left behind
 - (b) Daisy was told she was to take care of Billy
 - (c) Daisy was left alone
 - (d) Daisy was also taken along
5. At the end of the story, Daisy cried because she knew
 - (a) Elmer and Edna hated her
 - (b) Elmer and Edna were going to get rid of her
 - (c) Elmer and Edna didn't care about her in the same way her mother did
 - (d) Billy didn't like her
6. What kind of family background did Daisy come from?
 - (a) poor
 - (b) middle class
 - (c) rich
 - (d) impossible to say

What Do You Think?

7. In the course of the story, Daisy referred to her toothache several times. Why do you think she did that?
8. What is Daisy's "start in life"?

Clothe the Naked



BIG Lannie went out by the day to the houses of rich ladies to iron their clothes. She did her work perfectly; some of the ladies even told her so. She was a Negro, a big woman, who was slow because of her size, and because the big veins in her legs hurt her, and her back ached much of the time.

Many things happened to her. She had had children, and the children had died. So had her husband. He was a kind man, cheerful with the little luck he found. None of their children had died at birth. They had lived to be four or seven

or ten. They had had their ways and their means of causing love; and Big Lannie's heart was always wide for love. One child had been killed in a street accident. Two others had died of illnesses that might have been mild, had there been fresh food and clear spaces and clean air behind them. Only Arlene, the youngest, lived to grow up.

Arlene was a tall girl, not as dark as her mother. She was so thin that her bones seemed to go ahead of her body. Her little pipes of legs and her broad feet were like things a child draws with crayons. She

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carried her head low and her shoulders scooped around her chest.

Big Lannie did not know it, when Arlene was going to have a baby. Arlene had not been home in nearly half a year; Big Lannie told the time in days. There was no news at all of the girl until the people at the hospital sent for Big Lannie to come to her daughter and grandson. She was there to hear Arlene say the baby must be named Raymond, and to see the girl die.

He was a long, light-colored baby, with big, milky eyes that looked right back at his grandmother. It was several days before the people at the hospital told her he was blind.

Big Lannie went to each of the ladies she worked for and said that she could not work for some while. She must take care of her grandson. The ladies were angry but said nothing. Each thought she had been too good to Big Lannie, and said so to herself. "Honestly, those people!" each said to her friends. "They're all alike."

Big Lannie sold most of the things she lived with, and took one room with a stove in it. There, as soon as the people at the hospital would let her, she brought Raymond and took care of him. He was all her children to her.

When Lannie started looking for

work the neighbors across the hall watched over Raymond and he was no trouble to them.

Raymond did not know about anything but good. When he grew big enough to go alone down the stairs and into the street, he was certain of fun each day. He held his head high, as he came out into the little yard in front of the flimsy wooden house, and slowly turned his face from side to side. Trucks and wagons did not come to the street, which ended in a dump for rusted bedsprings and broken boilers. Children played and men and women sat talking in open windows and called across to one another in gay, rich voices. There was always laughter for Raymond to hear. He would laugh back, and hold out his hands to it.

At first the children stopped their play when he came out. They gathered quietly about him, and watched him. They had been told he was blind. Some of them spoke to him, in soft, careful tones. Raymond would laugh with pleasure, and stretch his hands out to their voices. They would draw back, afraid that his strange hands might touch them. Then, somehow ashamed because they had stepped back from him and he could not see that they had done so, they said gentle good-bys to him. Then they backed away into the street again.

When they were gone, Raymond would start on his walk to the end of the street. He guided himself lightly touching the broken fences along the dirt sidewalk. As he walked he sang little songs with no words to them. Some of the men and women at the windows would call hello to him. He would call back and wave and smile. When the children laughed again at their games, he stopped and turned to the sound as if it were the sun.

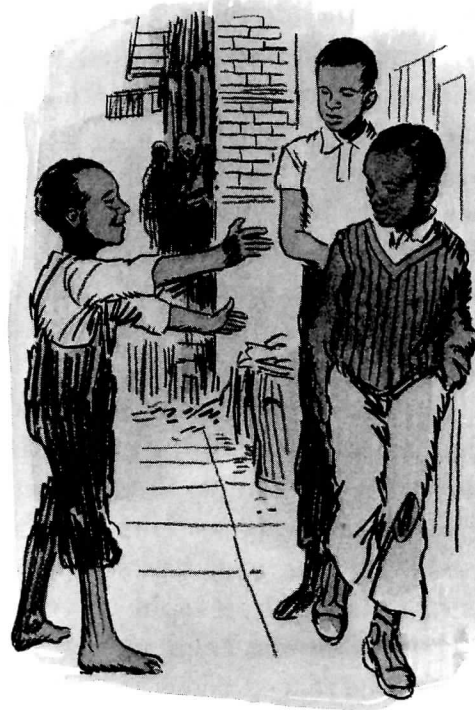
In the evening, he would tell Big Lannie about his walk, laughing at the memory of the laughter he had heard. When the weather was too hard for him to go out in the street, he would sit and talk all day of going out the next day.

The neighbors did what they could for Raymond and Big Lannie. They gave Raymond clothes their own children had not yet worn out. They brought food. Big Lannie would get through a week, and would pray to get through the next one; and so the months went. Then she couldn't find work any longer.

It was Mrs. Ewing who saved Raymond's and Big Lannie's lives. Big Lannie said that then and ever after daily she blessed Mrs. Ewing.

Mrs. Ewing was an important person in the town.

Back before Raymond was born, Big Lannie had worked for Mrs. Ewing. Mrs. Ewing took Big Lannie



back into her employment. She apologized for this step to her friends. She knew she was a fool, she said, after all that time, and after the way that Big Lannie had treated her. But still, she said, and she laughed a little at her own ways. Anyone she felt kind of sorry for could always get around her, she said. She knew it was awful foolish, but that, she said, was the way she was. Mr. Ewing, she said, always called her just a regular little old easy mark.

Two days' work in the week meant money for rent and stove-wood and almost enough food for

Raymond and Big Lannie. She must depend, for anything further, on whatever odd jobs she could find, and she must not stop seeking them.

Raymond grew so fast that he seemed to be taller each morning. Every day he had his walk in the street to look forward to and experience and tell Big Lannie about at night.

But a winter came, and Raymond had not any clothes to wear out in the street. Big Lannie fixed his outgrown garments as long as she could. But the stuff had so rotted with wear that it split in new places when she tried to sew together the ragged edges of cloth.

The neighbors could give no longer; all they had they must keep for their own.

All winter, Raymond stayed indoors. He sat with Big Lannie's old sweater about his shoulders. He lived, at his age, in the past; in the days when he had walked, proud and glad, in the street, with laughter in his ears. Always, when he talked of it, he must laugh back at that laughter.

Since he could remember, he had not been allowed to go out when Big Lannie thought the weather was bad. But then one day it was spring, so surely that he could tell it even in the smoky, stinking rooms of the house. He cried out

with joy because now he might walk in the street again. Big Lannie had to explain to him that his rags were too thin to shield him. There were no odd jobs for her, and so no clothes and shoes for him. So Raymond did not talk about the street any more.

Now Big Lannie did something she had never done before. She begged of her employer. She asked Mrs. Ewing to give her some of Mr. Ewing's old clothes for Raymond. She looked at the floor and mumbled so that Mrs. Ewing asked her to talk up. When Mrs. Ewing understood, she was, she said, surprised. She had, she said, a great, great many demands on her charity. She would have thought that Big Lannie, of all people, might have known that she did everything she could, in fact, a good deal more. She said that if she found she could spare anything, Big Lannie should remember it was to be just for this once.

When Big Lannie was leaving at the end of her day's work, Mrs. Ewing brought her a package with her own hands. There, she said, was a suit and a pair of shoes. They were beautiful, grand things that people would think she was just crazy to be giving away like that. She simply didn't know, she said, what Mr. Ewing would say to her for being so crazy. She explained

that that was the way she was when anyone got around her. All the while Big Lannie was trying to thank her.

Big Lannie had never before seen Raymond act as he did when she brought him home the package. He jumped and danced. He clapped his hands. He tried to squeak and squealed instead. He tore off the paper himself, and ran his fingers over the close-woven cloth and held it to his face and kissed it. He put on the shoes and clattered about in them, digging with his toes and heels to keep them on. He made Big Lannie pin the trousers around his waist and roll them up over his shins. He talked about the next day when he would walk in the street, and could not say his words for laughing.

Big Lannie must work for Mrs. Ewing the next day. He might go out at noon next day, she said, when the sun was so warm that he would not take cold at his first outing. One of the neighbors across the hall would help him with the clothes. Raymond laughed and sang his little songs until he went to sleep.

After Big Lannie left in the morning, the neighbor came into Raymond, bringing a pan of cold pork and corn bread for his lunch. She had a call for a half-day's work and she could not stay to see him



start out for his walk. She helped him put on the trousers and pinned and rolled them for him. She laced the shoes as snug as they would go on his feet. Then she told him not to go out till the noon whistles blew, and kissed him, and left.

Raymond was happy. He sat and thought of the street and smiled and sang. Not until he heard the whistles did he go to the drawer where Big Lannie had laid the coat, and take it out and put it on. He felt it soft on his bare back. He twisted his shoulders to let it fall warm and loose from them. As he folded the sleeves back over his thin arms, his heart beat so that the cloth above it moved.

The stairs were difficult for him

to manage, in the big shoes, but the very slowness of it all was delicious to him. His anticipation was like honey in his mouth.

Then he came out into the yard, and turned his face in the gentle



air. It was all good again. It was all given back again. As quickly as he could, he gained the walk and set forth, guiding himself by the fence. He could not wait. He called out, so that he would hear gay calls in return. He laughed so that laughter would answer him.

He heard it. He was so glad that he took his hand from the fence and turned and stretched out his arms and held up his smiling face to welcome it. He stood there, and his smile died on his face, and his welcoming arms stiffened and shook.

It was not the laughter he had known. It was not the laughter he had lived on. It felt like big sharp points tearing the flesh from his bones. It stopped for a moment and then struck him again. The sound was all around him and he could not breathe. It seemed to be swallowing him. He screamed and tried to run, and fell. The sound howled higher around him. Each time he could rise, he fell again. It was as if the street were perpendicular before him, and the laughter leaping at his back. He could not find the fence, he did not know which way he was turned. He lay screaming, in blood and dust and darkness.

When Big Lannie came home, she found him on the floor in a corner of the room crying and whimpering. He still wore his new clothes, cut and torn and dusty,

and there was dried blood on his mouth and his palms. She cried out and asked what had happened. She could not understand what he said; it was something about the street, and laughing at him, and make them go away, and don't let him go in the street no more. She did not try to make him explain. She took him in her arms and rocked him, and told him, over and over, never

mind, don't care, everything's all right. Neither he nor she believed her words.

But her voice was soft and her arms warm. Raymond's sobs softened, and trembled away. She held him, rocking silently and rhythmically, a long time. Then gently she set him on his feet, and took from his shoulders Mr. Ewing's old full-dress coat.

1. Big Lannie was Raymond's
 - (a) mother
 - (b) wife
 - (c) grandmother
 - (d) aunt
2. Raymond was
 - (a) blind
 - (b) crippled
 - (c) an idiot
 - (d) very sick
3. Raymond's biggest pleasure was
 - (a) going to the circus
 - (b) talking to Mrs. Ewing
 - (c) staying indoors
 - (d) going outdoors
4. Raymond didn't go out during the winter because
 - (a) Big Lannie didn't like Raymond to go outdoors
 - (b) he didn't really want to
 - (c) he didn't have warm enough clothing
 - (d) he didn't like to go out anyway

5. When Raymond went outdoors in his new suit, he
 - (a) played games
 - (b) was laughed at
 - (c) made new friends
 - (d) met Mrs. Ewing

6. When Big Lannie came home that night, she
 - (a) beat Raymond
 - (b) took him away from the house
 - (c) comforted him
 - (d) brought him a new gift

What Do You Think?

7. How do you think Raymond felt about going outdoors again? Why?

8. What kind of person do you think Mrs. Ewing is? Do you think she is really generous? Why? Or why not?

Vocabulary Review

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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