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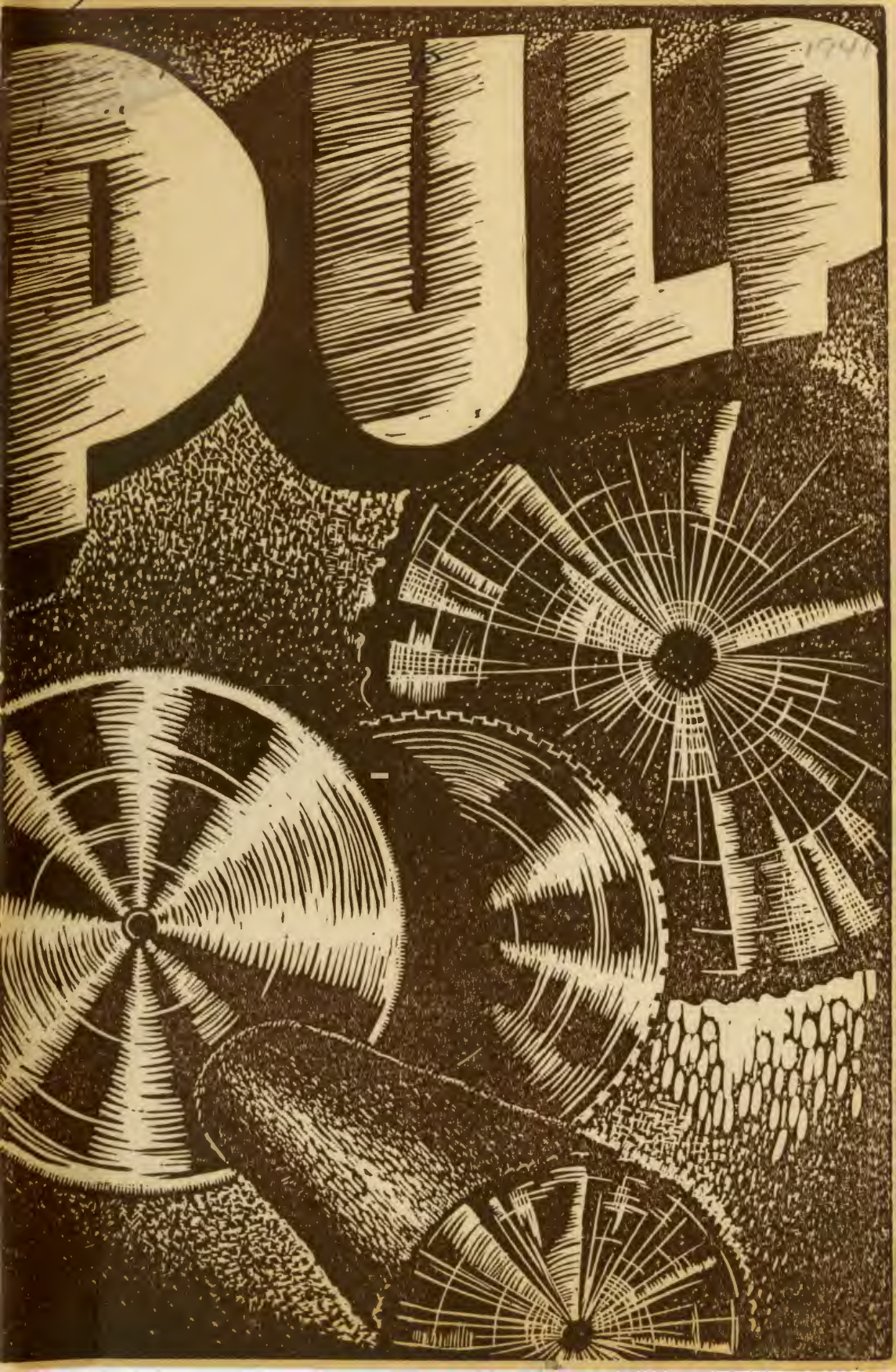
PULP

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It Was Spring

By Virgie Lee Jowell

USED to think there were only two kinds of college students: those who got around and those who didn't. It took me two years at Tall Pines Teachers College to move out of the latter class into the former. In the transition I acquired a column called "Chatter by Chirp" in the campus paper, and a boy friend called Dexter Hilton who drove a jallopy we named "Jeopardy". I had a perfect set-up. College was wonderful — I thought then. But that was 'way back in 1940 B. C.—before Carmine.

If she had been an ordinary roommate, I could have held my own against her. But she wasn't ordinary. I knew that the minute I walked into my room after Cat lab and saw her there. She came up from behind a barricade of trunks and bags. A tall, willowy figure topped off with firecracker red hair and big dark, sad eyes isn't ordinary.

"Hello," I said. "I'm Judy Tarleton. Call me Chirp."

She just looked at me in a sweetly nonchalant way and said, "I'm Carmine Parkes."

"Could I help you with your unpacking?" I offered.

"No thank you. I'm going to store the rest of them."

I couldn't tell right off whether she was snooty, timid, or just didn't give a damn. She kept on unpacking sweaters (fuzzy Angora ones), shirts, skirts, and some jackets that I would have given my right eye for. I wanted to ask a hundred questions, but I decided it was up to her to do the talking. I thought it was kind of funny that all of her clothes had that unworn look. Her bags were new, too. I always thought only freshmen had new clothes and bags.

Under the shower after dinner, it dawned on me that maybe Carmine would like to be shown around the campus that night. After all, she was my roommate, and I would have to see that she got around. But deep inwardly, I knew she wouldn't have any trouble getting around. Not with those looks!

"Say, Carmine," I said as I dripped into the room, "Would you like for me to call up my boy friend and have him bring—" and I was going to suggest some of the boys, but she interrupted.

"That's very kind of you, but I'm a little tired. So if you don't mind . . ."

And that's the way it was every time I asked her. She was always tired, or had to study, or wanted to read, or had to write letters. I never had seen such a droop. So, finally, I quit asking her. She studied a lot, especially at night. She

was always buried in a book when I came in from a date or some place. We never talked—not really, I mean, like roommates do.

We talked about her a lot in bull sessions late at night. Not gossiping, just speculating. We were all rather bewildered. I guess she was easily the best-looking girl on the campus, and I know darn well she had the best-looking clothes. Some of them came from Fifth Avenue shops, and some from shops in Paris. You couldn't tell it, of course, not unless you looked at the label the way I did. What puzzled the girls most was the way she refused dates. She got plenty of calls, too. The boys always rush new girls. She had the girls plenty worried at first. I guess we were all a little secretly relieved when she pulled this Garbo act.

I remember telling the girls one night, "Just think, she could have anybody on this campus, I'll bet. Even my Dexter!" It wasn't so damned funny one day a few weeks later.

I remember it was one of those days that make you want to write poetry or get bare-footed. Spring was just off-stage, waiting for a cue to come on. The park, full of tall pines, green grass, wild flowers and stuff was simply beautiful. I remember I was saying some poetry, or was I practicing that abdication speech of Edward's for Speech 121? Anyway, we were just leaving the park when Dexter grabbed my arm and whistled that whistle that sounds like "Great Guns" and could mean a hundred different things. I looked up at him to see what it did mean. He had stopped walking.

"Who's that?" he demanded.

I followed the general direction his gaping eyes pointed. I saw who he meant. It was Carmine. She had on a soft blue polo coat and was leaning against a tall pine, with her head tilted sort of wistfully upward. Her gorgeous red hair in contrast with the green pines was breathtaking. She looked like a girl on a magazine cover.

"Who is it?" Dexter insisted.

"My roommate, Carmine Parkes," I said, and hoped he'd be content with that. But he wasn't.

"Come on. I'll introduce you," I said without enthusiasm.

As we came up to Carmine, I said, "Carmine, I want you to meet my friend," with a lot of emphasis on "My". "Miss Parkes, Mr. Hilton. Dexter to you."

"Hello," they said at the same time. They shook hands; rather they held hands. My heart drooped. He was just standing there looking at her with that where-in-the-world-have-you-been-all-my-life look. I looked at Carmine again. It didn't take a psychoanalyst to tell me what was taking place there. Reader, I could have wept.

I tapped Dexter on the shoulder and asked sweetly, "Remember me? I'm the girl you are seeing home." It was meant to be funny, but it sure fell flat. Dexter looked at me then. So did Carmine. I had that feeling like when your

baby cries in the movies, and people turn around to stare, and you have to take it out.

Dexter and I had a movie date that night. I was glad I didn't have to talk. I knew it was our last date. I guess Dexter wanted to tell me it was, but was just waiting for me to save my pride by breaking things off myself. I couldn't blame him for what had happened though. After all, I guess he couldn't help falling in love with Carmine.

I planned it all out in the movie, what I would say to him. So walking home that night, I told him, "Look, Dext, I'm going to be pretty busy for the next few days. There are a couple of stories I want to write, and maybe I'll try out for the spring play. You understand, don't you? A girl who has a career to look forward to just can't be, well, shall we say, bound. Maybe, we're making a mistake going steady."

I don't remember what he said. I was too busy giving myself a mental kick in the pants. My sainted aunt! There I had just handed over to Carmine what it had taken me two years of hard scheming to get.

The next days and weeks after were like a bad dream. I worked all day and late at night. Carmine went out every night. It was as if we had traded identities. As for Carmine, I think she tried to talk about the whole thing one night. But I told her I had to go see a girl about a book.

I had one memorable encounter with Dexter. It was one day when I was coming out of the library with my arms full of books. I dropped one of them on my toe that has the in-growing toenail. You can imagine what I was muttering to myself as I reached down to pick it up. About half way down I collided with some one. It was Dexter.

"Yours?" he asked, and then read off the cover of the book, "The Art of Writing Fiction." He looked up.

"Now, really, Chirp, you don't think this will help, do you? Did it ever occur to you that you have to live yourself before you can write about life?"

"Really!" I said as haughtily as I could. "Well, thank you very much for your constructive criticism," and I reached for my book. He handed it over slowly, looking at me with what I thought was a sneeringly sarcastic but sort of indifferent look. I took the book, my heart hammering away at the wall between us. If he only would have said something like, "Chirp, I sure miss you," or, "This red-head doesn't mean a thing to me, don't you know?" or anything like that.

But he said, "There's a shine on your nose. Probably worn there by a grindstone. Why don't you get wise to yourself?"

Every time I thought about that I got madder and madder and madder. That night I tried to work on my story, but I nearly wore the x's out on my typewriter marking out things. I was disgusted. How could you write, I thought, when everything in you had curled up and died.

Was that what they called ghost writing?

I threw myself on the bed and sobbed my heart out into a pillow. I guess I hadn't realized how I felt about things until then. All the loneliness, bitterness, and yes, plain jealousy, came out in huge tears and made a general mess of my face. I don't know how long I lay there, just sniffling and looking at the moon. I must have been in pretty much of a soulful solitude, because I didn't notice Carmine until she had already come in and undressed. I heard her cough and smelled smoke from a cigarette, and I knew she was in, but I didn't turn around. I didn't want her to see my swollen eyes and red nose. So I just lay there with my back to her for awhile, and then I turned over on my back, put my hands across my eyes, and muttered thickly, "H'lo."

She didn't say anything, so I didn't either anymore. But I looked at her through the cracks of my fingers. She was at the desk writing a letter. I mean, she was contemplating one. She was mostly biting the end of her pen and staring into space. I watched her face. She didn't look sophisticated or any of those Hollywood adjectives. As woman knows woman, I knew she was going to cry and cry hard. But what in the world for? She had beauty, clothes, figure, and Dexter—just about everything, in my estimation.

Just then the dam in front of her eyes broke, and she was crying. She didn't bother to muffle the sobs. I didn't know what to do, but I knew I couldn't let the other girls hear her. My woman's instinct told me she was fixing to let her hair down for once. I jumped up and closed the door. She raised her head then, and met my eyes.

"Chirp," she sobbed, "Oh, Chirp, I'm so miserable. All the trouble I've caused," and she broke out anew with more sobs.

"You haven't caused any trouble," I white-lied and laid my hand on that fiery red hair. Given that chance any other time I guess I would have pulled it out. Oh yes, that's the way I've felt all along, though I suppose I tried to make you readers and even myself think I was a regular person. But anyway, I stroked her hair, kitten-fashion. She took hold of herself, blew her nose hard on the tissue I handed her, and then smiled sadly, "Chirp, you're so—wonderful. I mean the way you've taken all this dirt I've given you. But, Chirp, you've got to believe me. I didn't know about you and Dexter. I swear I didn't. I didn't know things were so serious between you and Dexter. I thought you were—sort of good friends."

She was talking fast and wild, but I managed to interrupt. "What makes you think there was more?" I asked, baiting her.

"One of your friends told me about you and Dexter when he and I were out at the Chum Inn. Oh, Chirp, if there's anything I can do to fix up this mess! I feel like a prize snake."

I sat down then on the opposite side of the desk. She

reached over and put her hand on mine. I wanted to go to bed and forget the whole thing. So she didn't know about me and Dexter and all those dreams we had. I guess it was my fault for not flashing the "hands off" signal that day in the park. No, it wasn't my fault, or Carmine's—she had just said it wasn't. Dexter's? Of course. The heel.

"Look, Carmine," I said, "It wasn't your fault, you know. Dexter should have told you, if I had really meant anything to him."

"Chirp, you're such a blind baby," she smiled. "You don't know the first principle of getting your man and holding him. I didn't think you cared anything for Dexter because you, well, you'll have to admit you didn't try very hard to hold him. So I went to work with all my red-headed wiles. Frankly, Chirp, it wasn't very hard. You know, you with all your thoughts of writing, literature, journalism, don't make a pleasant company for a young man on spring nights. You've probably run across this in your reading—Tennyson, I think it was, 'In the Spring a young man's fancy' and so forth."

She didn't have to say any more. My eyes were opened! My sainted aunt! What a blind be-spectacled goon I had been! Dexter was just infatuated, of course. And Carmine, well, where did she come in?

"Carmine," I began, "I'm glad that finally I can see beneath that red hair, those luscious clothes, your beauty, and see the real you. Carmine, you aren't the red-headed vamp you've pretended. What was the act?"

"It wasn't an act. The first time I saw Dexter, you can't imagine how I felt. He was so much like someone else, and then when I went with him and told him about myself—he was so understanding. You see, Chirp, I'm one of those poor little rich girls you read about who fall in love with the one boy my parents don't like. So they sent me on the conventional cruise, bought me too many clothes, and sent me to this school near home so they can keep the parental eye on me." She ended on a weak note, smiled unconvincingly, and suggested we go to bed.

It was past twelve. The dormitory was quiet. I lay on the bed, my chin propped on my hands, gazing at the moon. It was Spring! Dexter and I . . .

"Chump," I told myself, grinned, hugged the pillow, and went to sleep.

Suspense

The breeze is saying kiss me;
Your conscience says, "No, don't;"
This little moment's like eternity;
I'm so afraid you won't.

Jimmie Jeanne Mangum.

Two Poems

Bryan Reynolds

FOR A WAR POET

From your allusion
Comes the conclusion,
    Desolation.

Part with
Distortive myth
And doctor core
Of corruptive sore.

Be certain
Not to curtain
    Your inner-eye.

Look long
Upon wrong
    Of mutilation,

And grow cold
To Time's old
    Obscenity.

THE LOST GENERATION

Nevertheless the lonely heart
Gropes in its dark world,
Vaguely searching,
Always felicity is thwarted,
And the abscess of morbid
Dreams dominates the soul
Of repressed desire.
The fire of mind impassions
An art display of gargoyle
Images upon the scene
Of inevitable chaos.
They dance a symphonic
Ballet of death down
Haunted hollows to be
Swallowed up by abyss.

Country Club Dance

Madge Gribble

"Oh, Mother! Mother! Jimmy Terrell asked me to go to the Country Club dance with him Saturday night. May I go please, Mother? I've never been to a Country Club dance before. And Mother, they're going to have Tommy Dexter's orchestra. Isn't it just wonderful?" Judy danced around the room singing at the top of her voice, and stopped before her mother, who sat at the desk writing letters.

"Well, Judy, I suppose you may. Are Buddy and Sally going with Jimmy, too?"

"Yes, I think so. Buddy said I couldn't go—he makes me so mad. Just because he's a little older than me, he thinks he can boss me around. But Jimmy said I could so go, and he bought me a chocolate soda. He's so nice," and Judy hugged herself for joy.

"Well, you'd better ask Daisy if she will wash and starch your blue organdy dress—the one you wore in Marcia's wedding last month. It's been hanging in the closet since then, and won't look fresh." Mrs. Nesbit smiled on her pretty blond daughter and after a moment continued her writing.

Daisy, who didn't look at all like the flower for which she was named, laughed at Judy when she made her request. "Sho, Honey, ah'll fix them clothes up beautiful."

The morning of the momentous occasion, Mrs. Nesbit shampooed and "set" Judy's hair. And that afternoon Judy was so excited that she couldn't sleep a wink in spite of all her mother's warnings that she would be worn out that night if she didn't rest.

Late in the afternoon the florist brought her corsage, the most delicate little bouquet of pink and blue sweet peas. Carefully, they were placed in the refrigerator until time came to pin them on.

Judy bathed and ate supper early so that she could lie down and rest for a few minutes before it was time to dress. Indeed she was the happiest girl in all the world. She was going to the Country Club dance!

Promptly at a quarter to nine Jimmy put in his appearance. Mrs. Nesbit met him at the door. "Oh, Jimmy, I'm sorry, but what I was afraid would happen has happened. Judy wouldn't rest this afternoon, and now she's sound asleep."

"So I'm stood up," Jimmy laughed, "and for the sandman, at that. These modern gals!" He shrugged.

"You're a sweet, understanding beau, Jimmy," said Mrs. Nesbit, smiling. "I hope all of Judy's boy friends are like you."

"Judy's the only girl I know who could get away with a stunt like this. Dare I come around tomorrow?"

"Oh, yes, of course. Come for supper. It's her birthday, you know. She'll be five."

By Nancy Bunn

I dragged wearily home from lab. "Tonight," I thought blissfully, "tonight I shall sleep. I shall not study, I shall not read, I shall not see Katherine Hepburn in 'Philadelphia Story', I shall sleep."

Thus I made my firm resolve and thus I had intended to do. But fate—oh, bitter dispensor of sorrow and tears—planned otherwise.

That night at supper I ate no questionable dainties, no banana pudding (delicacy of delicacies) to upset my poor tortured stomach, and repeated gallantly to myself, "Slumber will be worth the sacrifice."

I then went out on the porch to sit leisurely in the swing in order to become drowsier. I did this for some time, and having accomplished my purpose, I went upstairs. I busied myself in my final preparations to woo the god Morpheus, and, after dutifully brushing my teeth, my hair, and aside all my worries, I crawled in between the sheets and relaxed. My eyelids drooped contentedly and I was going to sleep—when an "a-h-h-h-h-a" sound like a disappointed nightmare filled the air. For the love of Dracula, was I dreaming? I peered out the window with sleep-filled eyes to see some children chanting gibberish to each other that sounded suspiciously like the time-worn "Knock-Knock" game. For some reason that I could not fathom, it was interspersed at regular intervals with the aforementioned wails. I thought that that game had gone out with the NRA, but evidently someone was trying to revive it and making a horrible success. I immediately called down to them (in tones not so dulcet and sweet) to stop that horrible noise! Sensing my irritation (little cherubs that they were) they immediately departed for neighborhoods unknown.

"Ah, now I shall have some real sleep," I sighed wearily to myself as I sank into bed again. And I slept. How wonderful to look upon that glorious hour of oblivion. For it was only an hour. Only one hour of peace and contentment. The rest of the night was a shambles, a confusion of yells and gunshots, of clocks dripping and water ticking—I mean wocks tripping—I mean—oh, nuts, what a night!

I was awakened from my hour of bliss by the feeling of a cold, clammy hand on my nose. My first thought was that

of being kidnapped. THEY were trying to chloroform me. But who were THEY? And why should they kidnap me? At any rate, I would put up a struggle. I flailed my arms and legs valiantly and reached out to grab my attacker and—no one was there! Then I heard a faint dripping and again felt the cold sensation on my nose. Ah-ha, I had solved the mystery of the disappearing kidnapper—there was none. There was only a leak in the roof and it was gently raining outside. Well, that WAS the climax. How could I sleep with the constant torture of dripping rain on, of all places, my nose? There was only one thing for me to do, and I did it. I couldn't mend the roof at midnight, but I could move my bed.

As I did this, accompanied by some very unlady-like remarks, I gave the bed a vicious jerk. Immediately, all the cover gently slid from the bed to the floor. Grimly resolute, I picked up the debris and put it back on the bed as smoothly as possible. I then got into bed for the third time and vowed to SLEEP.

Again I was drifting into a happy void of sleep when—Bang! I heard something which sounded faintly like a gunshot. I looked out the window resignedly, and there on the sidewalk stood a weaving, unsteady figure flourishing a gun and shouting, "C-Can't s-somebody wake up up t-there? W-Wake up, I say. I'm th' law an' I've got a g-gun. Yippee!" (This was punctuated by expressive hiccups which gave me a clue as to the man's condition).

"Shades of insomnia," I thought, "Will I never on earth get to sleep?" It seemed hopeless, for my guest this time was Sheriff Darson on one of his monthly binges in which he imagined himself to be a tough westerner bringing desperadoes to justice. Lying there in misery, I debated throwing a shoe at him or just shooting him quietly; but my problem was soon solved by the appearance of the sheriff's two stalwart sons, who carried him off protesting and still flinging his gun about in careless abandon.

"That is that," I thought patiently to myself. "Surely I can snatch some sleep now." However determined I might be, sleep did not seem to be in store for me that night.

Hidden in the inner recesses of my mind seemed to be a small devil, persistent and annoying, sure that I was not to slumber. I became conscious of, of all things, the constant ticking of my alarm clock. It seemed to throb in rhythm with my heart. Throb-tick-throb-tick—the rhythm seemed to grow faster and faster until it seemed as if my heart would burst from my body with its terrific throbbing. I clutched the head of my bed in terror and felt cold sweat popping out on my forehead. Finally, when it seemed I might stop breathing, a loud "r-r-r-ring" rocked the room and I slapped my hand down impatiently on the alarm release. Ah-ha, seven o'clock. Time to get up. My weary limbs, though, refused to move, and so I turned over and—went to sleep.

Double Cross

By Margaret Chaney

The man crossed his eyes.

Pleased with this comical grimace, I applauded vociferously—to such an extent, in fact, that I only faintly heard his sob of anguish. But I could not mistake the racking scream which followed.

"My eyes! My eyes! Oh, God! My eyes! Ohhhhh, God in Heaven———" The cry died into crazed babbling.

Although he closed and opened his eyes once in bewildered unbelief, he did not shut them again, but stared pitifully into a strange compound world.

I smothered an impulse to laugh. The dilemma was not humorous; yet, I was possessed with an insane urge to giggle. Almost ashamed by my wayward sense of humor, I mentally kicked myself and rushed to console the stricken man. I stroked his desperate thoughts with words of deep pity and understanding; yet, though I opened every door to my sympathy, he would not enter and I became exasperated. I grabbed his wrist and commanded, "Well, come on to a doctor, anyhow!" and gunned ahead. Unfortunately, I miscalculated the length of his arm and was almost jerked to the ground. He fell.

I staggered upright and lowered over the fallen man. Why didn't he get up?

Suddenly, he rocketed skyward—I swear his spring left three yards of sky between him and the ground. In the next second, screeching like a barrel of tom-cats, he leveled off to use me as a landing field.

Had his misfortune driven him mad? I wondered as I fended off his flailing arms, and retreated before his superhuman approach. But I might as well have encountered an energetic octopus, for I could not free myself from his frenzied clutching.

At the same time that he screeched and tried to climb me, I sped backwards with ungainly haste.

Then, Fate shoved a stump in my path.

Kreml over Oxfords,* I somersaulted backwards and lay stunned. My thoughts were chaos! How did maniacs kill? Killed!? By a mere acquaintance. Get up! Run!! I hadn't lived long. Would he tear me to pieces? Can't get up! His hand—now touching me! Death rattle. Rigor mortis. Me!?!

Light of day pierced my consciousness. I gulped and swallowed. Did dead people swallow? Or if they did, were they aware of it? And didn't choking bruise the throat? Still suspicious, I wriggled my toes. If that remote part of

*Head over heels.

my body moved, surely I was alive. Every toe responded nobly. I then balled my hands into fists and relaxed the fingers one by one. Hooray! I was alive!

I looked around. (My eyes, until then, had been focused toward the world I thought I had gone to, and I had not bothered to notice my surroundings.)

Like the process of seepage, reality formed in my brain. The man who bent over me . . . !? . . . !?

Silence, a caravan of tiptoeing thoughts, passed between us. Then, I laughed, at first silently. I laughed again—out loud, jerkily, nervously; for a moment, gayly, and finally hilariously. The man offered his baritone rumble. I laughed until it was no longer possible. When laughter subsided, the man helped me to my feet.

"I had an awful scare, didn't I," he said, looking straight at me.

You Can Go Home Again

By Mary Agnes Wolford

There are three types of people—men, women and commuters. The commuters are the ones who make noises like this about five minutes after twelve every day, "Hey, whose car's gonna go home today." After a slight war, someone usually yells, "We are; come on." The Commuter dashes madly across the street, jumps into the car, throws his books on the floor, and then puts his feet on them.

The trip home at lunch is a wow. No one says anything until we've gone about five miles. About this time some courageous chap attempts lighting a cigarette. Immediately a small revolution starts. Everyone yells, "Hey, you, put out that weed or get out on the running board to smoke it."

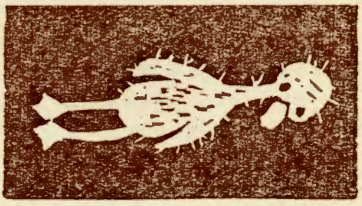
The passengers in our car are interesting. The driver is the serious type. When the car begins to get stuffy, he says, "Somebody crack a window." One of our wittier passengers immediately puts his big foot against the glass and threatens to take the driver literally.

There are two others in our car who get the giggles when they get hungry. As soon as these two begin to giggle, the driver speeds up in order to get them to food. But quick!

When we reach home the mad scramble for books is on. Our policy is—If you can't find your own, just grab. Finally you reach your own home. You've got an arm load of books, a coat half on and half off, and rumpled clothes. Some fellow sufferer is kind enough to open the door and give you a push. From there on you are on your own.

Thesis on Geeses

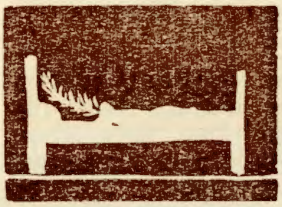
By Harry Lou Collier



A PLUCKED GEESE

Geeses is the plural for gooses and ganders. They are low heavy-set birds covered with feathers and fuzz. You pluck these to make feather beds and quills too. A plucked goose looks a great deal like a plucked duck. All the feathers have oil on them so they won't sink when they duck (in the water, of course). If they lose the oil they sink; if they die they stink.

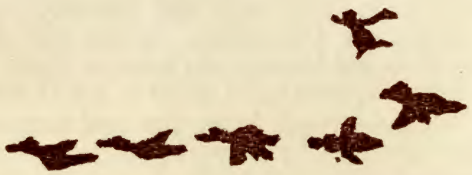
They have two feet on the under side, both webbed. Some people are web-footed, but that does not make them geeses. People with cobwebs in their heads come nearer being gooses. Their legs are set back so far they almost miss the body. They have two ends; their head sits on one end and they sit on the other.



A FEATHER BED

Geeses are first cousins to the swoose which is half swan and half goose. They are also kin to the people that are goosey when you tickle them (the exact relation has not yet been determined).

There are also wild geeses. No one has yet discovered what makes a wild goose wild. They are probably a bunch of black sheep geeses like the Dead End Kids are black sheep in the picture show, only they aren't sheep. These geeses fly in flocks and also rest in flocks, all depending. This is another way they are like sheep: they don't like to be lone wolves. The wild goose is a good weather prophet, but there is no profit in it for the g o o s e. A l l they do is use up a lot of good wing (they don't have elbows) grease in flying North and South. What they should do is rent a g o o d steam-heated igloo for the winter.

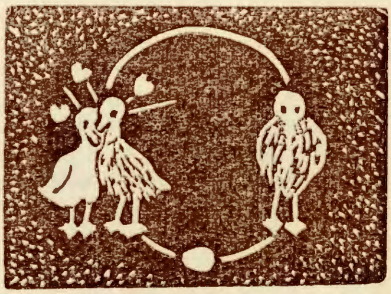


GEESES FLYING SOUTH

GEESES FLYING NORTH

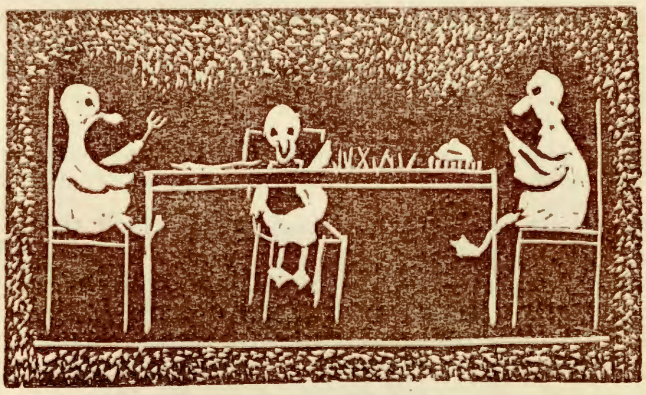
The wild goose uses his oiled feathers not only for floating but for a bullet-proof vest too. You cannot kill him when he is flying head-on toward you because his feathers are slick and the bullets bounce off. This is not the only reason some people cannot kill geese. Some just can't hit them.

Geeses eat woims, grain, water bugs, and just about anything, but mostly roots and aquatic plants. They lay eggs like all birds do and some animals, too. The women geeses lay these eggs and set on them, too, which shows the unfairness of the sex question. The woman does all the work (hard part anyway). This is the way you get baby geeses (from the eggs, of course). Baby geeses are goslings. These grow up to big geeses thus forming the vicious circle.



VICIOUS CIRCLE

It would be nice to be able to lay eggs, but if I was a goose I would heap rather be a gander.



GEESES AT DINNER

The Red Camellia

By Mary Elizabeth Garrard

PEOPLE in Pinedale smiled and looked at each other knowingly when Miss Jane passed along the street. They'd shake their heads and say, "Ain't she a funny one? Been acting like a grandma ever since she was twenty. Too shy to breathe, poor thing."

Miss Jane knew people said these things. Old Mrs. Brown had even told her so, in a roundabout way of course. But Miss Jane didn't care much what people said, or what they thought, either; at least she tried to pretend that she didn't. After all, she had a steady job at Hampton's five-and-ten, a big two-story house to live in, and money in the bank. So why should she worry? What could be the matter? She had asked herself these questions so often nowadays that she was beginning to wonder whether people weren't really right. Maybe she should . . .

Then came the first real Spring day. As soon as the six o'clock bell had tinkled wearily at the back of the store, she walked unhurriedly to the dressing room. The other girls were already there, rushing to get away. Sally Williams gave Miss Jane a pat on the arm and said, "Bye. See you in the morning." Miss Jane could tell by the way Sally looked that she was going somewhere that night. Just then Grace Penman rushed over to Miss Jane: "Be a dear and tie this sash for me. Thanks. You're an angel."

"Oh darn," wailed Jinny, before Miss Jane could finish tying Grace's sash, "I've got a runner. What'll I do? Miss Jane, can you fix it? Will you, honey?"

Miss Jane looked in the righthand corner of her purse and pulled out a needle and a spool of thread. "Let me see it, dear. Don't fret so. I think I can make it almost good as new."

Jinny watched Miss Jane's small deft fingers pull the needle in and out the stocking. Soon Miss Jane handed it to her, "Here, dear. How is this?"

Jinny stroked her hand over Miss Jane's neat, brown hair and said, "Grand! You're mighty sweet to fix it for me."

Alone at last, Miss Jane sighed. It would be nice to have something to hurry home for. Or even a torn silk hose to worry about. She looked thoughtfully at her own sturdy cotton stockings. They were almost a year old. Then she put on her plain black coat and hat and walked slowly down the street to the grocery store.

Mr. Jones smiled indulgently when he saw Miss Jane coming. People, for some reason, were always feeling sorry for her. "Good evening," he greeted. "Can I help you?"

"Yes," she answered so briskly that Mr. Jones looked up surprised. "I want a dozen eggs and a box of cake flour."

As Mr. Jones went about filling her order, Miss Jane bit her lip until the tears almost came up in her eyes. She couldn't understand why she felt so wretched, so hateful.

"So you're making a special cake. Friends coming?"

"No. Mother always made angel-cake Easter. Why shouldn't I?" Miss Jane left the good man gaping after her and turned to leave the store. She felt sorry already for the short answers she had given Mr. Jones, and she thought about going back to buy something else, just to smooth it over.

As she paused momentarily at the door, she felt a hand tug at her skirt. She looked down and saw a small boy with a puckered, dirty little face. He was about to cry.

"What's the matter, dear?" Miss Jane asked softly.

"I can't find him," the child stated, bravely rubbing away a tear. "I can't find him and I want him."

Miss Jane looked uncertainly about. Then she set her bag of groceries down and took the child's hands. "Who is it you can't find, dear?"

"I can't find him and I want him."

Miss Jane looked around again. There were several people at back of the store buying meat at the market, but no one of them seemed to be bothered about a lost child. Suddenly the child began to sob audibly. Miss Jane didn't know what to do. Then she had an inspiration. "You want some candy?" she asked the child hopefully. "Come on; we'll get some candy."

"No," came the sobbing answer, "I want him."

"Now, now, don't you worry," soothed Miss Jane. "Let's go get some candy, and maybe he'll be here any minute."

"Will he be here now?"

"Why, of course . . ." They walked over to the candy counter and Miss Jane bought a nickel's worth of gum drops. "Here you are," she said.

"Sonny, Sonny," a worried voice called. "Sonny, where are you?"

"That's him! That's him!" cried the child, jumping up and down and pointing. Miss Jane looked up and saw a blond-headed giant of a man coming toward them. She didn't know what to do. She shifted her weight from one foot to the other and didn't say anything.

But the man wasn't looking at her. He had his eye on Sonny.

"Where'd you get that candy?" he asked.

"She gave it to me," the child replied, and then added triumphantly, "She said you'd come and you did."

Miss Jane's face flushed, and she lowered her eyes. He was looking straight at her. He had blue eyes that seemed about to laugh, and there was an honest, friendly expression on his face.

"Thanks for helping the kid," he said simply.

"Oh, er—that's quite all right. I didn't do much." Then Miss Jane turned and nearly flew out the door.

That night she sat a long time before her old-fashioned mirror, brushing her hair until it shone. Now and then she would smile guiltily at herself. "Silly," she said and got up to go to bed. "Just a man in a grocery store . . . and married, at that." The thought made her blush as she turned out the light and crawled into bed, vowing to put the whole business out of mind.

But the next morning just as she was starting to work, Miss Jane noticed a bloom on the red camellia bush next to the front gate. Humming, she reached over and carefully broke it off. Then she pinned it on her coat and started down the street. A robin was singing in the Adams's yard when she went by, and Miss Jane's heart answered him. But before she got to the store, or even to town, she decided to take off the red camellia. People would think she was crazy, going to work with flowers pinned on her.

All that day in the five-and-ten she watched the door. Once, when a tall, broad-shouldered man walked in with a woman and a little boy, Miss Jane almost dropped a pink glass pitcher she was arranging on the household counter.

After work, she took the red camellia out of a glass of water that she had hidden at the back of the store. At first she hesitated, and then suddenly defiant, she pinned the flower on her coat and started home. Let them think what they wanted to.

She didn't see anybody she knew for a whole block until she got to the grocery store. There she paused again. She didn't really need anything, but . . . well. . . .

"I want two cans of milk, a half pound of butter . . . and let's see . . ." Miss Jane heard herself saying.

"Sonny," warned a familiar bass voice behind her, "be careful with those apples. They won't be good if you drop them."

"Two cans of milk, a half pound of butter . . ."

"Yes, Miss Jane," said Mr. Jones patiently, "I have those here. Would there be anything else?"

"Er . . . no, I guess not."

Just as Miss Jane took up her bag of groceries, a coat sleeve brushed her arm, and she dropped the sack on the floor. There was a loud embarrassing thud and clatter, and Miss Jane's face was crimson as the camellia when she stooped over to pick up the scattered groceries.

A big, tanned hand reached the sack before she did. "I'm sorry. Please excuse me . . . just clumsiness. Here is your package."

It was his voice. In one brief, desperate glance Miss Jane could see his face and his smiling eyes close to hers. "That's all right. Thanks," she managed to gasp. Then she fled. She could hear Sonny, somewhere behind her, saying, "That's the one. That's the same lady that gave me candy."

At church the next day people stared at Miss Jane. She had on a soft blue dress, brand new, and a bit of a hat that made her feel positively scandalous. Mrs. Brown punched Mrs. Graves, "Reckon what she's up to?"

"Can't prove it by me," returned Mrs. Graves in her loud whisper that everybody in church could hear.

Miss Jane had decided to call a halt at rouge and make-up. There were some things after all that a person, even a person in a revolutionary mood, just couldn't do. And besides Miss Jane did not need any artificial coloring. She could feel the warm flush on her neck, her ears, and her cheeks. Everybody was looking at her. Politely, of course, in sort of running glances, but she knew what they were thinking. What would they say if they knew that she had been flirting, yes, shamelessly flirting, with a married man? Miss Jane giggled inside herself and began to enjoy the situation. What a Jezebel!

Just then the choir began filing in. And there he was, right on the front row. A new woman, slender and blonde, was with him. Suddenly Miss Jane didn't feel so secure. When she glanced up at the choir again, he was looking straight at her and smiling. He even gave her a nod. For the first time Miss Jane realized that the whole church was watching them. She wanted to die right then, to be snatched up into Heaven like Elijah or snatched up anywhere, just so it was out and away from everything and everybody. She hid her eyes in the song-book and guiltily kept them there for what seemed hours.

When church was finally over, Miss Jane fairly bolted down the aisle, gave the preacher a swift nod at the door, and scurried down the street as if the devil himself were after her.

"What in the world," exclaimed Mrs. Randall, "do you suppose is the matter with her?"

"And my dear, did you see that dress?"

"It beats me," stated Mrs. Graves, "why she would come to church dressed up like a heathen and flirting and making eyes, mind you, at that . . ."

"Yes, and then to run off like a scared rabbit. It's just like her."

That afternoon Miss Jane tried to stay in the house, but she couldn't. It was a day of days—clear, warm, and mad with April glee. A red bird kept hopping around the bushes by the window where she sat, and in the distance she could hear the laughter and calling of children at play in the sunlight. Everybody in Pinedale would either be out walking or riding. People she knew would come by to stare at her and pump her about the new man. Grimly she determined to go out and face the music.

She went straight to the camellia bush. There were two more blooms just opening. She stared at them vengefully. Red, they were, the color of her soul. Bright red, scarlet, like her sinful thoughts, but delicate, too, and alluring.

"May we come in?"

For a moment Miss Jane's heart stopped beating. She almost didn't dare to lift her eyes. She had to, though. Sonny was already through the gate and at her side. Suddenly he stopped and looked at her shyly. "You're the lady," he said. Then he looked back. "Uncle Joe, this is her. This is her!"

Uncle Joe was confused now. "Er—uh—Sonny and I have been looking for you, you see—er—uh—we wanted to thank you again for being so nice to him the other day when he was lost."

"It wasn't anything at all," said Miss Jane, blushing.

"You gave me candy," announced Sonny. "You're the lady Uncle Joe's been looking for in that grocery store."

"I'm Joe Anderson from Conway," said the man quickly. "Sonny, here, is my little nephew, Bob James."

Miss Jane had begun to feel weak. She hoped she didn't show her surprise. Sonny . . . nephew . . . not son . . . Joe Anderson . . . not married. Somehow she managed aloud, "I'm Jane Davis."

"I've been admiring your camellia bush, Miss Davis. You see, I teach botany at the State College at Conway. It's very rare that we see a plant of this family blooming so late in the season."

Miss Jane hadn't thought of that. "It is late, isn't it?" she said, startled.

"They're much more beautiful than the early blooms. Notice that extra fringe of petals and that . . ."

Miss Jane discovered that he wasn't looking at the red camellia at all, but at her.

"Will you go with me to church tonight?" he asked.

Miss Jane nodded. Then she picked a red camellia and gave it to Sonny. "Take this home to your Mother, dear," she said.

Lines on Lines

By Para Llels

It all started when I lined up that first day in school, not too many years ago, and some nasty, dirty-faced little boy pulled my beautiful golden curls. Ever since then my life has been one line right after another. The longer I live the longer the line.

Take College, for instance. The line into the registrar's office was the first, then into the dean's office, and finally into the auditor's office, where I waited patiently for thirty-seven minutes just to make my purse thirty-seven dollars lighter—dollar a minute. Not bad.

But even that wasn't the last, for I stood in line a solid

hour waiting to get my books. Then I thought I needed to coke up and try to rediscover the rugged individuality I used to have before it was stream-lined out of me. And by golly, if I didn't have to stand in line in the cafeteria.

"Maybe," I said to myself consolingly, "all this is just because I'm entering College. Those seniors over there look like individuals. Maybe someday I can be one." I found out, alas, that the lines were only beginning—that College, from plane geometry to art appreciation, is just a bunch of lines that get all tangled up and twisted and finally come out (we hope) about six eternities on the other side of the fourth dimension.

But regardless of where they come out, here they are, and we have to worry with them. First of all there is the old wornout line the boys keep handing the girls and the girls keep taking. You've heard it. Things like "Gee, honey, you're sweet. . . Lovely girl! . . . Where have you been all my life? . . . Has anyone ever told you that you look like (take your pick of Hollywood). . . . You look perfectly exotic tonight . . . we oughta get along, kid," and so forth and so on, far into the night.*

Then there are lots and lots of plain, commonplace lines like the kind you stand in in the band, to get into football games, and even into assembly, if and when you go to assembly. Or the one you stand in to get your library refund so that you can stand in another one to get your yearbook.

About the worst one of all, though, is the one where you get your grades. It was here that I first began to ponder philosophically, just to put myself in the proper frame of mind for the awful truth facing me at the end of the line. "This," I told myself, "should be a good place to loaf and invite your soul." If my soul was what visited me, then I don't want any too close acquaintance with it. All I could think of were those classes I had cut, that notebook I hadn't handed in, and a couple of "F's" I might have coming. It isn't very uplifting to stand flat-footed and picture your soul scarred and branded with scholastic sins. So about all you can do in this line is wait and pray along with the one in front of you and the one behind you.

The last line of College, the one you stand in to get your sheepskin (you are already a sheep—all you need is a skin), they say it is really the most trying. There, old and experienced linees become faint and weak-kneed. They perspire. They tremble. They wail. Some even fall by the wayside. It must be terrible. But then . . . that's one line I'm afraid I won't have to worry about, or if I ever do get there I'll bet I sort of keep expecting to be suddenly blinded by a spotlight and hear some guy drone out in a monotone, "Elizabeth Smith alias Betty Co-Ed, picked up for loitering in lines. Step down."

*"A little lining is a dangerous thing"—Alexander Poope in POWER LINES, p. 10002, line 6.

Lovers' Lane

Intriguing lovers' lane—
Any road, tinted by aureole color
From starlit dreams
And a boy
    And a girl
        Walking . . .
Hand in hand.

Pavement—muttly—hard—
Lengthening into highways;
A road that climbs and twists
    Into tomorrow—
        And a boy
            And a girl . . .
Lovers' lane.

Slumbering country roads
Laced by sunlight
With winking paths
That lead to somewhere—
Lovers' lane.

Re-incarnate in all ages—
The symbol followed.
Slow, steady steps
Mark the ones less young
    Who have walked
        Through the years
            Of their togetherness
Down lovers' lane.

Mist at dusk, and
Shrouded beacon lights
Familiar through the mist—
Nostalgic windows
Intimate through the mist—
Cobblestone sidewalks
Vague through the mist—
Lovers' lane.

Notes of thought,
    Melodies of dreaming,
        Chords of desire,
Scales of hope,
    Sharps of laughter,
        Flats of sadness,
Intermezzo of ecstasy—
    Life's dominant seventh—
Lovers' lane.

Louise Cheneval.

The Three of Them

By Aubrey Kindred

URPHY Hill! Murphy Hill will always ring in the memory of the boy; and the woman shall never go back there because it was close to hell, and the man shall often think sitting before a wintery fire—of Murphy Hill.

Back there Murphy Hill was wild and sat lonesome on the prairie and seldom a range rider wandered across its sagy flanks. And there was a house that clung to Murphy Hill and the three of them lived in it, but it was not a home, just a house.

It was one spring early that they moved their troubles to Murphy Hill. They had looked with hungry eyes upon the crouching wreck of boards with the doors and the paneless windows swinging out in the winter weather. The crib had been open—barren and cold, and its weight was held by props.

But these were farmers—builders. Changes were made, big changes. It was of good aim that they broke the land, beginning the cycles of agriculture, meanwhile scraping along for a living. They were pioneers, late pioneers.

Their progress was typical—American. By the middle of June the cotton and corn and other stuff were ready for laying by. Then it was easy, until one day the man went away and left them alone on the hill. And one day in the hot of July he returned to his own front gate where the boy so often wished him home. But he was no more the farmer; he was a stranger, bitter and pressing. It was that he had heard confidential accusations from his hating family, old and gray, about his woman taking care of Murphy Hill; that she was bad and men knew about her in Urn. His family had always hated his woman since the year of 1913, the year of marriage. She was a bad woman, they vowed; but he had lived twenty years with her under the same roof. He came back sure of the truth and developed her humiliation and pain. This was bad. There was trouble brewing on Murphy Hill and no one knew excepting the three of them. They knew about it at night, in the dark, out under the moon and stars; and during the burning day, in the field, and in the house.

Then came the day hot as the one before, but they did as never before. Their crop was burned, burned by July. "God did it, God did it to us," the woman had said; and the boy had asked, "Who is God?"

That morning at eleven-thirty the boy heard her voice calling. She was standing on the hillside beneath the oaks and by the running spring. The wind blew her dress close about her and it spread out behind her like a flag. Good old

Mama, he loved her more than anything in the world. She motioned for him to come on and eat and rest. He waved at her and went back to picking his cotton. His throat was dry and hot. Perspiration on his face made his lips salty; he noticed it when he smiled in thought and swallowed dryly. He picked only a few more pounds and straightened up, holding his back with his hands. It was time to eat. He pulled off his straw and fanned his face. His shirt was wet with sweat. He looked at his sack. It was full, several rows of the scarce cotton. He put his straw on and struggled the sack atop his scrawny shoulder. The weight made him stagger drunken-like up the hill. At the field gate he fumbled at the point of exhaustion at the latch. He walked out of the path so as to feel the tall green grass brush his bare feet. In the shade of the oaks it grew taller. When he reached the spring he threw his sack on the ground. He whistled under his breath and threw his straw on the damp sand. He lay on his stomach and drank long from the spring. It was extremely good for his body and soul. He took off his salty shirt and dashed water in his face and on his chest and arms. The grit washed down and the water ran down about his belt, wetting the upper part of his pants.

The woman came out the back door.

"Son. Oh, Son. Ain't you coming?" she called.

"Yessum, Mama, be there in a minute," he answered.

She came to the back yard gate, held it open for him.

"Bless his heart," she praised, "Mama's little man."

After emptying his cotton he washed himself again and put on a clean ragged shirt.

"Hurry, Sonny," the woman said.

At one end of the simple dining table the man sat eating like a hog. He did not look up when the boy entered and sat down on the bench. They ate corn bread and black-eyed peas. They poured their own milk, for the woman stayed back in the kitchen. There was nothing sweet; this was not Sunday. The boy finished. The man filled his plate again. A couple of peas fell out of his spoon mid-way to his mouth and hit the floor bouncing about. The old cat looked at them curiously remembering when she was a kitten. The man mumbled under his breath and dipped again. The woman watched him eat from within the kitchen. There was an expression of disgust on her face. When the man had left she came in and ate a few bites herself before she threw the empty bowls in the dish pan. While she was working, the boy came in.

"How are you feeling, Mama?" he asked.

"Mama don't feel good at all," she said, "He's just running me crazy; I just can't stand him any more. God forgive me for saying so after all these years."

The boy listened very affected.

"Sonny, I'm gonna do somethin' some of these days I'll probably be sorry for, but I'm tired of living in hell—cussed every day, accused of things I haven't done and would never

do. I just won't stand for it. I'll die before I stay with him."

The boy looked up into her middle aged face. He felt hurt and sorrowful deep in his heart. He showed it in his face. He loved her more than anything else in the world, but he loved his father, too.

The woman stopped talking when the man passed through the kitchen with a water pail in his hand.

"Where has Daddy been?" the boy asked.

"Over at Urn, I know," she said. "His filthy folks have told more lies about me. He cussed me out right after he got in. God knows why he should treat me like this. I tell you, Son, I just won't stand it any more."

The man returned from the spring carrying a fresh bucket of water. He cleared his throat as he passed them. The woman went back into the kitchen.

The bucket in the kitchen was empty, too; so the woman and the boy went to the spring. They sat down on the wash bench.

"Son, you don't know how I love you. You are the only thing left in this world for me. We're gonna git somewheres one of these days and then you can go to school and be with other boys and girls and you can learn about God and all them other things. You just wait."

She stopped talking, just sat there and looked into space. The jay birds went on and on in the tree tops and the cow lay in the shade chewing her chud. The old mule stood out in the sun looking across the field. The boy looked into her face and remained silent. He had learned never to talk much about things of this sort.

They were still silent and thoughtful when they saw him coming down the trail. He walked slowly and stopped before them. His hat was on at a new angle. He had always changed his styles like that.

"Gonna pick cotton this afternoon, Son?" he asked.

"Yessir, I guess so," the boy answered.

"Well, I just wanted to know. Might help you pick a pound or two. Well, Sis, what are you blowed up about?" he said to the woman cheerfully.

She did not raise her eyes from the ground. She could not stand him any longer. Anger mounted to his face.

"This is the way it is every damn time," he blurted. "By God, I'm fed up with you acting like this. You haven't given me a kind, decent word in the last two months. It's just like I told you. You're just trying to get shed of me, trying to run me off so you can take up with them damn cattlemen that slip around here. You know damn well that's so."

"Daddy, don't talk that way to Mama," the boy pleaded.

"You dry up, you little bastard. That's all you are anyway. I'm not your daddy. You'll be sorry you took her side in everything some day."

He harped on and on, no words too vulgar. He cursed and bemeaned them until the woman could stand it no longer. She screamed out at him, cursing, and beat her fists in his

surprised face. She clawed at his face, pushed him back against the oak. The boy stood watching them. It had been in his heart many times, this feeling. Now it gripped him paralyzed in fear. He was too dazed to say or do anything at first.

The man threw her off; she fell across the bench, overturning it. He hastily picked up a chunk of wood and drew it back to strike her. "I'll kill you," he said. But the boy rushed toward him, pushing him stumbling, causing the chunk to hit the ground beside her.

"Why you little—" the man gasped brokenly as he struck the boy across the face with his fist. The boy fell into the drain. He got up slowly, covering his face with his muddy hand. The woman seeing the boy struck was infuriated. She began getting to her feet.

"No, no, Mama. Don't bother him. He'll kill us both," the boy cried rushing to her side. "You go on to the house. I'll bring the water."

She hesitated, looking at the man who had turned his back to them and stood drooping. She went on but took the water herself.

The boy sat down. He was weak and wanted to cry but tears wouldn't come yet. The man walked over to the oak, placing his forehead on his arms against the tree. The boy could hear his sobbing. The man turned to the boy, came over to him and fell upon his knees beside him. He took the boy's head in his hands, held him to his breast sobbing.

"Did I hurt you, Son? Did I hurt your head? I wish I was dead. I never would of thought I'd a done it."

"Daddy, why did this have to happen, just why did it?" the boy asked.

They looked at each other.

"I don't know, Son," the man said. "I just don't know. Your mother has been acting funny now for two months. Won't even let me stay in the same room with her."

"You are the cause of it, Daddy," the boy said. "You shouldn't say them things about her. She doesn't do anything wrong. I know."

"No you don't, Son. You just don't know her. You just don't know her. I have been living with her for twenty years and I know." The man talked on about things that had happened during the last twenty years.

"Daddy, I guess I had better tell you. Mama is going to leave you," the boy said.

The man studied a while. "Where are you all going?" he asked.

"I don't know," the boy said. "But she says she can't stand it any longer. She's going somewhere, anywhere."

The boy could see anger coming back to his face.

"Won't you go to the field with me, Daddy?" the boy asked.

"Yeah. I'll go help you pick a few pounds. You are the only friend I have in the world anyway. Really, Son, you are

the only person that I can stay around and feel welcome."

They went to the field. In the field they talked very little. At one of the rows the man sat down in the shade. Since he had quit working and started running around, he was not so used to it as the boy.

"Son, I just don't know what I'm going to do. I'm just tired of living."

"You can't give up," the boy said. "Don't ever give up."

That night it was very quiet on Murphy Hill. The man went to bed early and the woman and boy sat out on the porch. They talked in whispers.

"Son, I have made up my mind what to do," she said. "Tomorrow I will go after Brother John on the mule. He can get our stuff at one load. We'll be out from this hole and we won't ever come back."

The boy looked at her uncertainly. He couldn't feature leaving Murphy Hill and his father. He looked out into the night and did not hear his mother's other plans.

The next morning the boy awoke before daybreak. He heard his mother clinking plans and walking in the kitchen. She was cooking breakfast. He got up and put on his clothes. As he went through the hall he looked in his father's room—the bed was empty and the quilts thrown half way off. He was gone. The boy went in the kitchen.

"Mama, where is daddy? He ain't in bed."

"He's not? That's funny. I wonder where he could be?"

They went to his room. Everything was all right excepting his absence. They pondered on the question. The boy tried to remember yesterday; he could not piece together anything.

They hurried their work as the sun began its progress. This was the last day on Murphy Hill, the woman hoped. She left early on the mule. The boy held the gate open for her and saw her ride away. He began packing. He found his daddy's razor on the mantle-piece. He held it in his hand, examined it, rolling it over in his fingers. This belonged to his daddy. He put it back on the mantle-piece.

About nine o'clock the boy became exhausted; he sat down to rest. In doing so, he heard the sound of a motor, an automobile. Up the road came a "T," rattling and jumping. It parked before the gate. It was his father and a boy from Urn.

"Morning, Son. Feeling okay this morning?" asked the man.

The boy nodded.

"Well, Son, I hate to do it, but I've come after my bed and stuff. I'm going to leave you and the sister with it. Just as well, too, 'cause you all are going to leave me. I don't want to be stepped out on. Ain't that what you say, Kid?"

The boy who came with him nodded uneasily.

"I don't know much about this," he said.

They took down the bed while the boy watched them strangely. In the stir a corn cob fell from between the mat-

tresses. It was worn on all sides. When the young fellow saw it rolling across the floor he realized that it was used for—scratching. He laughed at the man helping; he laughed too, trying to be cheerful.

When they had finished loading and were ready to go, the man took out his watch.

"It's ten o'clock," he said. He looked at it a full minute and put it into the hands of the boy.

"She's yours, Son. I don't need it any more. I'm too old to have a timepiece to look at. And all these other things that belong to me; they're yours, Son, all yours; and I hope—" he choked, "I hope you make out all right. I want you to write me 'cause after all you are the only friend I have now." He paused, looked away.

"Well, goodbye, Son," he said.

"Goodbye, Daddy," the boy cried.

He saw them leave in a glimmer, pass around the curve. He waved again and again. And now daddy was gone.

That afternoon his mother returned with her Brother John. They piled the stuff on quickly. The boy often took the watch from his pocket, rubbed its surface and placed it back. And now he was gone.

By dark everybody was gone, gone with the storm, the storm of life, the life of hell. That night was the most silent night on Murphy Hill in years. The house stood mocking on the hill, like a skull, empty of the boy, the woman, and the man. The field was lighted by the moon. The cotton shone like scattered chalk strewn by the boy, the woman, and the man. The jay birds twirped softly in the night, like fear of the boy, the woman, the man. The oaks waved, the spring seeped but no one heard or saw the light of the boy, the woman, and the man.

Everybody was gone, gone with the storm, the storm of life, the life of hell.

Caprice

When I sing, my melody
Flees the mood that I am in—
Gay, morose, or penitent,
Real, abstract, or flimsy thin.

When I write, my measures never
Catch the rime my fancy hears.
They strike the high notes past my laughter
Or cry below my wasted tears.

But in those sudden, guarded whiles
When our souls meet face to face,
All the spangles of my being
Swiftly, surely take their place.

Irvin Moses.