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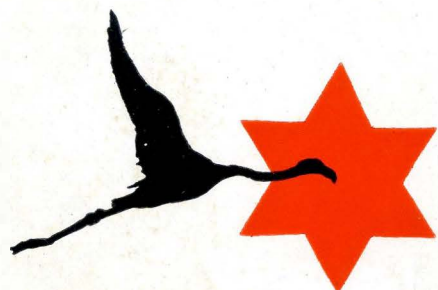


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The

# flamingo



APRIL, 1938

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Vol. 12

No. 4

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## Winter Park, Florida

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*Cover Design by John Rae*

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# To Go Home

ELIZABETH SCHOENING

"IT DOESN'T matter where we live," the young man said. He was a thin young man with brown eyes and hollow cheeks, and I was thinking he might look like anyone else if he were to shave and cut his hair and buy an overcoat. It's the lack of an overcoat really which characterizes people on city streets in January. And it was the reason, too, why we didn't turn him out when he wandered into the bookstore, obviously not able to buy anything.

Come to think of it, it's lucky he chose the bookstore of all the shops on sixth street. Anywhere else he would have been turned back into the street, where a January wind was whipping past the buildings, and the sky was a mild slate color—the color of cold. But we don't operate orthodoxly, in spite of the fact that there are people we have to be careful of—people who go out almost as soon as they come in, or are turned aside with saccharine lies when they begin to ask questions. That is because the management is an unanswered question except to a certain political faction, and there are plenty of people who would like to know the answer.

This young man wasn't one of those. You could tell by looking at him. And when anyone comes in hungry or cold or out of luck, we try to help him. Not for any special humanitarian reason, you understand; it's just something that comes up and you do it as a matter of course. Queer people drift in all the time, so we aren't too much surprised by any of them any more.

That is why I hardly looked up from the sales slips I was trying to tabulate when this particular young man drifted in and sat down, unobtrusively, near a radiator. And I kept on tabulating, inexpertly adding a column of

figures, when he walked over to the desk and said in an ordinary, pleasant voice, "You know, I'm going home tomorrow."

That was the first thing he said, and to me there didn't seem to be much answer except the obvious "You are? How nice," of a busy clerk.

It was Olga who asked where he lived. She is efficient enough not to be preoccupied, and she likes people in the abstract. Small and dark and beautiful in an intelligent Jewish way, she sits behind her desk doing her work as capably as the highest-salaried secretary you could find, and between sales slips and orders she speculates about people. The amusing part about her speculations is that they are almost invariably wrong—over-dramatized. But she believes them herself and her imaginary world is pliable enough so that she is never disillusioned.

So, "It doesn't matter where we live," the young man said, and Olga looked up with sympathy and interest and the speculative gleam of a human-nature student. He moved away from me and sat on the edge of her desk, taking up a pencil and twirling it nervously between his palms.

"Oh," I thought, "we're in for it now." And I put my pencil down before I tackled the second column—five units longer than the first. I remembered the last time, when Olga had extracted the life story of a visiting Mason from Long Beach while I was trying to create order out of the filing system.

"You know," he said, "we might live anywhere. We might be transplanted, house and yard and all, to Oshkosh or the suburbs of Detroit or Miles City, Illinois, and nobody would know the difference. Within a week Dad would be playing four-hundred with the



same men, Mother would be arranging bridge parties with the same Women's Club, the same next-door neighbors would come in on Friday evenings, the same Church would give a chicken supper in the parlor every Wednesday. We're unique that way perhaps—we and all the others. Take most people now; if they were just snatched up like that they might bounce among all sorts of alien personalities and never find the right street to live on. With us, it's a matter of class. There is our niche, and we drop into it. No one would mistake us for anything besides Church-going, Women's Clubbing, neighborly Americans."

"I see what you mean," said Olga, and she smiled her impersonally friendly smile. I didn't see. I kept wondering what pawnbroker had his overcoat and why. That and the hollow cheeks didn't look like Detroit or the Miles City, Illinois, Rotary Club either.

But he looked grateful for the smile and the warmth. "I want to make you see," he said to her. "I haven't talked up till now—not to anyone. All this has been locked up inside me. It means so much, you see, this going home. And no one can quite understand it."

"You must love your home very much," Olga said.

For a moment he didn't answer. He sat there on the edge of the desk, making aimless pencil marks on one of the memorandum pads. Then he said in a low voice. "No. No, it isn't that. For years now—for a lot of years—I've thought about going back, and always I've thought no, it would be better to die. Ever since the last time I have thought that. But it's something I have to do now, now that I have the right."

I glanced up at him, and there was a strained, bitter look about his mouth as if he were thinking things he didn't like to think. That, too, was different from the hundreds of overcoated young men who passed before the windows each day on their way to work, all

with the same stamp on them. Olga leaned forward. The gesture was enough.

"I don't know why it didn't happen with me the way it happens with most young fellows you see or read about," he said. "I had all the chances. My sister and I, we went to school and to high school the way people do. Our family never had a lot of money, but they managed to put me through college. A small college—denominational. You probably wouldn't know the name. Then, you know, we're supposed to graduate and get jobs and marry and settle down—that's the way life is supposed to run, and if it does I guess you're successful."

He paused and began his aimless marking again. "I guess the fault was in me," he said. "I guess I just didn't have the stuff. Enterprise, you know, and push and ambition. If I'd gone out for athletics it might have been different. The boy next door is making a good salary as a football coach now. My mother often mentions him when she writes. But I didn't have any knack for that at all, so I wanted to take—well—an English major—till dad made me see how impractical it would be."

"I majored in Economics myself," Olga said. "Clerking is just a by-line."

College boy. That would have fitted him a few years ago. I could see traces still—but not the sophomoric intellectualism of the University boys I knew, nor the sublime ignorance of some of the football majors. Somewhere between, and a lot knocked out of him.

"You did? I finally took a business major. I can operate all the machines, and I'm a registered accountant. So far I haven't been able to find much use for any of it," he said. "The thing is—well—you may think it's queer for a man, but I wanted to be a writer. Poetry, you know. Not syndicate stuff; the real thing, like Keats or Shelley or Browning. Say, have you read 'Sordello'?"

Olga nodded. His face lighted with the

first enthusiasm I had seen in it. He dropped the pencil and gripped the edge of the desk.

"Isn't it fine? And the monologue—'There's My Last Duchess,' you know? Well, that sort of thing. I did it at college for the literary supplement. Look here, I have one of them with me if you wouldn't mind—"

He pulled a sheaf of clippings from his pocket, torn clippings fastened together with a pin, and held them toward us diffidently. "I'd love to see them," Olga said, and took them from him. She read them quite carefully, one by one, and handed each one to me when she had finished.

They were quite uniformly good poems—none bad and none with any spark of greatness. The thing you won't see in provincial anthologies because its merit is too high, or in first-rate poetry magazines because it lacks startling qualities. The last of all were the best. A sort of love sequence, they were, not clipped from the college newspaper but typed on creased tablet paper and folded many times.

All the while we read he watched our faces, as if to probe into our minds. Strange, I thought, to have him care so much. As if the cold and the wind and the whole city could vanish for awhile and leave him in some towered castle of his own creation. Not a fabulous castle either; rather square and ordinary with perhaps a few miraculous turrets. . .

Most fairly intelligent college boys who studied the Romantic period could write as well.

Olga said, "They're really excellent." I think she believed it.

His face was transfigured, like a thirsting man who has been suddenly given water—a spring of clear water.

I gave them back to him. "The last three," I said. "You could probably publish them if you sent them away."

His eyes clouded. "Yes," he answered, "I've thought of it sometimes, but there's an

ethic involved. They're true, you see; real people and all. I don't think it would be quite fair to the girl."

I tried not to smile, and I did not point out the untraditional soundness of his ethic. He was silent for awhile before he went on.

"That was in college too," he said. "I think I was happier there than anywhere in my life. Four static years, you see, when it didn't matter whether I was a success or not as long as I kept up my marks. And then there was the literary supplement where all my stuff was published—it's very encouraging to see yourself in print. And everybody thinks it's good, if the college is small, so of course you can think so too. When you're out it's different. You have to face people and fight, and then you find out if you have the stuff."

"Not always," Olga said. "Sometimes your luck isn't very good."

The young man frowned. There was something ludicrous about his disapproval, contrasted with hollow cheeks and uncut hair. "Luck doesn't have anything to do with it," he said. "If a man works hard he'll get ahead. It's all in being practical, and never letting anybody get ahead of you. There are all kinds of opportunities for fellows who are capable of taking them."

"'Commencement Addresses, Unabridged': Chapter three," I murmured.

He didn't hear me. "My father is a very practical man," he said. "I don't know; it just happened that everything went wrong for me. It was partly self-consciousness, maybe—everyone expecting me to be a success and all. You see, dad and mother both have told me those things over and over; they expected me to be earning money as soon as I got out of college."

"What happened?" Olga asked. "Couldn't you get a job?"

He shook his head. "I don't like to think about it. I haven't been home since the end



of that year, you see. It was—well, that's partly the reason why I'm going back now. To see if it won't be different, perhaps."

He stood up and walked over to one of the shelves. He stood in front of it for a long time, looking at the books one by one, covers and title pages. Olga did not watch him, but I did. I thought he looked ill, as if he might be hungry.

There was a quarter in one of my desk drawers and I thought he might be able to get some coffee and a sandwich if he had it. There is a lunch-room next door where the food is quite good, and it saves a walk in the January wind if we go through the side door.

Finally I called him over and told him about it. "You look hungry," I said. "Maybe you'll want to get some lunch."

I was not surprised when he shook his head, but I was astonished when I saw he meant it. "Thank you," he said. "I've just eaten the first dinner I've had in six months. Chicken, at that place where they roast them in the window and bums and children stand around outside until they're sick from the smell. I had stood there so long—so this noon when I could I went in and ate." He paused. "It should have choked me," he said, "after everything. But somehow I couldn't feel a thing. Just hunger at first, and then appeasement—I suppose that's where a man's conscience stops."

The whole thing puzzled me. "Couldn't you pay for it?" I asked.

He nodded. "Oh yes. I could pay for it. I could have paid for a lot of them. I'm—" he looked toward the door, "I'm going home, you see."

He shook his head, and walked toward the window. For a long time he stood there looking out. When he came back his face looked drawn and older, and there was unhappiness in his eyes; deep, inexplicable sorrow. He watched us for a little while, then suddenly he spoke to Olga.

"How much do you think a life is worth?" he asked.

Her startled glance amused me. "Why, everything," she said. "It's all a person has, his life."

He smiled a little and shook his head. The smile made him seem older. "Christ's was worth thirty pieces of silver to Judas, and maybe Judas was starving. But afterwards his own wasn't worth a nickel. That's the way it is after awhile, I guess.

"You know," the young man said, and paused. Then he sat down on the edge of the desk again. "I remember when I came home from college. I had been working on campus in the summers for four years, so all that time I had lived away there with other people away from their families. I got so I thought it was the world."

"I know," Olga said, looking up at him intently.

"Yes, you've been to the University, haven't you. You see, all through college I had worked expecting to get a job when I got out. Somehow a person never thinks he won't. Everyone does and everyone always has. But then the end of the year came and I applied at a lot of places—it isn't as if I didn't have the qualifications. I placed fourth in my class, and I can operate all the machines—adding and dictaphone and so on. You'd think firms would need young fellows who could operate all the machines and who were steady workers, wouldn't you?"

Olga nodded. "You'd think so," she said. "But there are so many people trying to hold jobs . . ."

"Well, but you'd think somewhere—everywhere they ask, 'Have you had any experience?' I don't see how you can get experience if you don't work first."

"It's a vicious circle," Olga said. There was an interval of silence.

After awhile the young man went on. "But I was going to tell you about coming home

that time. You see I didn't have any money for a ticket, so I had to wire for it. It was kind of hard for the family to scrape together even thirty dollars then, because dad had been sick and my sister was graduating from high school. And they couldn't understand why I didn't have a job. I had applied everywhere, I guess. Everywhere you can imagine. So I thought, well, I'll go home and see how it is there, and maybe manage to find work in town. You know how it is when there's nothing else to do and you think about going home."

I guess both of us understood that. I guess anyone understands it who has ever been sick or unhappy or broke or even just tired of things. First you want to die, and then you realize you want to go home—a sort of mythical home where there is comfort and shelter.

"There was this girl," the young man said. "We were going to get married when I had my job. She said she'd wait—funny, I've never loved another woman since then; not really loved, you know. But even then, when we said goodbye, I knew that was all for us. I remember the day we left it rained, and I thought of the rain washing the print of our footsteps from the paths, and the mark of our bodies from the deep grass."

Wind whistled past the windows as he spoke. We were both quiet.

"So I went home. It was colder there, and there were more people. I didn't want anyone to meet me, so I just came. The house looked smaller somehow, and older, and the rooms seemed dark. Mother was sitting at the sewing table, mending things, and dad was upstairs still in bed. He was just getting better, and he hadn't worked for a long time. My sister was at school."

He frowned a little. "I can't tell you so it will sound like anything at all. You maybe expected something emotional. But it was only that. The house was like—like a shell. A worn, beaten shell with all the life out of it.

Hollow. And I began to notice the other houses—the people we know and always will know. It's a strange thing, but they were hollow too. Just the same, you understand, but no life anywhere. The embroidered pillows and the scrolled mottoes had a beaten look. Even the upholstered couches were tired."

He looked at Olga then to see if she understood. She was listening as both of us had to listen, because of the picture. I think she must have been puzzled, but her expression did not show anything but interest and sympathy. I could not speak.

"So the thought kept hammering that we were all done for. We were between two things, I thought, and I couldn't understand them. The sleek stone houses on one side, and something dark and secret in tall factory chimneys on the other. A triumphant look they had. Oh well, then there were family quarrels because everything was so pinched, and I knew I was in the wrong. I might have done something—something—so the hollow would have been filled. Finally I was ashamed to come down to breakfast and see the lines around my mother's mouth, and hear my father ask us to be careful about butter and tell about the price of eggs."

He stopped, and wandered over to the window again. Our tension didn't relax. "Did you leave then?" Olga called across the room.

He turned sharply around. "What? Yes. Oh yes. I worked as a grocery boy that summer at home, but the salary wasn't anything much and in the fall they use high school kids. So I've been on the bum for four years. When I get work I send money home, but that isn't so very often. I applied for office work in different cities until my clothes got bad; now I've been doing harvesting or anything, at least I was until I met some fellows and—"

His voice trailed away. He talked as if he were very tired. "It wasn't anything I'd do ordinarily, you know, but I kept thinking about going home, and I knew—it'll be dif-



ferent now, I guess, or maybe I'm just dreaming. Maybe it's gone too far, or maybe things will be worse. But while I can stand it I'll stay; *they'll* never look for me there anyway. None of *them* knew about it. And I have the right now. I can get a new suit of clothes. I can get an overcoat. I can telegraph ahead to be met. Maybe when I get back we can trade in the family car."

"But what—" The sound of the door opening stopped Olga's question. No customer; just Stormy and Bill with a heavy box of books. They put their load down and walked over to the radiator, shivering. "God," said Stormy, "there's an icicle on my eye-brow." They didn't seem to notice the young man.

The young man came over to the desk again. "Thanks," he said, "for letting me get warm. I shouldn't have taken up your time like this. I'm terribly grateful." He smiled. "I'm going home tonight," he said, "on the eight o'clock train."

"Good luck to you," said Olga. "Get that overcoat."

"Goodbye, and thanks," he said.

Then he went out, pulling his coat collar up around his face. A blast of cold air whirled in and stirred the papers when he opened the door.

Stormy came over to us. "Who?" he asked, and jerked with his thumb toward the door.

"Some young fellow," Olga said. "He was telling us about himself, and you interrupted."

Stormy smiled. He's very fond of Olga but he thinks she is a moron. "Well, file him under Unfinished. By the way, he reminds me of somebody. Somebody I've seen just lately." Stormy pondered. He likes to connect people; when he can't it bothers him. "Hey, Bill," he called, "can you remember seeing that young fellow or somebody who looked like him? Earlier today somewhere, I mean?"

Bill was sitting on the radiator reading. He hasn't much patience with Stormy's mono-

mania. "Naw," he said, "you're imagining things. Hey, look, fellows, Starke and Blanding took it on the chin last night."

Starke and Blanding are more often known in our town as the proprietors of the Metropolitan Bank and the two biggest frauds out of jail and living on the Boulevard. (The last definition isn't so much general as personal). So we were interested to the extent of saying "What? How did it happen?"

"Gang of thugs; somebody bumped off the watchman too. Sa-ay, they must have made some haul. Almost a clean million."

"Any idea who did it?" Stormy asked.

"Yeah, they've practically fastened on a gang. Seen people hanging around for no good reason, you know, and wired descriptions and found out some of them have served small sentences in one-horse dumps. This is their first big job, it says. Look here, they've got pictures."

Stormy left us to look over his shoulder. Suddenly he gave a small exclamation. "I knew it!" he said. "On the street-car, over the conductor's shoulder, all framed in type like this. See here, you!" He raced over to us, the opened paper scattering its pages as he ran, and put the front page down on Olga's desk. "Now see," he said, and pointed to one of the pictures.

It had, the caption said, been taken in a North Carolina jail a year ago of a man who gave his name as Richard Brown. The charge had been petty thieving; food and small change. Since then the face had been seen in company with the more notorious Red Morelli who was implicated in the holdup of the Metropolitan Bank because—and so on.

There, lean and unhappy among the more satisfied faces of Morelli and his henchmen Schmidt and Rossi, and two columns from a famous movie actress who had dyed her hair a new shade of red, were the blurred features of the young man.

For a long time we didn't say anything.

Then Stormy said, "He didn't look like a bad fellow, you know. Poor guy; they'll all be on his trail now."

"He seemed so nice," said Olga mournfully.

"You're lucky he didn't rob the store," said Bill.

"He wouldn't!" Olga flared up in defense. "Besides, there's nothing in the cash register."

We laughed a little, but we all felt rotten. We were glad when Stormy said, "Five o'clock; I guess we can leave now." We tried not to mention it again.

Olga packed her books away and put her desk in order with a flurry of efficiency. It was only while she was pulling on her galoshes that something occurred to her. "I wonder," she said in a preoccupied way, "I wonder whatever happened to that girl."

---

## RECOMPENSE

ELIZABETH SCHOENING

Have you, then, broken rock here to uncover  
The leaping spring whose heart might quell your thirst?  
Yet dream no smiling land, no scattered clover  
Quick-springing from dry sand. The plains are cursed  
With parching acres, and no bird returns  
From mellow land to sing where blackened trees  
Are stark against the sun. The traveller learns  
Unresurrected death from such as these.

Yet smite the stone, and pray your rod is strong  
To cleave what hidden water cools its walls.  
When you are dust at last, and when your song  
Is scattered to the wind, this stream which falls  
On heedless earth will blossom, will be rest,  
Where the untiring wind prowls loneliest.

# Mutiny In The Wings

*A Play in One Act*

JESS GREGG

## *Characters*

THE AUTHOR  
THE CRITIC  
PETER TROTWOOD  
PAULA DANE  
ARNOLD DANE  
ELVIRA DANE

*(The curtain has not yet risen. Into the box at the left of the stage, strides the AUTHOR. His face is like the satirical mask of Drama. He has a sensitive nose, but his eyes and voice are bitter, and his hair is uninhibited.)*

AUTHOR: I am the Author,  
Creator of Life.  
And I am, in truth,  
A god in myself.  
Should one potent man  
Have one hundred maids  
Each bear him a son  
Still he'd be sire of  
Comparative few.  
Now, I may give birth  
To thousands, yea, more,  
Sans the assistance  
Of any fine nymph.  
My brain is my womb,  
My offsprings, my thought.  
I'm the lone parent,  
Their tongue and their soul;  
The guide of their lives,  
Their only Supreme.  
And my will be done  
By daughter and son.

*(He seats himself. Enter the Critic. He*

*is impeccably dressed and groomed. His voice is hollow with boredom, and his long, blase face resembles the Greek mask of Tragedy.)*

CRITIC: I am the Critic  
Still serving sans thanks  
My mistress, the Stage.  
Oft people call me  
Her gross parasite,  
Since in existing  
I frequently cause  
An untimely death  
To plays I review.  
My enemies say  
The wings my Muse lent  
Were small, and too weak  
To carry me up  
To clouds of success.  
And so, they profess,  
I seek my revenge  
By trying to spear  
Those who may soar,  
Down, with the point of  
My poisonous pen.  
Of course they mistake  
And libel my line.  
For always, 'tis so,  
The worthy I'll court  
But sting to the heart  
Abortions of Art.

*(He seats himself in the box at the right of the stage.)*

CRITIC: And the name of your play is  
...?

AUTHOR: I call it "Love and Green Apples."

CRITIC: And what type of play is this?

AUTHOR: This is a piece pertaining to



the fabric of flame in the swift lightning from the fervent, the breathless, and the unleashed. It is of the spark, the cloud, and the oppressing thunder. It is, in short, a Sex Drama.

CRITIC: Oh, God!—another?

AUTHOR: Was it not you yourself who recommended a drama on a subject that should forever be vital?

CRITIC: Yes.

AUTHOR: Well, frankly—I feel that sex is here to stay.

CRITIC: (*fitting a cigarette into a long holder*): Proceed.

AUTHOR (*unrolls his script*): I'll read it aloud. Try to imagine the characters and production on this stage here.

(*Begins to read.*)

"Love and Green Apples," a Sophisticated Tragedy.

CRITIC: Yes.

AUTHOR: The scene is set in a Manhattan apartment.

(*The curtain begins to rise.*)

It is furnished with sterile white modern furniture.

CRITIC: I do not like the setting. Modern furnishings do something most vexing to my enzymes.

AUTHOR: In front of an enormous window panel stands PETER TROTWOOD, looking down into the city.

(*The curtain is up, and Peter is thus disclosed.*)

Trot—as he is affectionately called—hovers indecisively around thirty, and his face shows his amusement at being alive. He wears a smoking jacket. He turns.

(*The man on the stage turns.*)

And lighting a cigarette

(*Trot does.*)

he begins to hum a little tune.

(*Trot begins to hum "Bei Mir Bist Du Schon".*)

AUTHOR: No! No! Don't hum that.

(*Trot breaks off humming.*)

Something a little less frenzied.

(*Trot begins to hum "Stormy Weather."*)

There! (*to Critic*) Don't you think that's much better?

CRITIC: Yes! Yes! But go on with the play.

AUTHOR (*reading on*): The door bell rings.

(*It does.*)

Trot walks over and opens the door.

(*Trot does.*)

There is a silence, then Trot says quietly—

TROT: Come on in, Paula.

AUTHOR: Enter PAULA DANE.

(*She enters*)

Paula is standardly beautiful, technically clever, and emotionally over-developed. She cries—

PAULA: My sister-in-law tried to follow me, but my evasive taxi led her such a merry chase through Central Park that she'll never find her way out. Maybe years and years from now her whitened bones will be found. Oh darling—you're not even the littlest bit glad to see me, are you?

TROT: I just feel you were a little unwise to come here.

PAULA: Trot, don't tell me you've set up a monastery here.

(*She bursts into laughter.*)

Oh, darling, just because my husband is your best friend you don't have to avoid me.

TROT: This isn't worthy of Arnold. He is a fine man.

PAULA: Arnold is a fine man of nasty notions.

TROT: You're still his wife.

PAULA (*flopping upon the couch and kicking her shoes off and up into the air.*):

You'd never know it—the attention he gives me.

(*Still Trot does not turn. She rises.*)

Oh, Trot, don't be middle-class. You

don't mind traveling in the best circles—  
what's wrong with the best triangles?

TROT: You're metallic.

PAULA (*smiling*): I'm determined.

CRITIC: And I'm bored.

AUTHOR: You're bored?

CRITIC: These woman - chases - man episodes are too life-like to be good theatre.

TROT: Don't you see, Paula? Arnold has been like a brother to me. When I met you in Paris, I didn't know—I didn't realize who you were. Don't you understand?

PAULA: I understand nothing, except that our love is immoral.

AUTHOR: What? Immoral? You mean immortal.

PAULA: Well, don't blame me for your typographical errors.

AUTHOR: Wait—I'll correct it. (*Pencils script.*) There. Now, do it again.

PAULA: I understand nothing, except that our love is immortal. (*Trot goes from her.*) Darling, don't be so obnoxiously noble. I know you still love me—I can tell. Every time I touch you, an electrical shock runs through every fiber of my body.

CRITIC: How distressingly cosmic!

PAULA (*turning coldly to Critic*): I sincerely wish you'd shut up. Haven't you the decency to keep out of something very private? Where was I—? Oh, yes—and in my heart, I know that you can't mean what you say. You can't wish to terminate our love—to blot out forever Paris in the spring, Vienna in the fall, chestnuts in blossom and those nights bathed in splendor, hazy with stardust.

(*She goes over to Trot and looks up into his face.*)

You can't put me from your mind forever, can you?

TROT: Paula, Paula dear—I've tried—tried my damndest to, but—oh, what's the use? You're a necessary evil.

(*As he takes her in his arms, the Critic*

*yawns and lights another cigarette.*)

CRITIC: Do you plan, at this point, to lower a curtain for a lapse of morals?

AUTHOR (*proudly*): My characters are not sneaky, sir.

TROT: You know, darling, this isn't nice.

PAULA: There are lots of things that are not nice in this life.

TROT: I know—that's why I get such a kick out of living, too.

(*He kisses her.*)

I love you so.

(*There is a knock at the door.*)

CRITIC: Enter the husband.

AUTHOR: How did you know?

CRITIC: Husbands always enter on the line "I love you so."

VOICE OUTSIDE: Open up.

PAULA: My God! My husband!

TROT: How could it be?

PAULA: Elvira must have followed me, after all. I must hide.

(*She runs about, searching for a hiding place. Ducks behind a curtain.*)

CRITIC (*calling out*): I say there — Miss Paula—You left your shoes by the couch, you know.

PAULA: I know it, silly. It's in the play.

CRITIC: How frightfully inane. I never would have left them at a time like this.

PAULA (*confidentially*): Neither should I, really. But the author wrote it that way, so—(*shrugs.*)

AUTHOR: I suppose you could write it a lot better? What do either of you know about play writing? Paula, you're just an imaginary character, and you (*to the Critic*) never wrote a play in your life.

CRITIC: There's an old saying: "You don't have to be a hen to know a bad egg."

(*The Author rises and snarls at the Critic.*)

AUTHOR: Do you want to hear this, or don't you? (*Hurriedly*) Don't answer! I'll go on. Enter the husband.

(*The Husband walks on stage.*)

He is well-tailored, tall and greyish. At the moment, he seems to be quite vexed. Behind him comes ELVIRA DANE, his sister.

*(She enters)*

Middle-aged, she is a torch that has never burned. Frigid describes her mercilessly.

ARNOLD *(grimly)*: Where is she?

TROT: Who, old man? Who, who?

ARNOLD: You know damn well who I mean. Paula. Where is she?

ELVIRA: I know she's here. I followed her.

ARNOLD: And you — my best friend, Trot. How could you?

ELVIRA: I've suspected this for a long time.

ARNOLD: Well, where is she? Don't try to stall.

TROT: I should not think of stalling. Paula has not been here for weeks—veritably weeks.

*(He sees the shoes and begins to edge over to them.)*

ARNOLD: Could it be that I've made a mistake? I'm sorry, old man—I— *(spots the shoes)* Those are Paula's shoes. Paula is here. Paula is in this room.

CRITIC: Remarkable deduction!

ARNOLD: Paula! Paula! Wherever you are, come out!

PAULA *(coming from behind the curtain)*: Well, Arnold?

ARNOLD: I might have known it! I might have known it!

ELVIRA: She was born that way, Arnold. She was born faithless.

PAULA: Don't be silly, Elvira. God made me perfect. Being this way was my own idea.

TROT: Well, now that you've found out, what do you plan to do?

ARNOLD *(taking out a gun)*:

ARNOLD and CRITIC *(together)*: I'll show you my plans. Say your prayers!

AUTHOR: How did you know those lines?

CRITIC: They always come in that situation.

PAULA: Darling, don't be vexing. Put down that gun! Give it to me.

ARNOLD *(pushing her away savagely)*: Out of my way, woman!

TROT: You can't push her away like that!

*(The two men begin to struggle and it is obvious that they are really rather peeved. They fight with abandon, and the furniture is scattered in a most interesting manner.)*

PAULA *(screaming)*: Darling, don't! Don't! Don't! He'll kill you!—

ARNOLD: Just that!

*(He fires pointblank at Trot. And then again. And then again. And then again and again, and on into the night. Of course, Trot crumples into a heap, but Arnold keeps on shooting.)*

AUTHOR *(rising)*: Say, you don't have to stuff him with lead for posterity, you know.

ARNOLD *(turning—snarling)*: Say, listen! Whose rival is this—yours or mine?

AUTHOR: Well, he's your rival, but he's my character.

ELVIRA *(approaching his box)*: Say, who are you anyhow? Why don't you mind your own business?

AUTHOR: This is my business. I'm the playwright.

ELVIRA: So what?

PAULA: Oh! You've killed him! He's dead!

CRITIC: This girl is really remarkable.

ARNOLD *(tossing away the gun and staring at the body)*: What have I done? What have I done?

CRITIC: I'm afraid that's rather obvious.

PAULA *(flinging herself on the boy's body and weeping)*: Now have you taken away the star that guided me through the dark waters of my life. Now have you burst



the bubble of dreams. My gold is tarnished, and the cold winds howl dismally about my bleeding heart. Now I am alone, for you have destroyed the thread of life I clung to. I die.

*(She picks up the gun and uses it rather successfully upon herself, falling across her lover's body.)*

ARNOLD: Paula, speak to me!

*(Buries his face in her hair.)*

ELVIRA *(her body taut, her voice hoarse)*:

'Tis the will of God!

AUTHOR: Curtain!

*(The curtain begins to lower.)*

PAULA *(raising her head)*: Will of God—hell! It's the will of that playwright. Don't you dare lower that curtain!

AUTHOR: I say lower it. That was the curtain line. You are dead and the play is over.

*(Curtain hesitates, but does not lower.)*

PAULA: Well, I don't want to be dead. It makes my husband sad, and it makes me very desolate when he is sad. What's more—I love my husband. I hate Trot. I never did like him. He, and his silly epigrams and his smoking jacket. I wish you'd fix the play so that I could love my husband.

AUTHOR *(rising horrified)*: Why, say, you can't do that! It wouldn't do. I mean—just wouldn't go. Who ever heard of a sophisticated lady loving her own husband? It isn't done. The audience would not understand.

CRITIC: This play shouldn't have been called "Love and Green Apples." A more apt title would be "Love and Green Authors." I never saw such foolish endings. The author's finis is as phony as Paula's is ridiculous. It simply isn't either good drama or good art to love one's husband. My idea is that instead of killing yourself you should kill your husband in revenge, and stand there—stark with tragedy—knee deep in dead lovers. Very artistic.

PAULA: My ending may be very Ladies' Home Journalish, but it's the way I want it, and the way we're going to have it.

AUTHOR: You can't do that! I'll complain to the union. Characters unfair to author. Mutiny in the middle of a passage.

CRITIC *(to the characters)*: I'll lambast you black and blue from my column. I've never seen such disobedient characters.

*(The Author and Critic get out on the stage and, both expressing their views at once, they whirl in a hubbub of mad fury about the stage.)*

PAULA: Oh, shut up! Get up, Trot. Get up, I say! Now, Arnold, you shoot him again.

AUTHOR: I won't have this.

TROT: I don't like this so well, myself. After all, I ought to have something to say about my own death.

PAULA: Oh, keep still! Now—*(she holds Trot before Arnold)* Shoot him, honey. *(Arnold fires at Trot, who crumples as before.)*

ARNOLD: What have I done? What have I done?

AUTHOR: You've wrecked my play—that's what you've done! I simply cannot allow you to do this to my work. I demand that you kill yourself now, Paula, as I wrote it, and finish this nonsense.

ARNOLD *(angrily)*: Sir, you are speaking to the woman I love.

AUTHOR *(in high rage)*: Stop this! Get out of here! I'll rewrite this play and simply leave you out of it. Now, kill yourself, Paula, and be done with it.

CRITIC: Yes, this has gone far enough.

*(Arnold levels the gun at them. Horrified, the Author and the Critic scoot about the stage trying to hide.)*

AUTHOR: Stop! You can't do this. I'm your father.

CRITIC: Put that down! I'll sue. I'll ruin you.

*(Arnold fires and they both fall down—dead.)*

PAULA: Arnold, darling, I realize now that it was you and always you I loved. Trot was but a silly whim of mine. We'll forget him, you and I. Should all this lead to prison or death, I will follow. And, maybe someday—someday, we can return to our little chicken farm in the West, with the honeysuckle vine and the purple hills

and the primrose paths where we can be just folks together.

*(They embrace.)*

ELVIRA *(her face lighted, her arms upstretched)*:

'Tis the will of—'Tis the will of—Paula and Arnold, I guess.

*(Paula parts from the embrace long enough to say)*: Curtain!

*(The curtain slowly falls.)*



## MEDITATION

PATRICIA GUPPY

Under this layer of flesh there lies a skull;  
A finely-fashioned thing: two sockets shaped  
Precisely for the eyes. Most beautiful  
The smooth white bone dissection's knife has scraped—  
I feel it now; my fingers trace its form  
Under the living tissue of my head.  
Will this high sculpture edify the worm?  
I think I see it after I am dead:  
A hollow thing, which once contained some thought;  
The teeth agrin, that speaking lips had hid;  
The noseless hole that crumbling time has wrought.  
Someone may wonder what this skull once did,  
Fulfilling its evolved design? and I  
Would be right hard put to it to reply.

# Nice Women

PATRICIA GUPPY

THE doorbell was still shouting when Stella's finger pressed her lock-release button. She glanced gloomily around her small room as it did so. Neat bedspread in order, curtains clean, floor swept, books dusted; but not even this could change the room from being a half-basement made-over, nor make its dimensions larger than ten by eleven. Well—a lift of the eyebrows.

She opened her door and smiled a filial smile as her mother descended with ponderous dignity into the little hallway outside. Even at that stage Mrs. Clingham's whole attitude was critical. "Hello, mother," said Stella, bending her head for the pecks at each other's cheeks. Mrs. Clingham entered her daughter's threshold and continued her comprehensive glances of criticism.

"I'm sure," she said, taking off her gloves as Stella closed the door, "I've never seen such an out-of-the-way place. Even the taxi-drivers seemed to have trouble finding it. And through such peculiar streets!"

"Let's have your coat," said Stella. "Don't you think the neighborhood itself is rather nice? There are peculiar streets near every nice neighborhood in New York; there are even peculiar streets near Park Avenue. I think this chair is the more comfortable. Couldn't Miss Browning come with you?"

"Cynthia has her cousins in Jersey City, you know, and since we only have these few hours in New York, she wanted to spend the time with them. She'll come over with the car and pick me up at three." Mrs. Clingham, securely settled in the rocking chair, looked about her as if she were trying to discover obnoxious vermin. As her eyes rested upon the photograph of a young man on her daughter's dressing table, her expression seemed to in-

dicate that she had found some. The portrait, signed, "With all my love, David," returned Mrs. Clingham's hostile stare with the impassive gaze of a pictured face.

Finding nothing, except for this, but simple neatness and cleanness, with some arrangements covering the shabby spots, she returned to her daughter, who was sitting on the side of the bed. "Really, Stella, I cannot say that I approve of your living like this."

Stella shook back her fair wavy hair, set her hands firmly on the bed on either side of her, and composed her mouth into pleasantness. "I find it very enjoyable," she said. "Tell me about your plans for the trip. By the papers, you'll be going into lovely weather in Florida. Where do you plan to stop tonight? You won't have very much time to-day if you're starting at three."

Mrs. Clingham sat upright in the rocking chair. "What kind of woman is this landlady of yours?" she asked.

"Oh, just a woman," said Stella. "Quite a nice person. I don't know, I'm sure. I'm not well acquainted with her."

Mrs. Clingham straightened the ribbon of the folded eyeglasses which lay over her full, rigidly confined bosom. She made the gesture ominous, fraught with significance. "Then there is absolutely no nice woman near you to whom you can turn in case of trouble . . . or . . . or . . . ?"

"What trouble," inquired Stella, "do you think I am likely to get into, exactly?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Clingham, "I am your mother. I am an older woman than you are, and there are some things I know that you have not learned yet. I am only interested in your welfare. Apart from the fact that I don't like to see my daughter living in a



sordid little closet like this, it is not a nice thing for a young girl of twenty-two to be alone in a place like this. People are likely to misunderstand. And it's only natural that they should. You haven't been brought up this way, Stella."

Stella was rigidly still. "A point to be made, mother," she said quietly, "is that I am earning my own living, and paying my own way . . . at least, as long as I hold down this job." She paused, looking with careful politeness at the familiar folded lips and the two incongruous chins . . . one crag-like and determined above, and the other of soft meaningless flesh below. "Incidentally," she went on, "if I'm to continue paying my own way . . . which I want to do . . . this is the highest standard of living to which I can rise. Besides being the one I prefer."

Mrs. Clingham leaned forward. "There's not the least necessity in the world for you to live here, or in any place like this, Stella, even if you insist on this absurd thing of 'paying your own way.' You could do what your sister Leslie is doing . . . I'm sure, if one judged ages by common-sense, anybody would think that she was the elder of you two. Why can't you find some nice girl of your own class . . . that daughter of Nellie Barlow's you used to bring home from boarding-school; isn't she studying in New York now? At Columbia? Well, why can't you get someone like that to share a little apartment with you; then you'd be in touch with people who know you . . . she's such a nice, sensible girl . . . and you'd have the Barlows to spend your holidays and week-ends with, if you didn't want to go home to Aunt Julia (though I'm sure she's always more than glad to have you). I suppose there's no use suggesting that you board with Cynthia's cousins . . . though they've told me themselves that they would love to have you. Well, of course, your attitude towards Miss Browning is your

own business, though I should think, considering she is my best friend . . ."

Out of the corner of her eyes Stella held fleeting communion with the candid gaze of the young man in the photograph. She moved her hands forward and gripped the edge of the bed. "Mother," she said, "perhaps you can tell me in plain words what it is you are afraid of in my living here for the year."

Mrs. Clingham laid her hands on the arms of her chair and leaned forward heatedly. "Stella, I know that Leslie and her roommate would consider having you join them if you asked them. Of course, I haven't seen their place yet . . . but good gracious, if you put in your income with theirs, you could all get a lovely apartment, and have everything as nice as you've been accustomed to all your life. When you first got this absurd idea of living alone I wrote to ask Leslie if she and her roommate wouldn't be willing to have you join them, and of course she wrote back to say yes. Leslie has always been so fond of you . . . are you listening, Stella?"

Stella turned her head round to her mother. "Yes, mother."

"It would be so nice, you three girls living together this year." The voice was scolding, nagging. "I'm sure, Stella . . . Leslie is your sister; she should be closer to you than anybody else in the world, except myself; these are the years when you could give her an elder sister's sympathy and protection. It's all very well to say you'll be in the same city . . . but, goodness, miles apart! And she herself has written to me several times that she's hardly been seeing anything of you. And by her description Miss Jackson . . . Leslie calls her 'Jack' . . . I knew her aunt in Boston . . . must be a lovely girl. Leslie says she's so nice . . . Stella," Mrs. Clingham dropped her voice and hitched her chair closer to her daughter, laying a hand on the girl's woolen skirt, "really dear, it would make such a difference to my peace of mind when I'm down in Florida all

this winter, to know that you're somewhere among nice people; somewhere where . . ."

Stella leaned backward on her stiffened arms, unresponding to the touch on her knee. She eyed her mother squarely. "What exactly are you afraid of my doing here, mother?" she inquired. "Do you think I'm planning to run a one-woman brothel, or what?"

Mrs. Clingham drew back and half rose in agitation. "Stella, I cannot talk to you. I won't stand for your insolence! Really . . ."

"I'm sorry to contradict you, mother," Stella's tone rose unconsciously, "but that was not insolence;—it was merely plain speaking. I was simply putting into bare English some of what has been in your mind from the first moment you heard about my taking this room alone. I won't ask you to confirm that statement, because I know you would never do it in a million years." Stella arose lightly and moved away from her mother to her desk, and pulled out a cigarette from a package that lay there. "But," she said, "since I am being accused of insolence, mother, I might as well do the job thoroughly and get this matter settled once for all, here and now. So I shall tell you frankly that what I do or plan to do in this room which I am paying the rent for, I being twenty-two years and five months old, is strictly my own business." She struck a match and lit her cigarette, her hands well controlled.

Her mother stood with her hands clasped under her bosom and became still more emotional. "Stella," she said, "I never thought you would speak to me like this . . . today, when I'm going away and won't be seeing you for nearly a year." She regained some of her dignity. "Believe me, my child, I only speak to you because I care for your own good. It isn't only my opinion that counts; dozens of our friends know of your conditions here and how you're living and they think it's very peculiar, I can tell you. I won't tell you of all the explanations I've had to go through for

your sake in the last month, but you must remember the little poem that says, 'Reputation gone comes not again.' You can't disregard public opinion, my dear. I'm not going to talk to you about David, because I was hoping not to have any unpleasantness today; but you must remember that people know that he won't be in a position to marry you for some years yet . . ."

"No, he won't," said Stella, making an effort to keep her voice from shaking, "he's working furiously to be in that position, but he won't have the money for some time yet. I'm working hard to get some money too, but even at that we won't have enough to be safe for quite a while. So what are we to do about it . . . agree not to see each other until he has earned the right to kiss my hand in the presence of witnesses?"

Stella's eyes flashed. Mrs. Clingham toned the dictatorial quality of her voice with persuasion.

"Stella," she said urgently, "if you were with Leslie and her friend in a nice apartment, you could have a nice living-room where you and your friends could entertain David and any other nice boys who came to see you, as if you were in your own home. Here you have nowhere to entertain him, because I certainly hope you wouldn't think of bringing him right into your bedroom . . ."

Stella bit her lip and crushed out her cigarette. "Mother," she said, "I thought you wrote me that you wanted to go with me to see Leslie. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but if you're leaving at three, we'd better set out now . . . it's a long subway trip." She crossed over to her mother's coat and took it up.

Mrs. Clingham stood still. "Before we go, Stella," she stated, "I want to hear you tell me that you'll persuade Leslie to let you join them. You can ask her now . . . when we see them."

Stella held her mother's coat for her. "I'm sorry, mother, I can't. Neither with Leslie

nor anyone else. I want to stay here. I'm sorry. Let's go."

"Can you tell your mother why you insist on staying in this place, Stella?"

Stella did not answer for a moment; she was putting on her hat and coat. Then, "I can't tell you any more than I have told you already," she said.

"I'm sure, Stella," said Mrs. Clingham, "You're sending me off to Florida with a very heavy heart, and a very worried mind."

"Well!" said Stella, "Let's go and see Leslie. She'll cheer you up."

Mrs. Clingham walked out of her elder daughter's place in austere silence. Even in the subway she managed to convey the impression that Stella was in disgrace. Stella sat beside her and glared grimly at an advertisement which told her how to win the man she loved by using a certain patented mouth-wash.

As Stella rang her sister's doorbell, Mrs. Clingham looked up and down the street with approval. At one end of the block was a Chinese laundry and at the other end was a church with a small walled garden and trees dropping their yellow leaves. Mrs. Clingham looked at the church and said, "I'm glad Leslie found such a nice street."

As soon as they stood in the hall there was a tumbling sound at the top of the stairs and Leslie's excited voice raised in welcome. "Mother, darling!" she shouted, and ran down to throw her arms about her mother's neck. "How lovely to see you! How are you, dear? You're looking wonderful. It seems like a year instead of a few months since I've seen you. Can you stay overnight? . . . Hello, Stell . . . I haven't seen you in a dog's age! . . . mommy," Leslie turned towards the head of the stairs, "mommy, I want you to meet my roommate; her name is Florence Jackson, but everybody calls her Jack; so you must call her Jack too."

Mrs. Clingham, beaming, with her plump body encircled by Leslie's arm, was more than

willing to call Florence "Jack". Jack came down the stairs with her hand outstretched. She was a slender young woman of indefinable age. Her thin bony face was unadorned with makeup, and her dark hair was cropped short like a man's. Her hands were rather large, with long, thick-knuckled fingers. She was neatly dressed in a blue serge coat and skirt, with a man's shirt and tie. Her face was plain, but her eyes were large and rather fine, and she smiled and welcomed Mrs. Clingham in a very friendly way.

"Come on upstairs, mommy, and see our place," sang out Leslie, gaily ushering her mother up the stairs. "Jack" fell behind to hold out her hand to Stella. "Hello, Clingham," she said. "You haven't been to see us in an awfully long time."

"Been busy," said Stella, mounting the steps beside her sister's roommate. She smiled sideways, briefly. "When I get home all I want to do is loaf, very often. One good thing about working in banks . . . one gets Saturday afternoons off most of the time."

"So you could see your mother today; that was nice," commented Jack, the lingering gaze of her dark eyes attentive on Stella's face.

"Yes," replied Stella shortly. She went before Jack into the large airy skylighted studio which was the living-room of Leslie's and Jack's apartment.

Mrs. Clingham had already been attentively relieved of her coat and hat by Leslie, and was laying the seal of her approval on everything within sight.

Stella paused and looked at them, considering the likeness between Leslie and her mother . . . a fundamental facial likeness, and one of build. Leslie was shorter than her sister and always would be, with a stocky, broad-shouldered body, and strong muscular hands and sturdy legs. Leslie's face had a similarity to the one Stella saw in her mirror every day, but there were the high cheek-bones, the blunt nose and chin, like their mother's . . .



only with a still greater sharpness of outline, and with no softening fat. Leslie was handsomer than Stella: her blue eyes were beautiful and her thick mane of golden hair gave her a Viking's-daughter appearance. There was a fine vitality about her, a vibration of life, color, glamor and swift intelligence. Stella's eyes watched her with a saddened expression.

She felt hands about her neck at the collar of her coat, and turned quickly. Jack's face was smiling over her shoulder. "Allow me," she said, tugging gently at Stella's coat.

"Oh. Of course—Thank you," murmured Stella hastily, allowing her coat to be removed.

Leslie was showing her mother an unfinished oil painting of hers which stood on an easel near the skylight. Her eyes darted here and there as she chattered on; they glanced over vigilantly at her sister and her roommate. "Oh, Jack, dear," she called over, "Come along and help me show mother the beauties of our abode." She stretched out her hand to her roommate, who was putting Stella's coat on a hanger.

"Coming," said Jack, and taking Stella's arm, strolled over.

They paused at the door of the bedroom, an unusually large bedroom with two windows opening on a pleasant court with trees that would be green in summertime. "What a *nice* bedroom," approved Mrs. Clingham. She went in and admired the neat dressers and felt the good mattress on the double bed. There was a single cot too; Mrs. Clingham looked at it and sighed loudly enough for Stella's benefit. "Well!" she said. "You two must be quite comfortable here." She glanced in at the bathroom and went a step further. "Goodness, Stella! Compare this with that little makeshift hole you have, without even a decent bath . . . only a shower."

Stella made no reply. She had disengaged her arm from Jack's a few minutes before, and

was trying not to watch her sister take her place by Jack's side, with her arm intimately through Jack's, a moment afterwards.

Mrs. Clingham returned to the living room, and was seated attentively while Jack made tea in the kitchenette. Leslie perched on a footstool near her mother and asked innumerable questions, about Aunt Julia and cousin Tom, and Miss Browning, and other people at home, which Mrs. Clingham answered with floods of conversation, rambling stories, bits of gossip. Stella sat still in an arm chair and listened without hearing.

Jack brought out the tea, serving Mrs. Clingham first. "You know, Mrs. Clingham," she said as she did so, "this is a special day for me." She paused, looking at Mrs. Clingham with the deep expression that gave her words so much weight. As Mrs. Clingham looked flattered, she went on, "I've always wanted to meet you, and see who could be the mother of two such grand people as Stella and Les. I wonder if you're as proud of them as I am of knowing them?" Mrs. Clingham looked extremely pleased. "Well," said Jack, serving Stella, "now I've met you, I wonder that they aren't even nicer than they are."

"Well, my dear, that's very sweet of you, I'm sure." Mrs. Clingham beamed on Leslie and with only slightly less warmth on Stella. "They have been my life work, you know. I suppose, if they've turned out at all well, I feel about them as Leslie does when she's turned out a really good painting. Artistic satisfaction, you know." She beamed and nodded at Jack.

Having given Leslie a cup of tea and taken one herself, Jack ignored the remaining armchair and came to Stella's, perching easily on the padded arm. Stella shifted sideways away from her, and then glanced obliquely up at her, with a slight smile. She lowered her head to her teacup. Glancing over the rim, she caught her sister's eyes flickering nervous-

ly upon herself and Jack; but Mrs. Clingham had entered into a long confidential conversation with her younger daughter, and Leslie had to attend to it. Stella lit a cigarette and sat still, curled up and quiet.

Presently she felt Jack stir beside her. The dark girl extended her hand and brushed away a stray curl from Stella's forehead. She thrust it deftly back into place, and then ran her long fingers over Stella's smooth wavy hair. "Stella's hair is so beautiful," she said, softly, lingeringly.

"Thanks," said Stella, her voice suddenly loud. "I use Palmolive shampoo. Try it." She got up abruptly and crushed out her cigarette, crossing over to the painting on the easel. "This is really very interesting, Leslie," she said, "You've definitely got something to go on with, I think."

"Thanks, Stell." Leslie got up from her footstool and reached for a cigarette. When she had it lit she moved over to the chair Stella had just left, smiling up at Jack, who was still sitting sideways on its arm.

Stella glanced over them all swiftly. Leslie and Jack were not looking at her. It was with a jar that she realized that her mother was, with a sudden increase of angry disapproval that astonished her. What now? Oh, what did it matter, *what now*, she asked herself with a heave of impatience.

"Mother," she prompted, glancing at her watch, "didn't you say Miss Browning was coming for you at my place?"

Her mother stood up. "Yes," she stated, "we had better go back. I wish to have a talk with you before I have to leave, Stella."

"Very well, mother," said Stella.

"Oh, you don't have to go *already*!" Leslie and Jack were on their feet, polite and affectionate protestations bubbling from them. "I'm afraid we do," said Stella. "Yes; mother has to leave at three o'clock. Miss Browning is coming for her at my place. Goodbye,

Leslie. Goodbye, Jack. Yes . . . see you again soon."

"Mrs. Clingham," said Jack playfully, as she held the older woman's coat for her, "I wish you'd leave strict instructions with your daughter Stella to come and see us oftener than once every six months. We never see her! When we go to look her up she's generally out."

Stella's mother looked at Stella with her mouth folded into an ominous line. "So I understand," she emphasized; then with sudden vehemence: "I wish to heavens you'd get a little sense . . . and . . . and . . . decency into her head and make her come and live with you!"

The fierceness of this outburst left a gap of silence behind it. Leslie was on one side of her mother, Jack was behind her; they stood in a little group and stared at Stella.

Jack broke the pause. "Well, . . . I'm sure we'd be terribly glad to have her."

Leslie seconded her roommate, a little more synthetically. "Of course . . . if she cares to."

They all stood together and stared at Stella. She stood away from them and stared back, clenching her hand inside the pocket of her coat in sudden fury. Her eyes flashed hot and dry enough at Leslie to wither her. But she made the answer.

"Thanks a lot," she said in even conversational tones. "It's ever so nice of you, but I think I won't bother to move from my little cubby-hole once I'm in it. I'll be up to see you often. Ready, mother?"

Leslie and Jack saw them down to the front door, and stood waving to them until they had turned the corner of the street. Then Mrs. Clingham spoke, in the short clipped words of seething wrath. "I have something very important to speak to you about, Stella."

"Save it till we get indoors again," said Stella, bracing herself against a chill autumn wind.

Sitting side by side in the rushing current of the return subway trip, her mother was even more removed and austere. Much more; she was really angry now, really horrified, about something. Leslie must have told her . . . *She* was angry! *She* was horrified! Stella's fists clenched again, hidden in her overcoat pockets. Well . . . it's a mad world, she thought; but because someone else is a louse you don't have to be. She raised her head and looked upon an advertisement telling how to attain perfect health by the regular use of a certain well-known laxative.

It was quarter to three by Stella's watch when she closed her door behind her mother and herself. The closing of the door acted as the touching off of a train of dynamite; Mrs. Clingham did not wait to take off her coat, nor sit down, but turned on her daughter at once.

"Stella!"

"Yes, mother."

"Leslie happened to mention to me . . . I'm sure she didn't mean to let it slip out, for she is foolishly loyal to you . . . that she and Jack came here to see you at half-past nine one night, and when you opened to them, David Massey was alone here with you!"

Mrs. Clingham paused, perhaps for dramatic effect, so Stella spoke. "Quite true," she said, "I remember it distinctly. What about it?"

"Please try to refrain from being impertinent, Stella; and listen to the advice of someone who is not only your mother but an older woman who has seen a great deal of the world. You may think that you're being very clever, and very modern, my dear, but you don't know what you're doing, so it's up to me to tell you . . . My gracious heavens," she interjected, "really, Stella, I did not dream that you, brought up as you have been, would have had this boy you've picked up, alone in this room at all hours of the night. I thought you

still had a little of me left in you . . . How many times has this happened?"

"Just a minute, mother," said Stella. She rested one hand upon her desk and leaned upon it. It gave her a sense of steadiness in a whirling universe. She paused. "I don't know exactly what to begin to say to you," she said. "I might say, to start with, that if I opened my door to Leslie and Jack when Dave was here, it would seem obvious that we were doing nothing to be ashamed of, or to keep hidden from anyone. I'd like to say," she clenched her teeth suddenly, "that if anybody but my mother or another elderly woman called David a 'boy I'd picked up'. I'd slap her face in." She paused again; her mother was speechless. "However," she concluded, taking a deep breath, "I guess all that I need to say is this: I am, in the words of the old saw, free, white and twenty-one, with a little over. Therefore I must remind you that I am not obliged to answer any questions you may put to me about my private . . . my private life; and I certainly do not intend to reply to the insulting and unpleasantly suggestive ones you have just put to me. Won't you take off your coat and sit down?"

Mrs. Clingham sat down without taking off her coat. She put her gloved hand over her face and spoke in a muffled voice.

"Stella," she said, "I never thought I should live to hear you speak to me like this."

Stella stood by the desk and ran her thumbnail along a groove in the wood. She toyed with the idea of saying, *Mother, I am an honest woman*, but it remained an idea. She was removed from this train of thought by the strident buzzing of the doorbell; Miss Browning, more than punctual, as usual.

Miss Cynthia Browning had been a schoolteacher for thirty years. She was a tall, spare woman, with straight grey hair drawn back into a knob and a hat mathematically straight on it, above her long, equine face. Mrs. Clingham, who admired her, braced up at



once under her keen searching gaze, and hid some of the pathos of the scene she had just had with Stella.

"Well, there you are," said Miss Browning. "How do you do, Stella? Getting a little last-minute advice from mother? No, thanks, I won't sit. It's not quite three yet, Doris, but it will be by the time we're finally off, so if you're ready I think we might be making a start, don't you?"

"Yes, Cynthia," replied Mrs. Clingham, calmly, but with hidden sorrow.

"Did you see Leslie? How is she?"

"Yes . . . very well, thank you. I gave her your messages." Mrs. Clingham struggled to smother recent griefs that rose as she said this. "She's very nicely settled for the winter," she went on, becoming more cheerful as she thought of Leslie. "Her roommate is ever such a nice girl . . . a terribly nice girl. They seem very happy together."

"Good, I'm glad to hear it," replied Miss Browning. "I always liked Leslie. Nice bright girl . . . talented, too. And never any of this boy-crazy nonsense, as I remember her. Well, Doris . . ."

"Yes. Oh, Cynthia . . ." Mrs. Clingham added nervously, "I had a few more words to say to Stella in private . . . if you wouldn't mind . . ."

"Of course not," said Miss Browning. "I'll just go and make sure the bags are safely in, and you come out when you're ready. You'll come out with your mother, Stella? All right, then."

Alone again, Mrs. Clingham faced her daughter nervously. "Stella," she said, "unfortunately I don't have time now to talk with you any more; but I'm going away for a long time in a few minutes, and if you'll just trust that I know more about life than you do, you can save my worrying about you for all these months to come. I want you to promise me

that you'll give up having David or any other young men here late at night. I mean, for a long time. I'm not unreasonable . . . I can understand if you dropped in here with David after dinner before you go to a theatre, or something like that. But not this other business. If you're fond of each other . . . well, my dear, young people's emotions are not to be trusted together; you may think you're sure of yourself, but you can't be. I know what I'm talking about, Stella. And then, dear, people will talk, and that will hurt only you; and then it will hurt me, because that's all my life is, you and your sister. So please, for my sake, and your own, promise me, Stella."

"Mother," said Stella, "nobody is going to have any idea of what I do in this room unless you put it in their minds. That argument doesn't hold."

"My dear child, Leslie and Jack have an idea."

"They are not everybody. In fact, I happen to know that they would not be likely to carry tales about me to anybody but you. Don't worry, mother. The number of moral and immoral things one can do in New York without anybody suspecting a thing about it is amazing."

"Listen, my dear," said Mrs. Clingham, "time is going; I have to leave. I can't have the heart-to-heart talk with you I would like to have. But I ask you this: Is what people may say the only thing you're thinking of? Doesn't your own conscience and what may happen to it mean anything to you?"

"Mother," said Stella, "I promise you that I won't do anything this year that will be against my conscience. Will that suit you?"

"But I also want the other promise, Stella; promise me you won't go on with this dangerous license."

"I'm sorry, mother, but the assurance about my conscience should cover everything that is

necessary for you to be assured of."

"Stella, you are sending me away very unhappy."

Stella looked at her mother. As she looked she thought deeply, about many things. And

after she had thought of them all, she replied, "I'm sorry, mother."

Miss Browning rang the bell vigorously, and Stella went out dutifully with her mother to see her on her way to Florida.

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### HERE LET US REST

ELIZABETH SCHOENING

These molded hills curve gently  
To form the sweeping hollow  
Where all rain rests forever.  
The last light bends to follow

The downward slanting feather,  
When shadows move and lengthen,  
Of wind and cloud together  
Against the lucent evening.

Here let us rest, as silent  
As rain in peace subsiding  
To cool, subaqueous caverns.  
Worn with our wild wind-riding,

Let us lie lightly, keeping  
The sound of space, the singing,  
Muted and warmed with sleeping.

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### CINQUAINS

SEYMOUR BALLARD

Hands, strike  
No more that chord,  
The memory of love,  
That breaks the strings of my sad heart's  
Lyre.

This love  
Was a sweet song  
Leaving behind what is  
More loved, more cherished — a haunting  
Echo.

# The Landlady

*A Play in One Act*

ROB RAE

## *Characters*

DONN is a young artist. He is cheerful, irresponsible, and boyish. There is a pleasant *joie-de-vivre* about him; also an obvious lack of the sallowness and morbidness often associated with an artist's make-up.

REG is Donn's younger brother and is much like him in many ways, though less forceful. Between Donn and him there is a natural congeniality.

NINA is Donn's wife. She is young and lovely. The affection and respect she has for her husband is deep and sincere.

BUTCHIE is a wrestler. He is muscle-bound and consequently very gentle and unassuming. A great good humor pervades his massive frame, and all he says and does is frank and open.

THE LANDLADY is the old woman from whom Nina and Donn rent their room. She is dressed in gray, with a gray shawl over her head, hiding most of her face. The little of her face that can be seen is almost the same color as her clothes. The eyes are dark shadows. The cheeks are lined and sunken. Her nose is hardly distinguishable. There is something about her that reminds one of the ancient Egyptian pieces in a museum. When she glides silently out of the room, one feels that somehow she has not gone far.

THE TIME is the present, around the middle of the morning on a bright, early spring day.

THE SCENE is a small studio in an ancient New York rooming house. The room is rather messy and is very evidently the only room in the "suite", besides a tiny kitchenette on the left which is hidden by a curtain. In the

back there is a low platform, on either side of which are two unmade cots. At the right is the door which opens on a hall. All about the room are evidences of Donn's profession: two or three easels, canvasses, paint boxes, palettes, etc. One of the easels, up stage left, has a canvas on it. A large skylight on the stage left lets in all the light. When the curtain rises there is no one on the stage. But from the kitchenette come shouts and laughter of DONN, REG and NINA "doing the dishes."

DONN (Coming out of kitchenette in an apron): If you two will pardon me, I'll retire to my study here and do this dish-wiping job as it should be done. (He wipes dish with many flourishes. Goes to window to look at it in the light. As he turns, something on the canvas catches his eye. He dabs it once with his little finger, is satisfied, and goes on wiping the dish. Presently Reg comes out with a dish and an apron.)

REG: I think I'll join you, Donn. We must do this thing right, even though it does take a little more time. Which reminds me I've got an appointment at eleven. What time is it now?

DONN: I don't know. There's a clock out in the hall, I think.

REG: I'll go take a look at it. (He goes to the door, but as he opens it Nina calls from the kitchenette and he turns. Thus he does not see the landlady who is outside the door. She is just standing there, her shadowed gray figure absolutely motionless, her bony dark hands at her sides. She disappears quickly and silently into the hall beyond.)



NINA: I've got a watch. It's only ten o'clock.

REG (*Closing the door.*): Oh, good, thanks.  
(*Pause.*) Ah, this is better out here. Nina spoils one's concentration. (*They wipe their dishes and make up conversation for Nina's benefit.*)

DONN: Yes, it's appalling how women can do that, Reg. It's quite useless to try to work with one around.

REG: It certainly is.

DONN: Quite useless.

REG: Uh-huh.

DONN: I most certainly would not have married Nina two hundred and seventy-six,—two hundred and seventy-seven days ago if I had cherished any hopes of a future.

REG: My God! Do you count the days?

DONN: Nina does. She says some awful things about how each day is a wonderful experience and how each is happier than the last and all that.

REG: Oh! That's terrible.

DONN: I know. I'm getting sort of worried about her.

NINA (●ff): Yes, you goof! You ought to hear what he said, Reg. He said that if . . .

DONN (*Loudly*): Don't listen to her, Reggy—she's raving. Is it time for one of your capsules, dear? I'll get them if you like.

NINA: Oh, keep still. Hit him, Reg.

DONN: What do you suppose it could be?

REG: I don't know. Couldn't be anything in the food?

DONN: No.

REG: Plenty of fresh air?

DONN: Uh-huh.

REG: Exercise?

DONN: Yes, she goes down stairs for the mail every day; except when old fossil-face brings it up; which is every day except Sunday.

REG: Oh, that's all right, then Does she get all the proper vitamins?

DONN: Yes.

REG: How's the water supply?

DONN: A bit soft, but it's all right . . . I guess there's no use trying to diagnose it. It's too far beyond us. (*Pause.*) What were we discussing before so learnedly?

REG: The futility of endeavor with women about.

DONN: Oh yes! So you see I've wasted just two hundred and seventy-seven days of my life. Two hundred and seventy-seven days. That's . . . let's see, two hundred and seventy-seven times twenty-four . . .

REG: Six-thousand six-hundred and twenty-four!

DONN: Good! Six-thousand six-hundred and twenty-four hours wasted.

REG: Six-thousand six-hundred and twenty-four. Let's see, six-thousand six-hundred and twenty-four times sixty is—ah . . .  
(*They both mumble, trying to figure it out.*)

NINA (*off*): Oh, shut up, you morbid mathematicians. Come in here and wipe some more dishes, or I'll never invite you to breakfast again, Reggy.

(*At the sound of Nina's voice a thought comes to Donn. He motions to Reg; they put down the dishes and go over to the dresser and start moving it toward the kitchenette. All this time Nina goes on talking.*)

NINA: You'll wear your feeble brains out doing all that complicated figuring. I never saw two people who liked to mutter about things they didn't understand more than you two. (*Laughs.*) Remember those two funny little monkeys at the zoo the other day, Donn? You should have seen them, Reg. They stole a paper from an old lady and dashed up into a corner and pretended to read it. They looked like a couple of old men in a subway. You two are just like them. (*Pause*) What! Don't tell me you've stopped talking. Impossible! But then, that crazy brother of yours is likely to do most anything, Reg. You should

have seen him the other day, (*Laughs*) Butchie was here posing. After they were through he started to show Donn some grips. He let Donn get some sort of a head lock or something on him and then when he told him to tighten up on it your sappy big brother squeezed so hard that he threw his own shoulder out of joint. (*Nina laughs.*)

(*By this time Reg and Donn have carefully put the dresser up against the curtain and dashed over and jumped under the top covers on the cots, waiting for the storm to break. Nina goes blissfully on.*)

Well, you monkeys, I'm almost through. Only a few more . . . Where the dickens are those dishes you were wiping? Here, give them . . . (*She starts through the curtain, bumps into the dresser and yells. Sees them, and tries not to laugh.*)

NINA: Oh, you absolute idiots! You ought to be still wearing short pants and sailor blouses! Come here and move this thing. (*Laughs in spite of herself.*) You're both silly and uncivilized—getting in bed with all your clothes on. (*They sit up.*)

DONN: She calls us uncivilized. Imagine! My dear young lady, do you know what civilization is? No? Well, I'll tell you. The process of civilizing man is merely a process of pulling in his chin from the beligerent, protruding position of the Neanderthal man—so—to a position more or less on a straight line with the rest of the body—so. I suppose if civilization continues the world will be full of Andy Gumps.

NINA: Stop lecturing and move this! (*They don't budge. She pounds dresser with fists. They duck inside covers, again shouting. A knock on the door surprises them into dead silence. Reg and Donn sit up again.*)

DONN: Who is it?

VOICE: It's me.

NINA: Butchie!

DONN (*Has another bright idea. Hops out of bed, motions Reg to follow*): Wait a minute, Butchie, we're still in bed.

NINA: No, we're not, Butchie. Come in here! They're just . . .

DONN (*He and Reg are waiting by the door for the attack*): All right, come in! (*Butchie does so. As he closes the door, Donn and Reg jump on him and they all go down in a heap. Butchie sees who it is and laughs.*)

BUTCHIE: Watch out fer me new hat, Rembrandt. Just got it this morning. (*The fight subsides.*) How d'ya like it? (*He gives it a rakish tilt.*)

NINA: It's lovely, Butchie; very becoming. Ah, . . . would you please . . . (*She motions to the dresser.*)

BUTCHIE (*Still on floor*): Well fer—say, what's goin' on around here?

NINA: The Whitelaw brothers have been amusing themselves.

BUTCHIE (*Getting up to take care of the dresser*): I seen that old dame in da hall when I come up. She been in after some-thin'?

NINA (*Unconcerned.*): No.

BUTCHIE: I don't like her looks. She gives me da willies. Always hangin' around. Deaf and dumb old coot. Jeez, I wouldn't live here fer nuttin'.

NINA: Don't be silly.

BUTCHIE: No, I'm tellin' ya. Dere's a jinx on dis place. Remember de old fella that was here before—croaked, didn't he? Sure. (*Finishes moving the dresser as he says this.*)

NINA: Thanks Butchie, you're a sweet thing.

BUTCHIE (*Embarrassed, changes subject. To Donn*): Say, I come over ta tell ya I couldn't—you know—pose fer ya today. Gotta work out over at da gym.

DONN (*He and Reg rise*): That's all right it's practically done anyway. Unless the new bowler has got to go in.

BUTCHIE: Nah, better not put dis in —  
Alice don't like it.

REG: Who's Alice?

BUTCHIE: She's my girl friend. She's a fortune teller down on Clancy Street. An', Boy, can she tell 'em! Why, the other day she tells me dat I was thinkin' of askin' a girl to marry me an' why didn't I hurry up an' do it. An' all the time I been tryin' to get up noive enough to ask her! Now how d'ya like dat? She's a wonder, I tell ya.

REG: She must be.

BUTCHIE (*Dreamily*): Gosh! . . . She is . . . wow! (*Coming back to earth.*) Dat reminds me. (*To Donn.*) She tells me somethin' yesterday dat might have somethin' to do with you.

DONN: What's that, Butchie? Is there a dark woman with gold earrings coming in to my life?

BUTCHIE: No kiddin', I mean it. She says some friends of mine—"a newly-wed couple," she says—should be careful today. She says somethin' about an automobile accident and that they shouldn't go nowhere. Sounds like you, mebbe, huh?

REG: Say, excuse me, Butchie, but it's getting late. I've got to be going. (*He grabs up his things.*)

NINA: Do you have to leave so soon?

REG: Yep. 'Bye and thanks. 'Bye, Donn. (*He opens the door and, as before, the landlady is outside. She has a mop in her hand. Her green-gray face, mostly hidden, is a still unmoving mask. There seem to be no active muscles in it. She disappears quickly. Reg does not see her, for as he opens the door he turns back to Butchie.*) I'll look up some old shoes and tin cans and rice for you, Butchie. So long.

NINA: 'Bye, drop in soon.

DONN: 'Bye, Reg.

BUTCHIE: Thanks. So long. (*Reg goes out*).

BUTCHIE: A nice guy.

DONN (*Looking after his brother affectionately*): The best.

(*Nina starts making beds. Donn energetically goes over to picture.*)

DONN: Well, let's see how this looks now. (*He surveys it.*) To tell you the truth, I'm almost proud of it. It really begins to have something. I don't know—There's a life about it I like. I think I'm actually getting to know how to put down what I want. Maybe in another year . . . What do you think of it, Nina?

NINA: I've practically fallen in love with Butchie just looking at it.

DONN: No, seriously.

NINA: Oh, I'm sorry. I think it's wonderful, really.

DONN: What about it, Butchie?

BUTCHIE: Dat's da best picture I ever seen in my life. Whatcha gonna do with it?

DONN: Oh, I don't know. Maybe I'll keep it. Something to remember you by.

BUTCHIE: Well, I was thinkin', ah . . . Alice, you know, she—ah . . .

DONN: I'll tell you what. If you like it I'll leave it to you in my will. That be all right?

BUTCHIE: Y-yeah. If da goil friend is any good an' you go somewhere today dat'll mean I get it pretty soon, huh? (*Laughs, a little nervously.*)

NINA (*Cheerfully*):.. Might as well take it with you when you go.

BUTCHIE: Thanks fer remindin' me I ought to be goin' along.

DONN: You're not going to leave without giving me my lesson? Nina thinks I have quite a future in this new art you're teaching me.

BUTCHIE: What art?

DONN: The art of self defense. Let's see now; I wonder if I can remember what you told me last time.



BUTCHIE: Oh, yeah! Dat was easy. Beal's headlock. You take . . .

DONN: Oh, that one. I guess we'll skip that one today, my shoulder hasn't been quite the same since. Better show me a new one. Something I can practice on Nina without hurting her too much. You know, Butchie, I think Nina has a crush on you. That's why I'm taking lessons from you, so I can win her back.

BUTCHIE: Quit yer kiddin' now, Rembrandt. Here, here's a good one ta woik on a big fella. When he starts gettin' tough, see, ya shoot ya mitts up as if ya was gonna grab his head. Dat makes him joik his hands up high, see? Then, quick as hell, you duck down on one knee and . . . *(Butchie stops and listens as if he heard something outside the door. Satisfied, after a moment, that there isn't, he goes on.)* And ya grab his leg like this, see, an' put your shoulder on his shin an' push. Dat sets him on his can every time. Woiks like a charm. *(He stands up.)* Now you do it. Dat's it—Yep—No, put yer left shoulder on my left shin. Yeah! Now push! *(He is thrown to the floor, smiling proudly at his pupil.)* Dat's da boy. Dat was swell.

DONN: Say, that's good. Hurt you?

BUTCHIE: Nah. *(Getting up.)* Now do it quick.

NINA: No, Donn, you'll hurt him.

BUTCHIE: Nah! Come on!

DONN: I won't push hard. I'll just get it quick. *(He does so. Butchie is thrown to the floor.)*

NINA: Donn!

DONN: Gosh, I'm sorry, Butchie. You O.K.?

BUTCHIE: Sure.

DONN: It worked too well. I didn't push hard at all. Aren't you proud of me, Nina? Throwing him like that?

NINA: I still like Butchie best.

BUTCHIE: Now, I'll show ya how ta get

out of it if some guy tries it on you, see? When he gets ya like this, *(He does so.)* You just throw yer right leg over his back see? An' he can't do a damn thing. That's the boy, Rembrandt. Ya . . . *(There is a slow knock at the door. Butchie stops talking; he is still on the floor under Donn's legs.)*

DONN: Come in! *(The door opens and reveals the Landlady standing outside, an envelope held toward them in her hand. Donn goes and takes it from her and thanks her. She makes no move to go. A little puzzled, he shuts the door.)*

NINA: What is it?

DONN: Telegram. *(Nina takes it.)*

BUTCHIE: *(Slowly and meaningfully, getting Donn's and Nina's attention from the telegram.)* Damn dat old dame. She sure gives me da willies. Always snoopin' around, snoopin' around. Always right outside yer door. Jeez. She reminds me of one o' dem things in a museum that come from Egypt or somewhere. *(Nina and Donn chuckle.)* Well, guess I'll be goin' along. Gotta get over to the gym.

DONN: Don't hurry, Butchie.

BUTCHIE: Honest, I gotta be goin'.

NINA: Don't forget your beautiful bowler. *(She goes to dresser, lays down telegram and gets hat and puts it on Butchie.)*

BUTCHIE: Gee, thanks. So long.

DONN: So long. Thanks for the lesson.

NINA: 'Bye! *(Butchie goes out, maybe a little hesitatingly.)*

NINA: *(Calmly.)* He's awful nice, isn't he?

DONN: *(Looking at her.)* Uh-huh.

NINA: You're kind of nice, too.

DONN: Uh-huh . . . so are you. *(He kisses her forehead.)*

NINA: Oh, Donn, I have . . . so much . . . fun with you. Everything is so bright and lovely. You make the whole world a happy, wonderful place. You're everything in

one. Everyone and everything else is slow and dull and stuffy and ordinary . . . Except Butchie, of course.

DONN: You sweet little goop. You're the loveliest thing ever created. The only thing that makes me think you're not also the wisest, is that you think those things of me. That really shows a lack of something somewhere, darling. (*She kisses him.*) If I am even anything like that, it's just because you make me so. When I'm not with you—or thinking of you—I'm—nothing, nothing at all.

NINA: Let's stay right here where we are for the next thousand years or so, shall we? Never go anywhere, never do anything.

DONN: (*After a pause*): Say, hadn't we better do something now about that telegram?

NINA: M . . . m . . .

DONN: Yes, we have got to be practical. Might be a ten thousand dollar commission! Come on, let's look at it. (*They go over to dresser and do so.*)

DONN: It's from George and Ann. (*Reading.*) "What about a week-end in the country?" Say, that's not a bad idea. What do you say?

NINA: You bet.

DONN: Good! Pack up your things! (*He rushes over to dresser and starts throwing things around. They talk happily and fast as they pack and dress more or less for the occasion.*)

DONN: Hope our old rattletrap will get us there. I have my doubts, though, it's been having sort of a mechanical decline for the last fifteen or twenty years.

NINA: Oh, it'll get us there all right. It always has.

DONN: Where the dickens is my purple tie, Nina? I thought . . .

NINA: What's that hanging around your neck?

DONN: So it is. You know, Nina, all this

packing makes me think—why don't we take a trip somewhere, way far off. You'd give everything just the right sparkle.

NINA: It would be a little inconvenient hitch hiking across the Atlantic, wouldn't it, dear?

DONN: Oh, we could find some money around somewhere. Think of it—Golconda, Afghanistan, Persia, Shehri, Zanzibar, Nirmul . . . where the dickens is my yellow shirt? Wouldn't it be wonderful, Nina?

NINA: Which, Nirmul or the yellow shirt?

DONN (*Boyishly*): You don't care about going.

NINA: I do, Donn. There's nothing I'd rather do. But we'll have to wait till we get the wherewithal, won't we? I'll tell you what—two years from now, no matter what we have or where we are, we'll go. All right?

DONN: Perfect! You're a genius, Nina. That gives us plenty of time to look forward to it and dream about it. That's the best part of anything, anyway. You know if I ever got to the point where my day dreams didn't give me any pleasure any more I'd throw in the sponge.

NINA: Well, then, why not make it three years?

DONN: Another stroke of genius! Three years from today we leave—ready or not.

NINA: That'll be lovely. Where's my coat? There it is! I'm ready.

DONN (*Closing suit case*): There, so am I. We're off.

(*Grabs Nina's hand. They open the door. Seeing something Donn whispers to Nina.*)

There goes the old girl up the stairs. Come to think of it, Butchie wasn't far wrong, was he? She does look sort of like a mummy at that. (*Turns back to room.*) Good-bye, room, see you in a couple of days. (*They go down the stairs, laughing. A moment after they leave, the Landlady comes into the*

room. She picks up the telegram as the curtain falls.)

### Scene II

(It is the afternoon of the next day. The room has been cleaned of most of Donn's and Nina's things, the last pile of which are still by the door; and the janitor is making ready to take that away. He bustles around for a minute, picking up things. The door opens slowly and Butchie, with bent head and dragging steps, comes in, stands by the door, waiting for the janitor to leave. The janitor starts to take the picture from the easel.)

BUTCHIE (In a low, gruff voice.): Don't take that. That—that's mine. (Janitor shrugs, gathers up the pile of stuff and goes out. Butchie wanders slowly and aimlessly

about the room. Once or twice he kicks something savagely. Once or twice he swears and hits something with his fist. He does this for some time. At last, hearing voices coming up the stairs, he takes his picture and, hesitatingly, leaves. As he goes out, the Landlady comes silently in. When he sees her he shrinks back quietly and hurries out. She does not notice him, but stops inside the door and waits as a bright, healthy, smiling couple come into the room, followed by the janitor with several new suitcases. The Landlady's shadowed, sunken eyes follow them and a distorted grin changes her face for a moment. The new couple smile at each other and look happily around the room, as the curtain falls.)

## YOUR DAY THE DARK DEVOURS

WALTER ROYALL

O haughty one and lonesome, now the night  
Has come and covered all the brilliant day  
With darkness, in concern you will invite  
The fickle world to keep the ghosts away.

The baubles of a holiday have gone,  
The gaudy knicknacks, and enchanted hours.  
The friends that knew you for a day. The  
lawn  
Is dense with shades—your day the dark  
devours.

Ah, child, I know the grief that you have  
borne  
So silently, with such an obvious pain;  
And, oh, the ache when all the world has  
scorn  
For you, and love has proved to be disdain.



# Book Review

SEYMOUR D. BALLARD

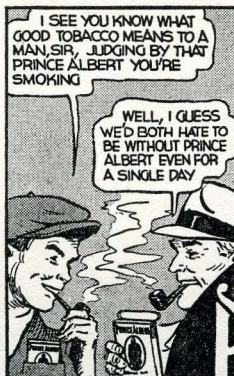
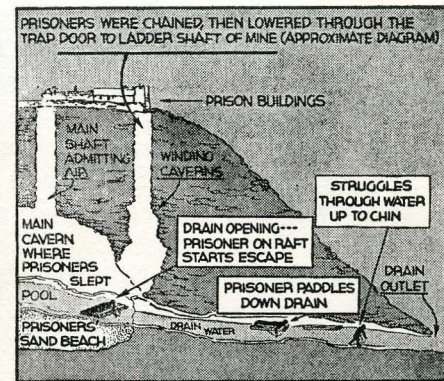
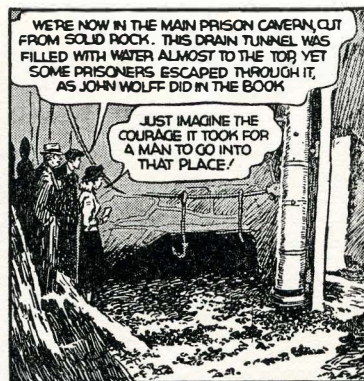
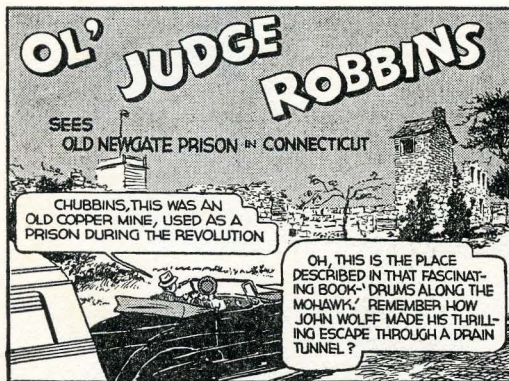
*SAUL, KING OF ISRAEL*, by Victor S. Starbuck, University of North Carolina Press.

THE story of Saul in the Old Testament is one of the great stories in the Bible. Browning realized this, and wrote a memorable poem about Saul. However he used only a single incident, whereas Victor Starbuck writes of Saul's whole life in one of the best long narrative poems this reviewer has read in contemporary literature. The author, a native of Florida, has had ample preparation for his task. He knows his Bible, having studied Greek to be able to read the New Testament in the original.

The Saul theme is one the Elizabethan playwrights could have used in their dramas. It sets forth the conflict between temptations and ideals which besets a great man. We see

Saul first, young and unknown, anointed King by the prophet Samuel. On his journey home he sees a maiden, Atarah, with whom he falls in love. On the eve of their wedding she is carried off into slavery by a desert raider. She is sent to the Philistines and is forced into sorcery, becoming a famous seeress. But Saul is in her heart forever, and her memory is in Saul's, even though after fruitless searching he marries her sister.

Though he is their anointed king, the various tribes of Israel are not united under Saul. It is the work of years to make his name known and respected among the tribes. He follows the will of Jehovah, made known to him through the prophet Samuel. But on the eve of a battle with the Philistines, Saul, who had been told to wait for Samuel, decides to strike,



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and prepares the sacrifice of bullocks. When Samuel appears, he tells Saul the Lord is displeased with him and will seek another king to do his bidding. For Saul has not learned:

"... They that serve the Lord

Must serve in darkness, and obey His word  
Though seeing not the end."

Circumstances had seemed to justify Saul's action. His men were deserting daily, and were impatient of waiting while the Philistines ravaged the land.

Saul's disobedience causes a breach between him and the Lord. Now he becomes proud and selfish. The virtues of devotion and service are gone. Though without the grace of the Lord on him, Saul continues to be a powerful king. Later the Lord decides to use him again, although meanwhile Samuel has consecrated David as king. But Saul is unrepenting, doing the bidding of Jehovah but still maintaining his pride. Samuel is saddened to see that no change has been effected in the man who had promised so much, seemed so worthy.

To give contrast to the main tragedy we have the stories of Jonathan and David and the romance between David and Michal, the king's daughter. The famous story of David's conflict with Goliath is given a new vigor. But the author's main preoccupation is with Saul, whom he never leaves long.

The king's reign, though still strong, gradually grows into one of fear. He alienates his son and David. David is forced to flee when the king one day throws a javelin at him as he plays the harp to soothe the disintegrating mind of his ruler. The monarch is given to sudden fits of rage and depression, and his household is in fear of his moods.

At the end, a great host of Philistines are arrayed against Saul and he goes to consult a witch to ascertain the battle's outcome. The witch he does not recognize as Atarah. She recognizes him, but does not make herself known to him. This is the most touching scene

in the book. At the king's bidding she conjures the dead Samuel to appear. He tells the king he is lost. And in the battle the next day, Saul's army is swept away and Saul kills himself by falling on his sword.

The character of Saul in this narrative has been well drawn. We are sorry for this man, whose moment of folly has cost what greatness we can only imagine. We are appalled at the cruel acts of his insane moments. We are moved at seeing his disintegration from the man of promise to the man of failure. His characterization is the fullest since he is the chief actor in the poem. But also ably portrayed are David and Jonathan and Atarah. The scenes of battle are as stirring as any of primitive warfare this reviewer has ever found.

Mr. Starbuck divides his poem into twelve sections and uses more than that number of verse forms. The lines are rhyming throughout. Occasional blank iambic pentameter might have been an improvement, for rhymed verse, no matter how varied, seems tiring after a while in a poem as long as this.

*Saul* is a well-written book. Mr. Starbuck knows where to end a scene without committing the error of having a few more lines to cause an anti-climax. Thus his book reads easily and swiftly. It does not lag. It has its moments of fine writing, all of which cannot be given, but one especially has stayed in the reviewer's mind:

"Go, seek the kingdoms that were great of yore:

For Noph lies waste, and Nineveh forgets;

On Tyre's wet rocks the fishers spread their nets,

And Ilium is a memory by the shore."

With this and other fine passages, with vivid descriptions and above all the characterization of Saul, the book becomes one worth reading. The author has taken a worthwhile theme and not failed it.

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