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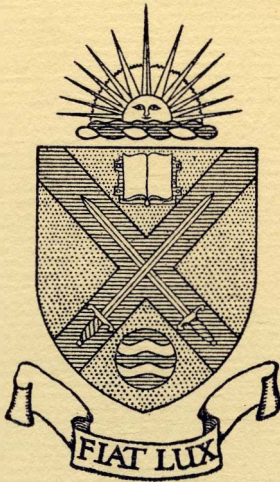
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WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

*Dep. Board  
MS.*

# THE FLAMINGO

MARCH, 1941



ROLLINS COLLEGE

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

# THE FLAMINGO

ROLLINS COLLEGE

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Vol. 15

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

No. 2

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Caricature of Jess Gregg  
ROBERT BURNS

## VINEGAR BOTTLE

JESS GREGG

SHE set the table for herself in the kitchen and ate simply because the food was there. The meal had been prepared so often, she never remembered cooking it or what she had eaten when she'd finished.

After the dishes were done, the various clocks wound and the drafts complained of, she lit the lamp and trudged out to the stable. Turning up the wick until the shadows chased back into the corners, she knelt on the straw beside the restless mule. Firmly she pulled out its lower lip and poured in the medicine, holding its mouth closed and massaging the neck until the creature swallowed.

Several times, as her vigil dragged on, she heard the clocks strike out, the grandfather clock above the rest in a patronizing tone. Except for the crickets and the rattling shutter, there should have been silence, for the house was too far from the town — too far even from the road — for any noise to penetrate. Yet, vague as mist, there was the sound of men and the bay of dogs in the night air.

Grumbling, she dribbled some water into the sick animal's mouth and was rising to investigate when a sound of sinister softness traced her spine with terror. Snorting at her own fear, she brushed the straw from her skirt and picking up the lamp, opened the door a crack. Seeing no one there, she shoved the door wide open in a gesture of disappointment. The sudden sweep of light sliced across a figure huddled, half submerged, in the puddles of darkness.

"Who's there?" she said.

There was no answer and she held the lamp higher.

"Go 'way from here," she said harshly. "I don't want no bums around here. Go 'way or — or I'll call my husband."

The man crept toward her, the light glistening on the muck that plastered his clothes to his great body.

"I won't do you harm, lady," he whispered imploringly.

"I ain't aimin' to let you," she said. "Now git!"

Furtively, he stumbled closer to the light. An old cap dangled a shadow over his face, but his eyes seemed to burn through it.

"Those men out after you?"

He nodded.

"What you done?" she demanded, her plain face impassive.

"Nothin'."

Wheeling around with animal grace, his eyes plumbed the night that brought closer the sound of men. Terrified, he turned to her beseechingly.

"Hide me, oh God, hide me! They'll kill me. Them dogs'll tear me to pieces."

She looked at the imploring hands held out to her, at the smooth curve of muscles intensified by the clinging wet garments. He was young — young and afraid.

Suddenly, in desperation, he pushed her out of the way and, hurdling the animal, burrowed into the loft. For a moment she was too amazed for anger, then in fury she wildly looked around for the pitch fork. As she strained up to the rack for it, a clear realization swept over her, displacing her rage. The voices outside had abruptly ceased. It was quiet now — terribly quiet. Dropping to her knees, she turned down the lamp and listened intently. She heard their heavy shoes crunch over the acorns and dry leaves, then the gate outside her house creaked and a moment later, the sagging steps of the front porch groaned under the weight of tiptoeing men. They were still whispering outside when the stable door opened and some men pushed in. Stolidly the woman looked up into the row of guns.

"Oh — Miss Adams," said their middle-aged leader, putting down his gun. "We thought you was someone else."

She looked at him with dull unfriendly eyes.

"What you want?" she demanded sharply.

"You remember me?" the leader suggested. "Bert Williams?"

"I ain't forgettin' you," she said. "What you doin' on my property?"

"Got a posse here. Lookin' for a man."

"Ain't you come to the wrong place for that?" she demanded bitterly.

The men in the mob snickered, winking at each other, which the woman pretended not to see.

"Some of our dogs led us here," Williams said vaguely.



"'Course most of 'em went in another direction, but we're fol-lin' up every trail."

"What's he done?" Miss Adams asked. "This man! What's he done?"

"I don't like to use the word in front of women, Miss Adams," the leader said hesitantly.

"It ain't murder, then?"

"Worse'n that," Williams stated, and the others grimly agreed.

"Woman?"

The leader nodded.

"And we got to perfect our women," he said. "So, if you don't mind, we'll look around."

Miss Adams smiled to herself. That was Bert Williams talking, Bert Williams, who had teased her unmercifully in school so long ago. Bert Williams, whose wife's hired girl left town with a wake of whispers behind her. There, too, was Joe Saunders and everyone knew his wife had scarcely spoken to him since the night after they were married. And nervously fingering a rope, was Herb Carson, who drank up his salary and whose wife, poor haggard creature, didn't need to tell anyone how he beat her. And those two young bucks, whose names she didn't know, she'd seen in front of the pharmacy, leering and whistling after the girls who passed. And the rest of the men, strained, nervous, eyes glittering, they too were out for the sake of woman's honor.

"I say we'll look around," repeated Williams.

Slowly she arose and faced them. For a moment she didn't speak and the men glanced at each other, whispering.

"I say you won't!" she said harshly. "No man — no single body's been here in years. I been in this stable all evening, nursing my mule, and I know there ain't no one around."

She met the leader's stare until he dropped his eyes.

"Now git! All of you!"

"If I didn't know you from school days, Elspeth Adams," said Williams, forcing a laugh, "I'd think you was makin' moonshine out here."

"Or more likely vinegar," she added bitterly.

"I didn't say that," Williams defended.

"But you was thinkin' it. Now git! You and all the rest. Git out of here and don't come back."

Banging the door after them, she squinted through the cracks in the wall, watching their lights become fainter and fainter as they tramped down the hill. Then, turning up the lamp wick, she hissed to the man in the loft. Wearily, he pushed his head from the hay and crawled out. She looked at him curiously, and then turned back to the mule, watching him from the corner of her eye. Painfully he sat down by the door, breathing heavily and staring in her direction. Suddenly she snapped around.

"What you lookin' at?"

"What's her name?" he said, indicating the mule.

"Boss."

"That's a cow's name," he jeered.

"Well, this here mule's name is Boss," she replied resolutely, "and it's all the company I need."

She stared at him relentlessly.

"You can stay here till those men are gone sure, then I want you to git. I don't aim to make this a hotel for the likes of you."

"I ain't askin' anything more, am I?" he said darkly and, pulling his cap over his eyes, struggled to his feet. For a moment he swayed foolishly, then with the moan of a small animal, fell across the threshold like a heap of dirty rags.

Miss Adams whirled around and regarded him coldly.

"Don't give me none of your tricks," she cried. "You ain't foolin' nobody, so get up and git, or I'll yell for those men—"

In disgust, she knelt down and awkwardly pushed him over. He was pale and dirty, with each bone pushing at the tight skin of his young, hard face. In fear, she slipped her hand under his muddy shirt and her palm felt a heart beating tremulously, weakly.

"I can't take you in," she scolded. "I can't have no criminals in my house."

She looked down again and he lay so still with his relaxed mouth half hiding his white squares of teeth and his thin clothes drying to the contours of his body. She stood there, her long hands twisting at the neck of her dress. Then abruptly she leaned over and lugged him onto the straw next to Boss.

Back in the kitchen she found one of the brandy bottles that



had been a mainstay for cobwebs since her father's death. Clumsily she pulled out the cork, making a wry face at the bouquet. Then, marching back to the stable, she shoved the bottle between his lips, tilting it until a sputtering cough pushed it away. The man flickered open his eyes and stared at her blankly.

"What's the matter with you?" she demanded. "You got to get out of here!"

"Bullet went through my shoulder," he gasped. "Been hidin' in a ditch all day. She—" He rolled up his eyes and his head lolled to one side.

Prying his teeth wider apart, she poured in more brandy, massaging his throat as she had done to the mule, but he did not awaken again. In exasperation, she flung a light horse blanket over him and went back to the mule.

Occasionally the clocks struck, but all else was quiet. She sat silently watching the flickering shadows tickle his face. Eventually the lamp began to smoke, looking sick and feeble as the morning light pushed through the cracks in the wall. It gleamed on the perspiration that covered his face, and as he deliriously turned from the light, she noticed with a start the dark stain of blood on his dirty shirt.

For a moment she poised in thought, the dim light compromising the plainness of his face. Then, resolutely she arose and went into the house, returning with heated water and disinfectant. Peeling off the mud-caked shirt, she cleansed the ugly wound, emptying the iodine into it. He groaned horribly in his coma and for a moment she thought she would vomit. Then, grimly wringing out a rag, she began to bathe his forehead. Into his ears her cloth ventured and over his neck. She scrubbed his arms and chest until the hair there was silvered with minute soap bubbles and the skin red and clear.

Vigorously she dried him and spreading a blanket over him, sat down, her eyes tracing the body under the cover. Once or twice she reached over and straightened the blanket. and at last turned away and crawled over to Boss. For a moment, her fingers wondered through its short mane. Then she lay down beside it, and watching the sun stream through the half-open door, she put her arms around the mule's thick neck.

Carrying a new first-aid kit, she came out of the pharmacy, eyeing narrowly the stoop-shouldered men who always lolled across the street.

"I see by the paper," one was saying, "that nowadays they make jest about everything out of cotton."

"Yep," agreed a fat man, laughter spilling out of his words, everything — but money."

The group exploded with mirth, slapping their thighs and creaking with laughter. Miss Adams, getting on her bicycle, heard their guffaws and knew why they laughed. She knew what they had just called her as she passed by. Vinegar Bottle! Old Vinegar Bottle. Oh, she drinks it, didn't you know? And I hear tell she uses it for perfume, too! Oh, yes, Old Vinegar Bottle! Well, let them laugh, because she could laugh harder. She knew what those lounge-lizards would give their hearts to know. *Lounge-lizards!* she repeated with satisfaction.

Hurriedly she pumped on, holding her head at such an angle that the visor she'd sewn on her shapeless tam shielder her from the sun. Up the hill she rode, her lean face caricaturing itself as she sneezed in the spray of fine dust. Then, with the wind pushing against her lids and ears and the dry leaves swirling in her wake, she was speeding downhill, pumping the already whirling pedals.

The sky, ribbed with long clouds, was beginning to darken as she pushed open her gate and wheeled the bicycle to the side of the stable. Then, pulling off her tam, she ruffled her dust-brown hair and for a few minutes stood there, enjoying the desolation that pushed in about her. Here even the trees were sparse, the gardens and fields sterile. But evening can be kind to silence and wide spaces, and its glow softened and shadowed the world there.

She opened the door of the house and walked over to the man, half hidden in the dusk of the old canopied bed. For eighteen days he had thrashed and cried out in his delirium, and if his fevered language was picturesque, the manner of his sickness was not. On the second day, she had loaded him into the wheel-barrow and trundled him in the house. Beside the bed in which he tossed, she dragged a makeshift cot for herself, and though he was still unconscious, she carefully placed a sharpened trowel under her pillow.

As she closed the door behind her, the man weakly raised his head.

"Hello," he said.

She didn't answer, but walked over to his side.

"How long I been here?" he whispered.

"A good stretch," she replied curtly.

"You took me in after all, didn't you?" he jeered.

"Wasn't much left to do," she said.

"And you're jest as pleased as you can be, I don't guess."

"It don't make any difference to me," she replied, tucking in some loose covers.

The shadows grew heavier in the house and lighting the lamp, she brought him a steaming bowl of broth.

"What's your name?" she demanded as she fed him.

"Bo."

"That ain't no Christian name," she said harshly.

"Boss ain't no mule's name, neither," he reminded her.

"If it's any of your business, I named it after a cow I used to have," she admitted.

"Well, I guess Bo is what my kid brother called me," he said.

"Then you got folks somewhere?" she asked.

"Jest a brother, and I ain't seen him in years," he yawned, and stretching out in the great bed, drifted off to sleep again.

As he grew better, dregs of memory and fragments of thought became more vivid and the desire to talk surged through him. His face aglow, he would ramble endlessly of his adventures as a cabin boy on a tramp. He told of trips to fantastic cities and amazing shores — to the South Seas, to Australia, to Singapore, to Mandalay, to Pago Pago.

"And to England?" she demanded, wiping the lather from her hands and unsheathing the long razor that had been her father's.

"Sure," he said. "I been there lots."

"And is London like Dickens says? All funny chimney pots and narrow streets?" she inquired dreamily.

"I never read Dickens," he laughed, "and all I remember of London is some barmaids in a pub."

She scraped the razor down his face fiercely, and finished shaving him in silence.

When he was strong enough, she fixed a room for him with white curtains and her thick quilt. Until he could walk un-

aided, she would help him outside each morning, and all day he would sit in the strained sunlight of the vine-stubbed veranda, eternally watching the road half-visible down the hillside. It was that quiet, sullen way he sat there, with his chin cupped in his hands, that she feared and which set her planning.

He had wandered into the kitchen when dusk at last hid the road, and took his accustomed seat at the table. She came over from the stove and without a word, set his plate in front of him. He looked at the food critically while Miss Adams, barely flicking a glance in his direction, sat down and helped herself to the grits that composed the meal.

"Warm day in town today," she said with unaccustomed glibness. "Warmest we had in months."

He didn't look up, but toyed with his food.

"I reckon rain is what we need," she went on.

"How come we ain't havin' greens much any more?" he said suddenly.

"I 'spect I could feed you finer if the garden was in better shape. It don't turn out much."

"Ain't there still a grocery store in town?" he asked.

"Guess you ought to know money don't grow on trees," she reminded him.

For a few minutes, there was only the regular scrape of her spoon on the plate.

"Don't know if I'm strong enough to work in no garden," he said. "Seems like my shoulder still pains me."

Without looking up, she scraped at a dry gravy spot on the tablecloth.

"Saw Bert Williams today," she mentioned.

He waited for her to go on, but she continued to scrape at the gravy spot.

"What did he say?" Bo demanded at last.

"Oh, he said it was too warm for comfort and he felt like a wrung-out—"

"I mean about me! What did he say about me?"

"Well—well, nothin' much."

"You tell me what he said!"

"Told me they was still on the look-out," she said. "Posters up in town and everything."

She rose, placing the dishes in the sink, and pumped water over them with careless rhythm. Without turning, she watched



him sitting silently, his head propped on his hand. Rising, he carefully avoided looking at her. "'Spect I'll turn in," he said.

"How come?" she demanded. "It ain't nine yet."

"Guess I'll need sleep if I'm working in the fields tomorrow," he replied, and went to his room.

Scarves of purple clouds preceded the sunrise and the cold light found the two searching for tools.

"I found a hoe," he said, "and a shovel. Reckon you could find anything more?"

"There's a fork in the loft," she replied, "and I found this here trowel in the house. Watch you don't cut yourself. It's sharp!"

All morning they worked in the field, breaking up the hard crust of earth, spilling over the thick, fragrant loam until their feet sank ankle-deep. At noon the sun was merciless, but they barely stopped for lunch. The afternoon trudged and as steadily as they worked, by dinner time the progress seemed infinitesimal.

"I guess that's a good beginning, though," Bo shouted, lustily sloshing his head under the pump.

"I 'spect," she said.

"You tired?"

"I ain't complainin'," she replied.

He watched her fumble with the plates.

"Let's see your hands," he demanded suddenly.

"Don't bother me!" she said harshly, "I got to get dinner."

He reached over and twisted her hands around, surveying the swollen blistered palms.

"Looks like I'd better do all the field work," he said.

"I ain't no mollicoddle," she said. "I'll do them fields if I want."

"Look!" He turned on her fiercely. "I'll do them fields alone from now on, like I said." For once she dropped her eyes before his gaze. Now, how about some food?" he suggested.

The weeks smoothly, quickly rolled toward autumn, with Bo doing the fields all day and Miss Adams reading Dickens to him every night.

"The devil finds use for idle hands," she would say, and there was plenty of work to be done; but there came days when she'd find him standing in the fields, unaware of the hot

sun-rays, forgetful of the hoe still grasped in his hands, staring dreamily in the direction of the road.

"What you thinkin'?" she'd say.

"Jest restin'," he'd reply, swabbing his brow.

"Earth smells good. You sure been doin' a nice job," she might say, and he'd grin. But she knew the moment she turned, that the fields, the hoe and herself would be forgotten again.

"What's Sumatra like?" she'd say over the heaping dinner plates, or: "Tell me about Zanzibar." And, for a while, he'd tell of the lush tropics where women wore nothing above their waists and she'd cluck disapprovingly in encouragement. But soon he'd become vague and would begin a stare out of the window, silently drumming his fingers.

"You didn't even hear the last chapter, I'll wager," she snapped one night over '*Dombey and Son*'. "What in Glory's name are you broodin' about?"

He didn't answer directly, and the flickering rays from the lamp made the lean line from jaw to neck quiver.

"I'll tell you what I'm thinking," he said, startling her with his abruptness. "I'm thinking maybe I won't have to bother you much more, Miss Adams."

"What you mean?" she demanded briskly.

"Well—I sorta plan to get goin' again."

"Don't be a fool!" she snapped. "They're still lookin' for you. They've offered a big reward."

"I aim to go by night."

"They'll get you," she said harshly. "They'll get you sure. Better stay another month."

"A month more of bein' shelved here?" he said, rising restlessly. "It ain't in me! Don't think I ain't grateful, but I ain't used to bein' stuck away. I want some lights and some girls to dance with—."

"Stop that talk!" she said sharply. Then, the room becoming unbearable, she rose and hurried toward the door.

"Go if you want," she said, turning. "If you're still here when I git back, I'll see you."

"When will you be back?" he called.

"I don't know," she cried, and tearing her tam from the hook, shoved out the door.

The autumn night was chilly and her breath was white



as she ran in the darkness of the shadow-bruised fields. The clouds, caked and cracked like an ice-flow in the heavens, were too far away to hear her muffled sobs, and there was no one to watch her as she rushed on. She didn't know how far she had gone when the barb-wire barrier stopped her. Slipping under it, she once again looked back in the direction of the house.

"Vinegar Bottle!" she suddenly cried aloud. "Just an old Vinegar Bottle!" And clenching her teeth, began to stumble on again when suddenly she stopped abruptly and turned around. Her face loose, her eyes frenzied, she began to run back. Pausing in indecision at the barb-wire fence, she commenced to sob and suddenly grabbing a line of barb-wire with both hands, pulled them along until the clear, searing pain sliced through the tangled knots of her mind. Slowly she brought her torn hands up to her face and tried to push the tears back, but it only blotted her cheeks with red.

Quietly she began to walk back to the house, half-heeding the path.

"I'll jest tell him goodbye," she told herself. "I won't be a fool no more."

Tearing strips from her petticoat, she clumsily bound her hands and pawed open the front door. The house was dark, but she could hear him stirring in the kitchen.

"Bo?"

Her voice seemed empty in the house and as she walked down the hall, she could still hear herself echoing his name in her mind. The light was dim in the kitchen and she could only see him shadowed there, but her sense of smell told her immediately.

"Bo!" You been drinkin'!"

He looked up at her with the reproachful gaze of an abused child.

"Put that bottle down this minute and come here."

Her eyes were bright with anger and painfully she clenched the hands hidden behind her.

"Come here, I said!"

He slung the bottle on the floor and lurched toward her, an empty smile sagging on his face.

"I should have known better'n to take you in. But I did take you in. I did, even knowin' what you done," she cried wrathfully.

Bo's smile suddenly disappeared and she felt strangely powerless, impaled on his long sullen stare.

"Why did you take me in, then?" he snarled. "If you knew what I done, why did you take me in?"

"I'm a Christian woman—" was all she could say before his laughter drowned her out.

"Oh, I guess I understand, *Miss Adams*. I guess I do."

He began pushing toward her, slowly at first, then lunging. his face torn with laughter, raised his open palm and struck her down.

"Don't!" she cried, but it was only a whisper.

Intoxicated by this reintroduction to his strength, he hit her again, laughing richly at her half-buried cry. Biting her lip, she dragged herself up and staggered over to the table where her kitchen knives gleamed among the dinner dishes. As if she hadn't seen them, she poised there until he caught hold of her dress and, with a tearing wrench, pulled her back to him. She felt his arms girding her, imprisoning her, and the warm odor of his body was all about her. Her world thundered and the jumble of her mind made so much noise, she didn't know whether she screamed or not.

Suddenly he released her and she huddled to the floor, waiting in fearful anticipation. Nothing happened, still she patiently huddled there. But there was only silence and a sound of sobbing akin to silence.

She lifted her head and saw him crumpled beside her, his hands covering his face as if to blot up his sobs.

"I don't know why—I don't know why," he wept. "I don't know why I done it. The first person what's ever been good to me and look what I try to do." His voice was thick and the words tumbled out half-born. "I don't know why! I don't know why."

Slowly Elspeth got up from the floor, hugging her torn dress about her.

"Git up, Bo."

He staggered to his feet, wiping his eyes and waiting for her hysterical tirade of words and tears, but she only looked at him.

His face twisting with an unborn cry, he pushed open the door and rushed out into the darkness. She whirled around

after him, but the door banged shut in her face, and she could hear his footsteps as he ran down the hill.

Clutching her ripped dress about her, she slowly turned back, when she noticed a reflection of herself in the mirror. A sob rose up in her like a bucket in a well, spilling in tears from her eyes.

Abruptly, she sped across the room, tore open the door, and called out after him. "Bo! Bo!" But there was not even an echo of her own voice in the silence of the night. She stumbled across the verandah and clung to one of its rickety supports, calling now this way, now that, and upwards, too.

"Bo! Bo! Bo!"

---

### SNAKE KILLING

Because I feared the living, not the dead,  
I severed the taut body from the head  
Adroitly with a hoe that rose and fell,  
And in the swift attack, broke off the spell  
Of one bewitching but heart-quailing dread.  
I stood and struck, absorbed in fear that fed  
The stark desire to kill the reptile-sphinx,  
The deadly chain that moved its diamond links  
One moment late of death. In death it fled.  
Three parts I hacked of it, hoe bleeding red.  
The sections wriggled with a separate will.  
I watched the jaws work aimlessly until  
I saw the life momentum turn the head  
And it grow less surprised at being dead.

THOMAS CASEY

## I AWAKE IN PARIS

There has not been enough darkness it seems now,  
For I have wakened earlier  
Than was need for me to do.  
I see a sweet grey dawn and think of blossoming,  
And please myself with pale reflected blue  
Lambent on the walls.

I will hear the ribaldry of singing soon.  
The laugh-indented sound of words  
Will find an easy access to my ear,  
And I will murmur out of drowsiness.  
And I will curse the dream that holds me back  
And will not let me hear or understand.

Those are alien voices in the street below!  
Those are alien voices!

There has not been enough darkness it seems now.  
I must go back, back to the dream  
Where too much night may blind  
And dull the hearing of the lately proud.  
I must hush the wound and fix the smile,  
And mark with somnolent eyes futility,  
And count the blinding stars and bruise the tree,  
And crush the blossoming and leave the fruit  
To fall upon the ground and sob into the earth.

But I wake again, the sun against my eyes,  
Out of a dream sharply, and with weeping.

PEGGY HUDGINGS

# JURY OF AWARDS

MARY ANN WILSON

## SCENE I

### CHARACTERS:

LYNN TREVIS

HOWARD TREVIS, her husband

MRS. THOMAS CAMERON, her mother

MAJOR LANSING

4 SOLDIERS

TIME: Late afternoon one Tuesday in the autumn of 1939.  
Europe.

SCENE: The spacious, simple, and rather cosmopolitan living room of a country house somewhere abroad. Without the rural atmosphere which is invariably affected by urbanites in pastoral surroundings, the room seems to have the same subdued charm as the blue Picasso over the mantelpiece. The pale, silvered blue of the walls, the clear ultramarine of the heavy drapes, and the deep, vibrant blue of the rugs reflect the subtle disparagements in the shades of a single color, and its variations dominate the room as well as the painting.

A long, curved couch faces the fireplace at a slightly oblique angle on the extreme right front of the stage; in the right wall behind it is an archway, which leads to the stairs and kitchen. The front door opens from the left, across the room from the fireplace; hanging to its left is a large Regency mirror. There is a radio at the back of the stage, to the left and built into the back wall and extending two thirds of the way across the stage is a bookcase, its leather-bound volumes exemplifying the only contrasting colors in the room. There are six chairs: two by the radio, one standing against the wall near the door at right, and three grouped around the couch near the fire, which has been lit. Through the window on either side of the door comes the warm, maize light of the afternoon sun.

As the curtain rises Lynn enters from left, almost tripping over two small suitcases near the doorway.

*Lynn* — (She is obviously calling with the intention of being heard upstairs): Ward . . . Mother!

Hearing foot steps on the stairs, she finishes unbuttoning



her smock, which she throws casually over the back of the chair. Then she applies her lipstick, methodically and without sense of anticipation, as though she were fulfilling some sort of duty.

(Lynn herself is interested in painting rather than in being an artist, and her appearance reveals this fact immediately to us: the suit which is wearing may not, in any interpretation of the word, be described as "vivid"; but it serves its purpose, as it has probably done for several years. She turns from the mirror as Howard enters the room at right.)

*Howard*: Hello, dear (politely): How are the murals coming? (Howard is conservative, stolid, and inclined to be genial; his most extreme emotions are petulance and joviality. Although he is rather good-looking, the best tailors have been unsuccessful in improving upon the consistently mediocre effect which he is always able to attain.)

*Lynn* — (Aware that her husband is not particularly interested in her answer): Nicely, thank you. (Then turning suddenly): No . . . no, they're not "coming along nicely" . . . They're good, Ward; they're good, and they're going to be even better. Sometimes . . . I can't conceive that I —

(She is interrupted by the entrance of a very well-dressed matronly woman, who comes into the living-room from the archway at right.)

*Mrs. Cameron*: Lynn, dear, we've packed your things.

*Lynn* — (Tonelessly, without emotion): We've gone through all this so many times before. Mother, I'm not going.

*Howard*: Lynn, this afternoon Martha left . . . . The others had already gone . . . . Darling, you've got to realize that this thing can't be remote or detached any longer . . . . Lansing came through Roferge yesterday. . . . It's only a matter of time until he reaches us . . . The village has already been evacuated . . .

*Mrs. Cameron*: Of course it would waste their bombs to use them yet . . . They're saving those till they get to Malbae.

*Howard*: So the road's still open to Lombarht . . . And we're sure we can get a boat there. (To Lynn, who is putting another log in the fireplace): Lynn, do you mind listening? You know if it hadn't been for you and your precious



murals we'd have left this place a week ago . . . . And not had to leave everything behind either! But you were so sure . . . .

*Lynn:* I was wrong, I'm sorry . . . . But I'm not leaving . . . .  
(Pause) I was just thinking . . . . Have you had anything to eat yet?

*Howard:* Lynn! My God, it's . . . .

*Lynn:* (interrupting him. she speaks calmly, thoughtfully):  
I think there's some left-over lamb in the kitchen . . . . And there ought to be some bread somewhere for sandwiches. Don't worry, I'll just take a minute.

(She was near the door, and is able to effect a quick exit. Howard attempts to follow her, but he is restrained by Mrs. Cameron.)

*Mrs. Cameron:* (placatingly): Sit down . . . . It won't do any good, Howard.

*Howard:* No, I know . . . . (Suddenly, after a brief pause):  
Well, I'll be damned if I can be noble . . . . or a martyr . . . . or anything else. It isn't as though her life were at stake. Of course, she'll be in danger and all that . . . . But that doesn't seem to be the main thing . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* She doesn't expect you to stay here, Ward . . . . Or me, either. for that matter . . . . Howard, have you seen the murals?

*Howard:* Yes, I've seen them . . . . and heard of them . . . . and talked of nothing else but them for . . . . Ever since I've known her . . . . My God, I . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* (lightly, attempting to pacify him): Sometimes I think I gave birth to a palet and brushes . . . . Anyway, I can look forward to the possibility of being grandmother to a mural.

*Howard:* (bitterly): Well, that's about all you'll ever be a grandmother to . . . . As far as I can see, there don't seem to be any other prospects . . . . (He pauses, as though he's not quite sure whether or not he ought to go on; then, almost confidingly, he says): You know, I used to wonder why she married me . . . . She never spends money on clothes, or cars, or anything like that. In fact, practically the only thing she ever buys . . . . is paint. The only reason she wanted to come abroad was because some fool thought his church needed decorating . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* When it comes to that, I've often wondered why you married Lynn; you two are so different, somehow . . . .

*Howard:* Yes, I know that now . . . . Oh, I don't know exactly what I did want . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* (Defending her daughter in a very reasonable manner): You can't complain of her abilities as a hostess, you know . . . . or . . . .

*Howard:* I could have hired a housekeeper, if I'd wanted one.

*Mrs. Cameron:* (Since she realizes that she can't do anything with Howard she goes back to the subject which interests her): You know, it's queer . . . . This is the first thing she's done that's been really good . . . . All the others seem to have been just a sort of a . . . . Well, a prelude . . . . to this.

*Howard:* Those damned murals! . . . . (Cynically): Mrs. Cameron, in my own very peculiar way I love Lynn, and while I'm not quite willing to risk my neck because of some silly idea of hers . . . . Anyway (obviously rationalizing), she'll probably be a lot better off without me . . . . I . . . . (Finally breaks down): Oh, God, I don't know what to do . . . .

(Lynn enters from right, carrying a tray on which there is the remains of a leg of lamb, part of a loaf of bread, a bottle of ketchup, a jar of relish, and some celery.)

*Mrs. Cameron:* Oh, you found some celery, too.

*Lynn:* Yes, there was some in back of the icebox, behind the relish jar . . . . I think they're left over from that tea . . . . Martha's always hiding the celery; it's so hard to get over here . . . . Won't you have some, Ward?

*Howard:* (sullenly): No, thank you, I don't want any . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* (Ignores Howard, makes an heroic effort to keep the conversation from lagging by reminiscing): That was a peculiar tea, wasn't it? Everybody was so excited about the war . . . . and that funny Mrs. Regent trying to flirt with old Mr. Fuller . . . . He must be at least seventy and he's so very dignified . . . . When he spilled that tea he was horribly embarrassed, you know . . . . and it wasn't his fault at all . . . .

*Lynn:* (ruefully): That was my last decent dress . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* (Gaily): Never you mind, darling . . . . when

we get to Paris we'll buy dresses, and hats, and shoes . . . . Everything there is to buy, won't we, Ward?

*Howard:* (Grimly): *If* we get to Paris, you mean . . . . Lynn, I hadn't meant to tell you this . . . . But . . . . down in the village yesterday, I heard one of the reasons everybody's getting out in such a hurry . . . . even though most of them have nowhere to go. It seems that word has gotten ahead that Lansing's been given definite orders not to take along any prisoners . . . .

*Lynn:* But Ward, I . . . .

*Howard:* The whole plan has to be evacuated quickly, you see . . . . It's a rather desperate move on their part and they've got to push it through . . . . Lynn, the answer is . . . . well, obvious.

*Lynn:* It won't do any good Ward . . . you ought to know that by now . . . . Anyway, if you only knew Lansing, you'd know how ridiculously morbid you're being . . . . He's not like that at all, Ward . . . . Did you know that he has one of the largest collections of Byzantine art in the world?

*Howard:* Byzantine art! Good God, Lynn! You have to realize that he's a major in an army that has no respect for . . . .

*Lynn:* What do you want on your sandwich, Ward?

*Howard:* Oh. I don't know. Lynn! (demandingly there is a pause finally:) Is there any of that pickle stuff left?

*Lynn:* The relish, you mean? Umm . . . . I'm sorry there isn't anything to drink, but I'm afraid of that water, and there's nothing else in the house . . . . Then you're sure of the reservations?

*Mrs. Cameron:* Yes, we wired Lindsay day before yesterday, and he was able to get us some . . . . Lynn, do you think there's any possibility that you'll get there before Friday?

*Howard:* Do you think there's any possibility that you'll get there at all?

*Lynn:* (ignoring Howard's last remark): I don't see why not . . . . if I'm successful, I hope to be able to reach Abbeyton . . . . with the army . . . . sometime tomorrow. They're going on through to join up with Fothay's troops there . . . . There's a chance that I might be able to get through the lines with Bret Davies. I talked to him last week, before the phones went out of order, and he said

that the Times was transferring him to the western front Thursday . . . .

*Howard:* If you don't turn up by Friday, what do you want us to do?

*Lynn:* If I'm not there by Friday, that will mean that I'll have to stay in Abbeyton until the end of the war—which isn't so far away, if we can believe anything the papers say.

*Howard:* To take a little less optimistic view of the situation, you do realize that there's a perfectly good possibility that you won't come back at all, don't you?

*Lynn:* Of course.

*Howard:* What makes you believe that Lansing will be interested in your murals? Isn't it a little far-fetched to assume that every major in the army is a connoisseur? Or do you expect to overwhelm him with their beauty?

*Lynn:* It isn't that as though I didn't know anything about the man . . . . He was in John Autrey's class at the Sorbonne, you know, and John knew him quite well. He came to that reception Lydia gave last spring . . . . I didn't meet him, but . . . .

*Howard:* My God! Do you realize you're risking your life on the basis of somebody's college education, and Lydia's . . . . of all people, *Lydia's* . . . . discernment?

*Lynn:* Oh, Ward, don't you see? It's got to work! Those murals aren't just three years of my life. They're all of it . . . . And it's not just me, either; it's you, and Mother, and somehow even more than that . . . . Ward, maybe it's wrong to say it, but these are the best that I can ever do . . . . Somehow, they're even better that *I* can paint . . . . And I'm not going to give them up for anything . . . . not for . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* But, Lynn, even if you do keep them from destroying the murals now, how can you be sure that they'll be safe later on? After all, there'll be other troops coming through after Lansing, and you certainly can't expect to stay and talk to all the majors and colonels, and brigadier generals . . . . Darling, Ward and I both know how you feel, but the whole thing's so hopeless . . . .

*Lynn:* Lansing's going to leave a division here, Bret said . . . . And if Lansing tells them to do anything, you can be pretty



sure they'll do it. He's the only decent strategist they have, and they know it. You two finish eating and I'll talk . . . . You can't expect to leave on time unless you hurry. (She walks over to the radio, turns it on, but nothing happens) . . . . Oh, I forgot this didn't work . . . . For all we know, the war might be over . . . . That would be funny, sitting here and arguing about the thing if the war were over, wouldn't it? Has everybody left town except us?

*Howard:* I think that fool Mr. Thorburg and his wife are staying . . . . They didn't want to leave their chickens, or something . . . .

*Lynn:* His poultry won most of the prizes on market day, you know . . . . It's very queer, being without electricity, isn't it? This is the only warm part of the house now . . . .

*Mrs. Cameron:* Where are you going to sleep tonight?

*Lynn:* On the couch, I suppose . . . . It really doesn't make much difference . . . . Lansing will probably be here before morning.

(Having finished eating, they all rise; Mrs. Cameron looks around the room, reluctant to leave it:)

*Mrs. Cameron:* I wish there were some way that we could take at least part of the furniture . . . . But of course we can't . . . . Oh, well, if our enemies are as mercenary as our allies they'll leave everything alone that's at all valuable. And if Major Lansing does know anything about art, he'll keep anything from happening to the Picasso . . . . Ward, where are the coats?

*Howard:* I put them in the car; I think that suit will keep you warm enough until later this evening, if the battery's not too far down for the heater to work. (with a forced casualness) Sure you won't change your mind, Lynn? . . . . I'll leave your suitcase here then; at least that will make room for somebody else along the way.

They are standing by the doorway now; *Howard* picks up the other suitcase and bends down to kiss *Lynn* good-bye:

*Howard:* Good-bye, darling . . . . Best luck . . . .

*Lyn* kisses her mother in almost exactly the same way:

*Mrs. Cameron:* Good-bye, dear . . . . Please be careful . . . . (uncontrollably) *Lynn*, I wish . . . .

*Lynns* Mother, please . . . . Good-bye.

She stands for a few seconds in the doorway, watching them walk down the path; then she closes the door, gets a book from the bookcase, and goes back to the couch in front of the fireplace.

*The curtain is lowered for a minute to denote the pass-  
of eleven hours.*

## SCENE II

SCENE: The same.

TIME: About eleven hours later: before dawn.

The light of early morning partially illuminates the living-room, and a bright glow from the fireplace reveals the sleeping form of *Lynn* on the couch. Warm shadows envelop the furniture in the background. A chill mistiness is beginning to invade the room by way of the windows, frosting into sharp clarity the nebulous forms in the foreground. There is a low murmur, vague and chaotic, a reverberation of noise which is being created in the distance; above this rises the sound of approaching voices. Outside the door we hear:

*Sergeant*: For God's sake, Shut up! The way you talk, you'd think we weren't being paid. I call this the life . . . . not much fighting yet three square meals a day . . . .

*Private I*: All right . . . . So we eat beans, and stew, and then maybe more beans, and more (He is interrupted by *Private II*)

*Private II*: Oh, it's not the food that matters . . . . Do you know how long it's been since I've seen a woman. I mean, really *seen* one . . . . three months!

(As he says this, *Sergeant Fulby* enters the room followed by *Privates I*, who has held the door open for him, and, in turn by *Privates II* and *III*.)

*Private III*: And then on top of that we have to look around out here before we can go in with the others . . . . So when we get there all the good stuff'll be gone.

*Sargeant*: The Major won't let them keep it . . . . But if *we* find it . . . . well, being way out here, we'll have plenty of time to hide it . . . .

*Private III*: Say, that's right! . . . . Hell, I never though of that . . . .

*Sergeant*: (Rather smugly.) Sure, and what's more . . . .



(pauses suddenly in his speech, looks wonderingly around the room, then:) (softly) My God! (His tone has changed from one of awe to one of avaricious delight as he begins to compute mentally the probable value of the furnishings of the room.) Well, looks like I was right, doesn't it?

*Private I:* (grudgingly) Umm . . . . But what I want to know is, Why'd they leave all this stuff?

*Sergeant:* Hell, what do we care *why* they left it, as long as it's here. That's the trouble with you, you're always . . . .

(He is interrupted by a sudden, startled exclamation from *Private II*, who having walked to the center front of the stage, has seen *Lynn* on the couch.)

*Private II:* Good Lord! What is it . . . . "Ask and it shall be given"? . . . . (Turning to the others.) Well, what do you think of her? That is, if she's real . . . .

(*Lynn* wakes at the sound of his voice, is about to say something, but is prevented by *Private III*, who continues as though oblivious to her consciousness:)

*Private III:* She's real, all right . . . . But what are we going to do with her?

*Lynn:* I beg your pardon . . . . Which of you is Major Lansing?

*Private I:* Ha . . . . That's a good one . . . . Listen, we'd better decide something before Lansing gets suspicious and comes here after us . . . . What are we going to do with her?

*Sergeant:* Why, take her back to camp as a prisoner of war, of course . . . . What else could we do with her?

*Private II:* Oh, don't be like that . . . .

*Private I:* Sure, . . . . when something like this happens, it doesn't seem right to let it go by . . . . It's like refusing to do the will of God . . . .

*Private III:* I know a place where we can hide her . . . .

*Private II:* Of course, if we don't, there's always a chance we may get guard duty.

*Private III:* And let those other bastards get ahead of us? It doesn't seem fair to me . . . . We found her, didn't we?

*Sergeant:* Well, if you want to take her, you'd better hurry. Major Lansing might get here any minute . . . . Go on without me. I have some things I want to take care of here . . . .

*Private III:* I can't see what good this stuff here will do you.

You can't trade it anywhere . . . . I'd take her any day.

(For the first time directly dressing *Lynn*) Come on . . . . You heard what he said, didn't you?

*Lynns* You realize when this is found out you'll be court-martialed, don't you?

*Private III*: They'd be likely to get rid of four good soldiers because of you, they would. (He joins in the laughter at his own joke.) But we won't take any chances. (He put his hand over her mouth, holding her down, then calls to *Privates I* and *II*.) Help me here, you two.

The three men are attempting to bind and gag her when *Major Lansing* enters at left.

*Major Lansing*: Well, you've taken a devil of a long time. I . . . . (seeing *Lynn*) What's going on here, anyway?

All three men are standing at attention. Only *Private II* can gather up the courage to answer his superior officer:

*Private II*: (Saluting.) Prisoner of war, sir.

*Major Lansing*: (Sarcastically) Since when has it become customary or necessary to bind and gag women prisoners. Untie her at once. (The men hastily release *Lynn*, whom *Major Lansing* addresses): I'm sorry that this happened, Miss . . . .

*Lynn*: I am Mrs. Howard Trevis.

*Major Lansing*: I'm Major Lansing, Mrs. Trevis . . . . As I said, I'm sorry that this happened . . . . It was unfortunate that you stayed.

*Lynn*: Yes, I know. But I have something very important to tell you . . . . Could I possibly speak to you alone?

*Major Lansing*: Why, of course. (He dismisses the men, instructing them to wait outside for him, then turns to her curiously): Yes?

*Lynn* waits until the last of the soldiers has left, and the door is closed. When she finally speaks to *Lansing* there is not an entreating note in her voice. She speaks coldly, almost emotionlessly, at first, gradually allowing her eagerness to be betrayed, but with an unwillingness to appeal merely to his emotions.

*Lynn*: You see, besides being Mrs. Howard Trevis. I'm—*Lynn* Cameron.

*Major Lansing*: I'm afraid I haven't . . . .

*Lynn*: You wouldn't have heard of me . . . . I paint murals. I

haven't done anything worth hearing about until now. I'm working on the cathedral in the village . . . . It's almost finished now and its . . . . well, it's good. You'd have to see it, of course, to know. Anyway, I hoped there might be some way that I could persuade you that it was worth saving . . . . That's why I stayed.

*Major Lansing:* Do you mean to say that you stayed here, even though you realized—And you must have realized—what would probably happen to you, because of some murals?

*Lynn:* Perhaps if You'd see them . . . .

*Major Lansing:* No, it's not necessary, anyway we don't have time. I'll have the men outside signal Corporal Verenin in the village. He'll carry out my orders.

*Lynn (Quietly):* Thank you.

*Major Lansing:* Do you have a pencil? (As she starts to look for one, he finds his in a pocket). Never mind, I found mine. (He begins to write.) As a matter of fact, I probably would think you'd gone completely insane, if I hadn't seen the Picasso. The General unfortunately doesn't know Picasso's work, so it won't be so easy to convince him of my sanity. Maybe I could suddenly become very religious . . . . But it would have to be *very* sudden . . . . Oh, well, we'll take care of that when we come to it. (Having finished, he rises.) That ought to be enough. (He raises his voice to call *Private I*, who appears almost immediately at left.)

*Private I:* Yes, sir.

*Major Lansing:* See that Corporal Verenin receives this message at once. (Hands him the note.)

*Private I:* Yes sir.

*Exit Private at left.*

*Major Lansing:* (turning again to Lynn). Mrs. Trevis . . . . I . . . . think I understand—to a degree, of course . . . . the way you feel . . . . the reason you stayed. If I do, I think you must have known that . . . . I am *Major Lansing*, Mrs. Trevis, and there's no turning back now . . . . What you wanted most, I think I have been able to give you. Other than that . . . . I can grant you . . . . nothing,

*Lynn:* I realized that . . . . or almost realized it, I think. Only (pause) . . . . when will it have to be? Soon?

*Majoring Lansing:* (Nodding) . . . I'm sorry.

*Lynn:* Because I think it might be better now, than if we waited too long. There's no way . . . ?

*Major Lansing:* No . . . No, there isn't. We can talk for a few minutes anyway . . . only not very long.

*Lynn:* You know John Autrey, don't you?

*Major Lansing:* John! Of course . . . at the Sorbonne . . . I think he was first to introduce the more obsolete forms of English profanity into my vocabulary . . . I never was able to criticize Reynolds before that . . . Did you know him in the States?

*Lynn:* He lived a block down from my house in Uniontown. And Lydia Grayton?

*Major Lansing:* Of course . . . The last time I saw her was at some sort of reception affair she gave last Spring . . . about two months before the war began, I believe.

*Lynn:* Or possibly three. I was there, too. That seems very queer now, doesn't it?

*Major Lansing:* Lydia had wanted to have a garden party, and it rained.

*Enter Sergeant at left.*

*Major Lansing:* (Continuing.) It seems very strange now that once anyone might have thought that so very important.

(To Sergeant.) Was my message sent?

*Sergeant:* Yes, sir, but we haven't received an answer yet, sir. A prisoner has been taken in the village . . . Gatesly brought her here. Her husband was a little difficult, (to Lynn.) Sorry, Miss . . . her name is Mrs. Thorburg.

*Major Lansing:* I think you have your orders.

*Sergeant:* Yes, sir. (*Exits*).

*Lynn:* I wonder what became of her chickens.

*Major Lansing:* I imagine they have already fulfilled the ultimate destiny of all fat chickens.

*Lynn:* It always happens, doesn't it?

*Major Lansing:* Well, I can't say that we're able to find many chickens, if that's what you mean . . . But there are often cases that are almost parallel . . . Everybody has something that they can't leave behind, you know . . . Sometimes it's less cruel to destroy the people themselves than those things.



*Lynn*: Do you feel that too? That no matter . . . .

*Lynn* stops suddenly at the sound of two shots offstage, following each other in rapid succession. There is a slight pause, and then the third and last shot is heard.

For a moment neither *Lynn* nor *Major Lansing* say anything; during that time we become aware that until now *Lynn* has not actually been conscious of the imminence of death. But her resolution succeeds in suppressing the momentary expression of incredulity:

*Lynn*: Your sergeant isn't a very good shot . . . . is he?

*Major Lansing*: No. No, he isn't. As a matter of fact, Gorton's the only one of them who's very good outside of target practice.

*Lynn*: There isn't much chance of his doing anything . . . . else . . . . first, is there? I mean . . . .

*Major Lansing*: Oh, no, you needn't worry about that. He won't dare try anything as long as there's a possibility I might find out . . . . No, you'll be quite—well, "safe"—from that aspect, at any rate.

*Lynn*: Then, if you don't mind, I'd rather go now.

*Major Lansing*: But . . . .

*Lynn*: Please.

*Major Lansing*: Of course, whatever you say . . . . (raises his voice): Private Gorton!

*Private Gorton*: (Entering quickly from left): Sir?

*Major Lansing*: You will have charge of Mrs. Trevis.

(Slowly *Lynn* walks to the door. For a moment she studies the room. Then she faces *Lansing*)

*Lynn*: Goodbye . . . . *Major Lansing*. — And — Thank you

*Major Lansing*: I'm sorry, Mrs. Trevis. Goodbye. (She goes out.)

*Major Lansing*: Gorton, I don't expect to see Sergeant Fulby's inaccuracy repeated.

*Private Gordon*: No . . . . No, I won't, Sir.

*Major Lansing*: All right . . . . That will be all. Call Jenkins here on your way out.

*Private Gorton*: Yes, Sir.

(*Private Gorton* exits at left; his exit is immediately followed by the entrance of *Private III* through same door.)

*Major Lansing*: Well, did you find any food, or anything else we could use, around the house?

*Private III:* No, sir . . . . We were looking when you came.

*Major Lansing:* You might have been . . . . Of course, my evidence to the contrary is purely circumstantial . . . . Anyway, take a look around now and see what you can find.

*Private III:* Yes, sir. (He is preparing to leave through the archway at back right when *Private II* enters at left. *Private III* pauses near the archway.)

*Major Lansing:* (As *Private II* enters the room.) Did you send the message?

*Private II:* I'm sorry, sir . . . . It seems that the soldiers had already done a pretty thorough job.

*Major Lansing:* It's absolutely ruined?

*Private II:* I'm afraid so, sir.

*Major Lansing:* Oh God, . . . . I . . . . (suddenly turns to *Private III*, who is still standing near the archway, and proceeds to give vent to a little of what he feels on that very astonished soldier):

*Major Lansing:* I thought I told you what to do . . . . What are you standing there for? Get out!

(There is a pause before *Major Lansing* turns to *Private II*.)

*Major Lansing:* Was *Private Gorton* outside when you came in?

*Private II:* He's . . . . carrying out orders, Sir.

*Major Lansing:* There was nothing else I could do, anyway . . . . Even if I'd tried, it wouldn't have . . . .

(*Lansing* paces the floor, takes out a cigarette. As he starts to light it, a single shot splits the night. For a moment he stands motionless . . . . then slowly lights his cigarette.)

From the expressions on the men's faces it is obvious what each of them is thinking . . . . Suddenly, *Major Lansing* comes back to the more important subject of the war, takes out his watch and looks at it.)

*Major Lansing:* It's almost six now . . . . We'll have to get through here not later than nine if we expect to reach *Abbeyton* before dark. I'm going on down to the village . . . . Meet me there as soon as you finish here.

*Private II:* Yes, sir.

*Major Lansing:* (Walking towards exit at left): You might



bring that picture over the mantelpiece.

*Private II:* But sir, it's . . . .

*Major Lansing:* (angrily) : Private Dowell!

*Private II:* Yes, sir.

*Major Lansing:* (placatingly): It's . . . . very valuable,  
you know.

(*Curtain*)

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### ILLEGITIMATE

Half of blood and half of water  
Is my weeping ill-got daughter.  
See, she sits beneath the stair  
Murmuring and sly,  
See, she sits beneath the stair  
And half-gestures. I go by  
On unheeding feet.

Out of over-nourished fields,  
Insatiable and lush,  
Insatiable and lush, with water  
Swirling, ruddy, seeping,  
Out of night too warm for sleeping,  
Out of night too warm  
I chilled with momentary weeping.  
Half of blood and half of water  
Is my weak and ill-got daughter.

PEGGY HUDGINGS

## TWO POEMS

ELIZABETH MILLER

### POST-MORTEM

Who was it slew the five and feathered birds,  
Unfeathering all the fine and singing birds  
Who flew blue flights into air's dazzling ocean?  
Who robbed the swift of all their feathered motion?

I would not boil and eat a little bird  
That left so small a taste upon the tongue!  
O no, not for the small dry flesh it was  
But for the drier morsel of their song.

Why are your heads hung down, your limbs unhinged,  
And why about your necks are nooses hung?  
It is because we struggled to abstract  
The siren singing from the severed lung.

---

### BLAKE

He dreamed a whiteness wholly rare  
Compounded of colour  
More violent and pure  
Than any of them that are.

If organ or if violin should  
So white a melody  
Play, there would be  
A sound of rending wood.

His medium splintered too. Distortion  
Of eyeball suddenly shed.  
Sight from the radiant head  
And left a visual blind perfection.

## RED CLAY

SALLY McCASLIN

**J**ANUARY was unusually cold. It rained and the rain froze and the wind creaked through the ice coated trees, but cut with increasing keenness across the clear space between the barn and the house. The cows stood humped in the tin roofed shed, their hair rubbed in curious patterns where they licked one another for salt. The floundering hay stack was rigid with ice.

It was in January that Dave Summers died and they buried him on a windy day and the preacher pulled off one glove as he read from the Bible over the red clay hillock. The flowers from the funeral home had looked cheap and ineffectual against the dirt of the grave and the grey of the sky and the red opaque eyes of Dave's family.

When it was over, they had gone home and huddled over the stove in their Sunday clothes until it was time to feed, and then they had gone out, their heads bowed to the cold.

By February the rain had stopped. A painful hardness of earth and objects took the place of the ice, and the red dirt of the grave had sunk almost level with the ground. Freda used the last of the wood her husband had cut before the doctor had told him that he'd better go to bed, that he was inviting pneumonia. She sent her sons over to a neighbor's with a note asking if he needed any wood cut on the shares. The boys were old enough to cut wood. Freda rented her place from the bank in town, and the bank wanted to save the timber. The man let them cut fence posts for two days, and they hauled home a wagon bed of round oak sticks. The wood was green and they picked up shingles when the wind whipped them from the roof and used them for kindling.

By the middle of the month Freda shivered in her bed, when she thought of the gaunt cows licking each other's backs in the open shed, of the great holes the pigs rooted looking for roots and acorns. She wondered if the boys were sleeping in their clothes again, and thought of Modine long and dark and thin under the covers in the great drafty North Room. Crockett slept beside her, his ragged union suit yielding patches of warm skin, his little boy hair neither soft nor stiff against her arm.

Six weeks from the time Dave had died, Freda rode with a neighbor in his pickup truck into town, and walked the mile from Wade's Feed Store to the cotton mill, her hands warming each other against the cold. Though the town was small, she had not been in that part before. The Feed Store, Dickey's Dry Goods, and the post office had been the scenes of her infrequent visits. Dave had bought the groceries on Saturday.

The atmosphere of the mill town was different. The houses were small, close together. There was no grass, no empty flower boxes, no farmers standing on the streets. She entered the wrong door of the mill and a man led her through rows of whirling, whining machinery before she reached the employment office. The man at the desk listened attentively. The girl listened too, between flurries of rattling the keys of her typewriter. He told her to come back on Wednesday, that they were hiring more women, that some of the men were leaving for the draft and that others were going to work on the new munitions factory outside Memphis. At home Freda milked the cow and thought of the warmth inside the heavy doors of the mill.

"It was as warm as the post office", she said to Modine.

Modine answered, "I'd like to work there myself."

"No." the woman answered quickly. "I ought to be able to look after my own kids, oughtn't I. You got to finish school, Modine. You're the farthe'st along and I want you to finish."

"I hate it," Modine said. "I hate the whole God damned mess. The fools! The silly fat fools! What do they know about anything."

"No you don't, Modine. You know you don't. You know you told me that you liked Mr. Hughes, that he always let you put your geometry on the board because you had it right." Freda talked fast in a low voice, trying self-consciously to stem her daughter's bitterness, a bitterness that thrust itself out in vulgar scornful words and passed, leaving her more thin, more dark, more silent than before. Modine was her only daughter, sixteen; and when Freda talked to her, her words were short and breathless with the fear of her daughter's reply: and when Modine talked she hung on her words, saying them silently with her own lips. Sometimes she reached forth a thick blunt hand and touched the girl's thin shoulder.

"Modine works hard", she said to the neighbors, "and she don't complain none."

The boys were somewhat wary of Modine. They knew the vicious sting of her thin hand when they fought or swore at the food on the small square table.

Modine spoke now, not grudgingly but tired. "Oh he's all right. I like my teachers all right. I just hate those silly fool town girls. They haven't got any sense."

"I bet they aren't as smart as my girl," Freda answered with triumph.

"Oh you think your kids are perfect." There was no acknowledgement of the compliment in Modine's answer.

"I don't . . . ." Freda began, but Modine left, kicking the cow she had been milking lightly on the back of its legs to make it move on.

When Freda thought of her trip back to town on Wednesday and vaguely of the consequences of it, her conversation with Modine came strangely back to her thoughts. Modine worked and got good marks but ever since she had left the little country school and ridden into town on the school bus, the silence had grown on her until it manifested itself in her face, in the thin tightness of her mouth and in the depth of her dark brown eyes. Modine had never talked about boys. Once when Crockett had teased her about a truck driver who waved to her on the roadside, she had slapped the little boy and had said, "Shut up, I hate boys. They're like you!"

Freda became nervously impatient for Wednesday and the appointed interview. If she got the job, she'd get Modine a permanent.

She got the job. They put her to work in a row of young girls in blue uniforms guiding the white threads over spools and snipping it when they were full. The next day, the neighbor moved Freda and her family into a little three room apartment belonging to the mill. He took one of the pigs in payment and Freda sold the other one and paid for her blue uniforms and let the children go up town to the picture show. The cows were left in the country, and Freda poured canned milk into Crockett's glass and hovered without confidence over the blue flame of the oil stove.

The boys liked the new life. They walked down the railroad tracks with other boys, and Crockett asked Freda for a



bicycle like one he had seen on the street. Modine made no comment. She slept in the room with the boys now, carrying her clothes back and forth to the small bathroom on the back-porch, when she wanted to dress. Freda scrubbed her pans thoroughly in the new sink in the kitchen.

When they had lived in the little mill town a week, a boy walked to the porch with Modine and talked a few minutes before he went away.

"Who was that?" Freda asked when Modine came in, her arms enveloping her books.

"Just a boy and his name is Ronnie. Anything else you want to know?" She was ugly in her attempt to appear indifferent.

"No," Freda answered quickly.

The days passed. Freda grew a little deaf from the continual noise of the mill. She strained for Modine's words but did not always understand them. She thought frequently of the old place they had left, the cows, the pigs, the persimmon tree with its blue frozen persimmons. She did not think often of Dave. Dave had died and gone from her life. She did remember the picture of the preacher reading with one hand ungloved and of the small futile flowers. The crowded three rooms and the rows of houses made her strangely nervous, and she slept badly. The mill seemed strange but after the first week her feet no longer hurt as she stood in front of her row of spinning bobbins. Sometimes she listened to the talk of the girls on either side. She never talked to them.

On Saturdays they gave her the crisp green check, glistening with ink. She took it shyly and never felt that it was actually hers. She bought brightly labeled cans of food and set them on the shelves in the kitchen. When she was alone, she watched and counted them. She bought Modine a skirt and some bright colored gloves. and Modine wore them to school and talked more to her family than she had done on the farm. Ronnie walked with her often and almost every night he would come to the front steps and whistle and Modine would go out. He never came in. Freda came to fear his loose lipped smile and occasionally she dreamed of him, his eyes hidden by his long blonde hair. Modine did not talk about him, but she gave Crockett pieces of chewing gum which Ronnie

gave her, and sometimes she told him the story of a movie to which he had taken her.

Freda learned from one of the other boys that Ronnie lived in mill town, that he didn't go to school. He had met Modine one time when she went to the store for kerosene for the stove.

The strangeness of her new environment did not abate with time. Instead it grew on her, and the fear of Ronnie grew until each night she lay painfully awake until Modine came in and went to bed. She heard them whispering on the front porch at night, and the whispers sounded wicked and hidden in the dark. Yet she did not speak. At times Modine's face was softer now, and she could not bring herself to disrupt the spell. Once she put out her hand and touched Modine's shoulder and felt her daughter draw away from its weight.

In two months the worst of the March storms were over. The wind changed to the south and blew with a new wet softness. Kids of all sizes burst from the clutter of houses and played all day in the streets. Crockett cried to go barefooted. Around the edges of tumble down fences, the grass was green under the past fall's leaves. Wash day was apparent in long lines of flopping clothes.

In the country it would be time to start plowing. Dave would have taken the sharp turning plow around the very edge of the field and worked in until only a small center circle of unplowed earth remained. Wild onions would be springing up in the low places of the pasture and Crockett would refuse to drink his milk. Freda missed the old place with a longing that could find no place to bury itself in the noise and disorder of the town. Once she asked Modine if she'd like to go back.

Modine answered slowly, "I'm not going to move back" and went out on the porch and watched for Ronnie.

In May, the boys began to talk of the day school would be out. Marble season came and reigned and gave way to baseball. Ronnie played on the mill town team and Modine begged Crockett to go with her to see the games. Sometimes he went without an argument, but again he made Modine play marbles with him in the back yard before he'd go. Modine played silently, her long legs against the black dirt, her wrists relaxed. Sometimes a half smile crossed her face when Crockett's pride in his marksmanship justified itself, but usually

her eyes were blank and far away, and Crockett said patiently each time he shot, "It's your go now, Modine."

When the game was over, Modine always threatened, "You said you'd go now," and Crockett went, a little reluctantly, jingling the marbles in his pocket as he walked. They stood at the edge of the field and sometimes Ronnie waved but usually he showed no sign of their presence.

Ronnie was catcher and he held his hair back from the mask with a rubber band. When a ball came in wild, he cursed in a loud voice and threw his mitt high into the air. When he made a good catch, he threw back his head and said, "Jesus! that burnt!"

Once after a game, Crockett said at the supper table, "You ought to hear old Ronnie cuss."

Modine answered, "You ought to see what Crockett wrote on the side of the coal house."

Crockett reddened and answered, "I didn't. How do you know I did?"

One of the other boys asked, "What?"

Modine did not answer. Freda looked at the little boy and he raised his eyes and faced hers.

After supper, Freda and Modine washed dishes in the smelly little kitchen, and Freda said in her mind all the things she wanted to say to her daughter. Finally she did speak, her little used voice breaking in the middle of being casual.

"Are you goin' out tonight, Modine? I just wanted to know whether to lock the door."

"I guess so," Modine answered.

"You guess so you're goin' out or to lock the door?"

"There's no use in locking the door anyway. Who'd steal what we got?"

Having broken the ice, Freda had to slow the words down. They wanted to rush out and caress the tin tired shoulders, to take within their own the long brown hand, to make the tears come and to cry away the interlocked chains of barriers. When she spoke she said almost playfully, "Is my little girl in love with Ronnie?"

"It's funny, Modine", the woman said. "Things seem kind of different when you have kids of your own. Maybe it's just because you've seen more things happen. When you get a little

bigger . . . but you're smart, honey. You know these things. I know my girl is good."

"Oh for God's sake, Mamma!" she said, "don't start that". Then Modine dried the dishes hurriedly and went out of the room and sat on the front porch. Her rocking made a measured beat through the house.

Again Freda dreamed of Ronnie and woke up . . . the darkness heavy with promised but indistinct suffering. Modine stayed out later than usual and came in and undressed and went to bed in the dark.

Blue circles bit deeply into her cheeks the next morning and her eyes showed unfathomable pain. She breathed in short quick gasps and after supper, she read carefully in her high school *Prose and Poetry*. She asked Crockett if he wanted to sleep with her and promised to tell him a story. Crockett refused and Freda whispered as she helped him wash his feet before going to bed that she'd give him a nickel if he'd sleep with Modine.

They were washing dishes the next night when Modine spoke, twisting the dish cloth with slight trembling fingers. There were tears in her voice but her eyes were dry — a hard brown.

"Mamma", she said. "I'm sick. I feel so bad." she began to cry, awkwardly rubbing at the tears.

"Bless her beautiful heart!" Freda was tenderly reproachful. "Why didn't you tell me? I thought you was sort of puny. And out here dryin' dishes in this cold kitchen.

"Don't you know, Mamma?" She looked at Freda now. You do know too, Mamma". She whispered the words, "Ronnie . . . I been ruined, Mamma, and Ronnie's gone. I been ruined. I know."

Freda had known. Somehow, in the cold barren roundness of Dave's grave, in the gaunt, rough tongued cows, in the fast diminishing wood pile, she had known. She had seen it in the scattered ugliness of the mill town, in the long line of bright blue uniforms, in the tall, loose lipped Ronnie. She just hadn't realized.

Great awkward sobs began in her breast and her eyes were a dull, dark red. She said in a strange new voice.

"Yeah, I knew it, Modine. Don't cry, Hon. Don't be scared — we'll do somethin' "



Modine leaned against the wall, her thin body quieter, but her damp hands closed and opened.

Freda went on her grief assuming a sing song chant.

"It's my fault. It's your old Mamma's fault. We oughtn't to have moved. I knew it. We didn't have no business in town. The wood pile got low and . . ." She began to cough and she coughed and cried together and finally said in a calmer voice:

"We'll go back, Modine. The cabin ain't rented and we'll just hire out 'till next year".

The funeral home which carried Dave's burial policy loaned them a truck and they moved back at the end of May.

They swept the little house and unloaded the furniture and Crockett ran away and waded in the pond and got his pants wet. Freda cooked supper with the back door open and the night and the South wind came in, strangely gustful with life. The fireflies, the frogs, the damp, warm, wonder of the earth itself permeated their senses. Freda spoke to Modine like she used to talk to Dave.

"You know, Modine, Mr. Harwood's cotton is up good. We're goin' to be choppin' before you know it."

"Yeah, I know it", Modine said.

"We better start on the gowns tomorrow, then", Freda went on. "Time's goin' to fly and we got to plant the garden and straighten the place up a little.

Modine's voice was calm, free from restraint. "We just about used all the goods. I want to get some more blue."

"The woman answered, "You better get some pink, young lady. Sometimes you find out you weren't so sure as you thought you were."

Modine smiled, a soft full smile.

"I don't care", she said.

They stood in the door together and looked out over the soft plowed fields and watched Crockett, a thin, rabbit-like figure in the dusk, coming home to supper.



## THE MORTAL CINDER

THOMAS CASEY

THE carnival closed in Budapest. The acrobat, after a tiff with the manager, found himself wealthy in the properties of his act. He owned a yellow robe and green tights, three coils of rope, one set of tumbling furniture, and nothing else. He hadn't even money enough to return to London.

Oliver sat in his dressing-room, legs crossed, staring at himself in the mirror. A single hissing gaslight glowed yellow in the room. Outside his door he heard the voice of the strong man fretting English, and when more effective, profaning in Swedish. The Russian juggler was there too, the blond songstress, and Cobby the Midget. The manager's tale of woe seemed to vary in all cases, but he paid off at the same starved figure. With all accounted for, it appeared the midget had come off the richest.

"I'll try it," Oliver said, slapping his knee. He hurried to the door. He waited a moment until only two voices were in the hall. Then he turned the knob.

Like a sprout at the foot of a bean pole, the midget stood talking to the juggler. He turned his tow-head toward the acrobat. The pixie-face wrinkled a wonderful smile.

"Have you seen Sykes yet, Oliver?"

"I have. Come in a minute."

The midget took leave of the juggler, who was glad to be on his way to assemble and pack his saucers, balls, pins, and knickknacks. He was going back to Russia to try another form of starvation.

"What is it? Are you in trouble, Oliver?"

"Shut the door. Do I look to be?"

"Only slightly. But what is it?"

"It's an idea I have," said the acrobat. He sat across from the midget on a white stool, tipping back, swaying. "I fancy I'm tricked as a performer. I never belonged in this cheap joke-of-a-carnival. It's a sad existence for you, Cobby. It's been living though; still I have talent for nobler things. Hereafter I intend to operate on a scale that befits me. I have the Midas touch as a promoter, you know. I've decided I'm going to use it now. Will you hear me on?"

"Willingly, Oliver."

"You're not to tell this about."

"Is it so important?"

"To you it is, Cobby. It's essential you not even think much on the matter after I've told you, lest you say a word out. I'll manage affairs nicely. I don't know though, Cobby, you're awfully waggy at the mouth. Now that I think on it, success might steal away your good senses."

"No, Oliver. Tell me. You'll see how well I can be private."

The acrobat then gave a thorough and detailed description of his plan. He visualized Cobby on the stage with swarms of dancing girls, some bowing, turning, somersaulting around him; some swinging their jaunty skirts under his nose; some singing into his ear and tilting his hat. There would be three acts. Cobby was to be the King of the Dwarfs. It was something flashy and original in stage revues. As the tower of words cast its brilliant light into his mind, the midget became alive and excited. Even though the venture would cost him his small fortune, it might be worth the sally. His weasel legs paced the floor with a scurry of steps. He went rapidly around the room like a toy wound spring-tight.

"But where will you get all those girls?" he begged.

"I have only to snap my fingers. You forget I know London."

"But they won't dance with me, will they?"

"Just snap *your* fingers." Oliver sneaked a moment to smile at the floor. When he looked up his face was earnest. "Is it a proposition, then?"

Cobby gripped the acrobat's fingers with two trembling child-hands; he pressed them meaningfully. His eyes twinkled, wet at the corners. He bowed as a prince might have.

"This is the beginning of a great association."

Leaving the Continent, their great association carried the acrobat and the midget across the Channel. They docked with other vessels in the haze of East London, hustled through the busy markets of Billingsgate, and after a long search found rooms in Dury Lane with a Roman Catholic widow and her daughter. They prudently advanced her eight shillings, six pence for the week. Near their quarters Drury Lane entered the Strand, and their first walk was through the delirium of

the Strand, and under Temple Bar, a gray and sombre archway over the milling flow of humanity. They walked as far as Essex Street. Turning back, they stopped at the Baking House Inn, a coffee-shop in the shadow of Temple Bar. The place was in a great stir, for Charles Dickens had just halted his coach outside and sent his coachman in for cakes and ale.

"A truly fine eating-house," Oliver said, leaning over the table. "We'll come here often when you've made your fortune."

Cobby glanced at the ornate hangings and fixtures.

"An expensive place, I'm afraid. Will the feasting we've had cost us terrible, Oliver? I haven't much to squander. Our passage over puts us to watching our spending."

"Only a frolic for today," his companion answered, casting his eye about at the other tables. The turn of his head followed the steps of a comely barmaid. Curls spilled from under her lace cap like copper shavings, her frilly dress was cut low, and every movement was an advantage to calculate and not guess her beauty of flesh and figure. The girl was soon aware of the dapper stranger and the curious Hop-o'-my-Thumb. From that moment the pair found her smiles a welcome dessert to the meal. They glanced up from their banquet at every advantage.

"A trim wench," the acrobat acknowledged. "Lovely indeed. I think we'll see her again. There's more to this place than I thought."

They retired early that evening. Oliver fell quickly into a deep slumber, breathing with a rumbling sound into his full chest. But Cobby sat up in bed, thinking what tomorrow would bring. Surely Oliver would abide by his promise and have him promoted to a rich billing in all the London theatres. Then his greatest wish could be fulfilled: he would marry some nice woman and love her dearly, live quietly in Charterhouse Square. They would have a fine ornamented carriage, two drivers and a postillion. They would visit all the playhouses on first night performances, and one day, be presented at court.

Cobby's mind turned from this to the girl at the Baking House Inn. Oliver had found out her name—Vera. The midget whispered it over to himself as if he dared say the word. It was beautiful to him, suggestive. Outside in the street the sign-boards over the shop fronts creaked and groaned in the

night wind. There was the infrequent clip-clop of hoofs dying up and down the cobbles.

When Cobby finally dozed off, he began to dream. He dreamt himself a giant, a proud Hercules standing like a pillar above other men, stooping to look into their scared faces. Then he saw himself strolling up the busy Strand, people scurrying before him. He saw himself crouch to pass under Temple Bar, saw himself bend to peer into the Baking House Inn. Vera was there. She came forward, offering herself, and he wept and kissed her.

The next morning Cobby was whistling as he stood on the stool over the porcelain crock dousing his face. Oliver was suspicious of the midget's gaiety when he awoke. He was a little leery that possibly the fellow, having decided he was being duped, or somehow caught on, planning some clever reprisal that pleased him to the point of song.

"Cobby, I'm going out today," he said, "and lay the foundation to your success. I'm going to Clifford's first." When he was dressing he watched, waiting until the midget's back was turned, then helped himself to some of the perfume the tiny man used freely and for all occasions. It lent him a sense of the debonair. Then smoothing his hair against his scalp and oiling the ends of his mustache, he bade the midget good-morning and departed. Idly watching him from the window, Cobby saw him turn and walk toward the Strand. That was odd. Clifford's was quite the other direction.

Spending the day in the lonely room, Cobby enjoyed himself building on to the dream he had during the night. The sound of the widow's daughter in the next room singing unrestrainedly delighted him. He wished to be there with her, but of course that couldn't be. And even were it possible, she would be frightened by him, and cry out. She'd not make him happy, only miserable. It was always the same weary truth. He had no reason to expect love and comfort, born half a man. Still, it satisfied him to listen, to dream, to thread all his capricious thoughts together, forgetting lovesickness.

Long after Cobby was in bed, Oliver returned. He smelled of rum, and stumbled about undressing himself in the dark. Finally he clambered into bed. Cobby slept little after that. He crawled from underneath the warm covers and sat on the window ledge.

"Tomorrow I'll go along with him," he said; "either that, or follow him."

He sat in silence for a long time after.

When tomorrow came they rose early, and coming out on the street, the two of them stood a moment to suck the morning air.

"Where shall we breakfast, Cobby, my bucko?"

"You know best, Oliver."

The acrobat stared at him a second. But seeing the midget's eyes innocent of meaning, he brightened up.

"I have the place." He struck off at a quick pace. "We haven't been there since first we came."

In the Baking House Inn there were but few early-risers breakfasting. The room was steamy and warm, and the odors of a hundred foods hung heavily in the atmosphere. Sitting beside Oliver, Cobby drowsed several times, and excusing himself, fastened his eyes on the nearest moving object. It was Vera, coming to take their orders.

"The top of the morning, my two fine handsomes! Sure you'll have hot wheat and cream, tea, muffins, honey and cheese?"

They left the menu to her choice.

"Did you know a stone fell from the Bar the other night?" she said, returning with the dishes. "It didn't strike anyone, but narrowly missed a grocerboy. They're planning to pull that old mischief down soon. Until it's out of the way, we'll have its bloody sight before us."

Thinking Cobby was not noticing, Oliver grasped her hand and pressed it for a fleeting second.

"How do you mean, Vera?"

"You know its history?"

Cobby was watching both of them with sharp eyes.

"I can't remember much of it. Cobby might know though. What, Cobby?"

The girl concentrated her attention for the first time on the midget. He supposed his skin was flaming. As he felt the thoughts of every woman like needles, he could feel her thoughts pricking him. She was thinking how darling he was, how doll-like, how like an elf.

"No, Oliver, I don't know. I'm no help at all."

"Then I'll have to tell both of you," she said, looking di-



rectly into Cobby's eyes. "The Bar was never a city gate, but it always marked the city bounds. Nobody can tell when it was built. It's always been there. It's like London herself, eternal, sort of. Under the Bar, on this side, Sir Thomas Wygatt was taken prisoner. Once it was hung solid black for the funeral of Wellington. But no one sees Temple Bar without connecting it with human flesh of thieves and traitors, heads and arms and entrails."

"That sounds ghastly, Vera. It gives me a chill. But how do you mean? Did they really hang the heads and hearts of humans on the Bar, or are you just making foolishness for the morning?"

"God's truth. They say the first pretty was one of the quarters of Sir William Armstrong hisself. I trow he had something to do with the Rye House Plot. Later they made a sick hanging of the head and quarters of the men who tried to assassinate William the Third. The last heads were put there during the Rebellion of Forty-five. I've heard tell the heads used to dry in summer and blow down. You can still see the spikes where they hung. Oh, the Bar's a bloody sight, all right."

"Well, they'll have it torn out soon, and blessings for that." He turned to Cobby. The midget's face was mysterious, dead-looking, and his eyes seemed to peer back into his head where the horrors of Temple Bar had painted an ugly, terrifying picture in his brain. "I'm going to Clifford's again today. They say they'll try our show, providing I organize it, prepare the script, and hire the troupe. It's going to be a pack of trouble. There are a few matters yet I have to settle. But it's done all right, Cobby, and you can jig around a bit and loosen up for the big number with the ballet girls. From here on your job begins. I guess I'll need a few pounds more. I'll need it to make arrangements."

"But I'm coming along, Oliver. I think I'd like to see Clifford's."

"Never, Cobby. I've been keeping you for a surprise. I told them I had an honest-to-Peter, pure Himalayan dwarf. Naturally they wanted to see you. I set my boot down and told them you wouldn't see no one, that you were very special on meeting folks."

"But won't they be mad when they see me?"

"Too late then. They won't know better. I'll disguise you, by Jiminy! They'll never fathom it."

"Can I go halfways?"

Vera had been listening. She touched her warm hand to Cobby's, stroking the blue skin that tipped his knuckles. She leaned over until she was almost against him. He scented the sweetness of her body.

"Stay here with me," she pleaded. "I'd love your company. We can sit and talk between customers. You can tell me about the carnival, about where you've travelled; you can tell me about all the things you've done. Then I'll tell you about myself. You'll only tire yourself keeping up with Oliver."

It took scant persuasion after that for Cobby to remain with Vera at the Baking House Inn. His refusals never reached his lips. Oliver, having gentled the full sum of the midget's money from him, vanished down the Strand, swallowed up in the tides of London.

Through the morning and into the afternoon Cobby sat in one corner of the inn, speaking now and then with Vera, sharing little personal jokes with her over the people that came and went. He was surprised by her intelligence, amused at her quickness, and pleased enormously to share her company.

Later she emerged from one of the back rooms wrapped in a long cape. She looked ever so beautiful, like a grand lady of Regent's Park. Cobby was dazzled.

"Will you walk me home, Cobby dear?"

The midget drew himself up to full height, all but stood tip-toe, and smilingly nodded his head. A lock of hair loosened itself in his eye. His waistcoat was unbuttoned. But he noticed none of this, took her hand and passed out the door like a poodle being led on a leash. Outside they shivered a moment in the shadow of the Bar, and trudged happily beyond it.

He escorted Vera home, where, of all the lovely, unbelievable miracles, she bent and kissed his cheek. He heard all the symphonies of the world humming in his ears.

Returning by Milford Lane, feeling cold and lonely, Cobby was confronted by a band of ruffian boys. Featuring themselves Robin Hoods, they gave pursuit to the midget at a great speed, laughing threats and flinging pebbles at his heels. Cobby outran the bedlam. Stopping on a corner, catching his breath, he cursed the hoodlums soundly and thrice over.

The lamplighters were uncapping and capping the lamps, leaving a dotted trail of light behind them. An early fog was drifting like an eerie ghost into Drury Lane when Cobby arrived at the steps of his lodgings. He turned and looked after him for a long interval, perhaps to satisfy himself he hadn't been followed by another band of rascals. Then he entered the house.

Upstairs he opened the door and received a shock. The room was in cyclonic disorder. Everything had been tossed about, everything upset. His own small valise had been rifled. No more than his clothes were left him. His watch chain, his silver buckles, even his perfume—gone. The acrobat had left nothing of more value than the lace of one shoe, snapped in his hurry.

The midget sat down in the center of the mess, and hung his head. He felt now as never the complete humiliation, the curse of his smallness well up in him. There was a great cavity inside him that he tried to fill by swallowing the lump in his throat. He felt his eyes rim with hot tears. Now he understood why Vera had occupied and entertained him so unselfishly at the Inn, why Oliver had taken the remainder of his money. The plan had been expert, the working-out perfect.

Whether it was an hour or more, at least it was very dark when Cobby stepped out of the house. His eyes were red and tormented. He crept along in the swirling fog like a child out after bedtime.

Under Temple Bar, the window of the Baking House Inn glowed reddish against the vapory presence of the night. Inside there was the customary singing and merrymaking. By a table, entertaining a crowd of revellers, sat the acrobat. He was steeped wax-eyed in drink.

The midget came in upon him in this state.

"Oliver, what have you done?" he sobbed. "I've trusted you, Oliver. God bears witness."

"Get out, you scum! Get, you roly-poly lout!"

Oliver swayed, clutched at his goblet, threw it. It shattered to bits at the midget's feet. The midget was horrified and turned to run. A hand nabbed him at the collar, tugged him off his feet, conveyed him backwards. Suddenly he was righted on a table. Voices beat against him, then their fury fell off under the roar of words from the acrobat.

"Here he is, men, the vilest creature that ever moved. Look, tried to steal me blind. and behind my back at that. Now he has the gut to come begging for mercy."

The acrobat drew back his hand and smote him a fearful blow across the mouth. The midget toppled from the table. The revellers lined the path of escape, and the nip of a man ran the gauntlet. At the end of it he was lifted bodily and dashed out into the bank of fog. The doors slammed behind, echoing on the still night with a loud clatter.

Later that evening the acrobat left the inn. He was to have called for Vera. They were to go to the country. She was waiting for him.

On the following morning the Strand was agog with the sight of something out of its stormy history. Impaled upon the spikes jutting from the arch of the Bar like teeth of a mastodon, were the head and quarters of a human being. The gory spectacle attracted crowds from all London. At halfpenny a look, beggars offered spy-glasses to the rabble.

Not until late afternoon were tall enough ladders found and the human remnants removed. Meanwhile, an investigation was in progress. The victim was discovered to be an unemployed acrobat, recently returned from Budapest. After further inquiry, the police located the home of the girl with whom he was often seen. Neighbors there told a strange story. Vera had left in the night with a man. But panic entered their voices when they described him, for he was of appalling dimensions, alarming height, a giant out of a nightmare.

## MORNING ALARM

*(As Elizabeth Miller would hear it)*

The Borgia clang inclement  
Releases peccant poisoned pearls  
In liquid sleep: flint.

This, the grievous startle  
Shreds the slumberous gelid mind  
Resuscitates mortal;

Tempts the dry dream tinder.  
The habit-hand that pierces blast  
Drinks lusty thunder.

JANE BALCH

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## NIGHT

Goodnight . . . and that is all.  
Street lights on far corners gleam,  
And, as they glimmer there, they seem  
To beckon me to share their light,  
But I am held by strange delight.  
The thought that you were sitting here  
Has made this darkness seem more dear.

DOUGLAS BILLS



## FAMILY PORTRAIT

“VINEGAR BOTTLE”, Jess Gregg’s fifteenth story published in the *Flamingo*, was one of the few Honorable Mentions in Story Magazine’s last collegiate contest. Ellis St. Joseph, one of America’s most profound literary stylists, called it the best short story of 1940.

Jess is twenty-one, and a senior at Rollins. On graduation he plans to continue his work at the Yale school of the drama—unless, like many another American youth, he is by then “eating ham for Uncle Sam”. Primarily interested in writing for the theatre, he has written five one-act plays and is currently concluding his first three-act play, “Enchanted Afternoon”.

As he is from Los Angeles, many people are curious as to why he came three thousand miles to go to Rollins. He says he left the sunshiny land for Florida because he wished to study under Edwin Granberry, head of Rollins famed writing workshop.

Among his other stories published in the *Flamingo*, are the story of the centaur, “My Name is Nikki”, “The Sound of Hate”, “Mutiny in the Wings”, “Still Life and Fish”, “Not I, Said the Cat”, as well as creating the letters of Lola LaRue for the *Sandspur*.

Thin, he prefers being called “slender” to “skinny”. Doesn’t care for narrow minds, bores, bridge, long dinners, or fashionable patriotism. Likes Cruickshank etchings, Noel Coward, Robert Sherwood, Herbert Tareytons, sleep, Thornton Wilder, clean paper, Scheherazade, and any good conversationalist. Says he: “I’d rather write than be president”.



Jess Gregg

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