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Fall 1947

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# *Flamingo*

**rollins college**

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**literary**



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# Flamingo

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VOLUME TWENTY-THREE    NUMBER ONE    FALL, 1947

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# Flamingo

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## EDITORIAL

We have changed the cover and have added a new feature, The Student Forum, a discussion by Rollins students on some pressing world problem.

We have heard it said that the talent within these two covers is not as good as it might be. We have heard it said, also, that as a literary magazine, Flamingo, to put it politely, raises an objectionable odor. That depends on what your definition of *talent* and *literary* is. If it means the monocle and raised eyebrow type of literature, perhaps the magazine is not as great as some. But if it means genuine, sincere, and understandable fiction, poetry, and articles, then we, the editors and staff, feel that Flamingo far surpasses other college magazines.

We have decided this year to award prizes each term for the best piece of fiction, the best poem, and the best article. The prize for each piece will be \$5 and the winners will be decided by faculty members of the English department.

We are doing this in hopes of stimulating old talent, discovering new, and bringing modest writers out of their corners. So the future success and greatness of Flamingo is in the hands of you, the readers. After all, it is your magazine.

—Zoe Vail Weston



## AUNT AGATHA'S CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

*A short story by* JIM. ANDERSON

I was not pleased when Aunt Agatha appeared at our apartment on the day before Christmas, announcing that she was going to bring us joy and happiness through the Yule Season. Myrtle and I understood Aunt Agatha, but we were the only ones in the whole wide city who did. There are some traits about Aunt Agatha that annoy those who do not understand her. Aunt Agatha picks up things. I suppose it is a trait she inherited from our bourgeois ancestors. Our ancestors were noted for their accumulative characteristics, and in the present generation this trait seems to have been concentrated in Aunt Agatha. Take one trait from over a hundred ancestors and bring the whole of it into one individual, and you have a pretty strong concentrate. So it proved with Aunt Agatha. She was, in the spirit of the age, quite democratic in her choice of articles to be picked up. She picked up small things, large things, useful things, and things of no apparent reason for being. Myrtle and I understood this trait, and took it merely as Aunt Agatha's only fault. Aunt Agatha was entitled, we felt, to the possession of one fault; so many people have so many.

Aunt Agatha had many redeeming virtues. She was sweet, and cultured, she possessed poise, she was understanding, and she was especially free in dispensing charity.



She loved to give things away. On my last visit to her village home, I knew personally of many of her charities and gifts. She gave the judge's silver candelabra to the butcher's wife, and she gave a large edition of *Paradise Lost*, with engravings by Gustave Dore, that she had acquired from a lawyer, to the parson, even marking some of the passages for the parson's special enjoyment. She even gave the Constable's badge to the town drunkard, telling him to wear it with honor. Yes, Aunt Agatha had her redeeming virtues. Yet it was with some misgivings that I agreed to accompany Aunt Agatha on a Christmas shopping tour.

"We shall begin here, Gerald," said Aunt Agatha, indicating a large department store. "I love department stores; they have such beautiful displays, and they are so full of new shiny things, and such merry people."

"First," she said, "we shall need a shopping bag; a large roomy one. Then we will fill it to the brim. I just love Christmas," she added, as we pushed along the crowded aisle. "Here, Gerald, you may hold the shopping bag," and she produced one.

I stopped. "Aunt Agatha, where did you get this bag?"

"Back there," she answered vaguely. "There were several others, but I liked this nice blue one."

"Aunt Agatha," I said sternly, "did you pay for this bag?"

Aunt Agatha was surveying the long counter before her. "No, Gerald, as a matter of fact, I didn't. The clerk was so busy that I couldn't attract his attention. Here, Gerald. Put this into the bag."

She handed me a small Christmas Tree, such as those used for decoration along the counters. I saw a vacant niche, and as Aunt Agatha browsed among the bric-a-brac, I replaced the tree. A clerk eyed me suspiciously.

"Aunt Agatha," I said sternly, "we must go back and pay for this bag."

"Now Gerald, don't be such an old fuss-budget. We shall pay the manager, if we can locate him. Here, put these into the bag."

She handed me a miniature brass horse, several ash trays, an electric razor, and a large doll that cried as Aunt Agatha gave it to me.

"Aunt Agatha," I objected, but she disappeared into the crowded aisle. I replaced such articles as I could, but Aunt Agatha continually replenished the stock, darting from time to time out of the crowd and telling me to "Put these things into the bag, Gerald." I had no chance to reprimand her, for she disappeared as quickly as she returned. In spite of my returning objects with such rapidity as I could manage under the circumstances, she gained on me, and soon the large bag was nearly filled; and it was with joy that I approached the open door. Once out of here, I should go home to stay. No more shopping tours with Aunt Agatha. They were too nerve-wracking.

On the counter near the door was heaped a mountain of imitation snow balls, which served as ornaments for Christmas trees. Aunt Agatha had gathered several of these, so I paused to replace them. Unfortunately, I was not so deft as Aunt Agatha; the mountain tumbled. The snow balls cascaded into the aisle, and it took me some minutes to gather them up and replace them.

When I rose from my task, I was confronted by the manager, and a gentleman who wore a badge. The manager informed me that he had been watching me; and the gentleman who wore the badge told me that there was a law against shoplifting, and that I was to come with him. At the police station, while I was asserting my innocence, the gentleman took the bag from me and laid it on the sergeant's desk; the doll cried. They locked me up.

It was several hours before Aunt Agatha came to visit me.

"Gerald," she said, "I am ashamed of you. I had to do my Christmas shopping all over again. But I did get a much better electric razor for young Uncle Ned. That is a blessing I suppose. He is such a good brother to me."

"Aunt Agatha," I said, "will you please call Myrtle, and tell her to come down and bail me out."

"Oh, you can go with me, Gerald," she answered. "Here are the keys. I found them down the corridor." She produced a huge ring of keys from her handbag. "And, by the way, I've decided to remain with you and Myrtle for New Years Day. This is such a nice town."

"Aunt Agatha," I said, "I have decided to remain here. I think I will be much safer. Please do not unlock the door."

"Very well, Gerald," said Aunt Agatha. "As you say. You always were a strange person. Well, bye bye, and have a Merry Christmas. I'll tell Myrtle. By the way, we are having turkey for Christmas dinner; I gave it to Myrtle for a present. We'll bring you some."

She was ushered out by a smiling jailer. He liked her. She had given him my watch; I know because I saw my watch fob on him when he came with the locksmith to release me, several days later. He was not happy then, though, because an inmate of a cell not far from mine had somehow obtained the jail keys and escaped.

Myrtle said that Aunt Agatha had left in high spirits, saying she just didn't know when she had had such a lovely Christmas.

## VEILS of VANITY

Oh, you causer of all misunderstanding,  
Why must you complicate life so?  
Without you life would be so simple.  
Too simple, you say?  
Ah, but how can you tell?  
You have never given us the chance  
To glide happily down life's stream,  
Colliding not with distasteful quarrels,  
Capsizing not from overload of troubles.

You break up happy homes;  
You injure beyond repair close friendships;  
You destroy cities, nations, worlds;  
You prevent us from knowing our Father.

You say that is good?  
It gives us something for which to fight?  
Perhaps you are right.  
*Who Knows?*

—Weston L. Emery

## STUDENT

### F O R U M

*Question*

Why  
Shouldn't the  
U. S. Go to War  
With Russia?

*Discussed by:*

A. Stenbock-Fermor  
Pat Myers, Jim Wray,  
Nancy Butts

War with Russia? Why, of course. How can we avoid it, while we cram our newspapers with implications that such a war is inevitable, and regard Russia's every action with fear and suspicion? The causes for fear and suspicion may be there—actually, we do not know. But fear breeds hate, and hate, war. If we could get at facts and causes, and bring to bear on them an objective attitude, rather than the half-admiring, half-angered "devil worship" with which we now regard Russia, perhaps war might be averted. But that is a big "if."  
—Pat Meyer.

Too often of late people sit down and try to count the cost of atomic and biological warfare. Complacently they guess at how many cities might become dust, talk wisely of blast area and radiation area, and knowingly calculate the number of vials of disease germs required in the water supply to kill the seven millions of New York City. Wishfully they say: "Of course, Russia doesn't have the atomic bomb," or "We have the best scientists in the world. They could never catch up with us."

They forget that war is a very personal affair. They forget the recent announcements of the best military minds that "If another war comes"—and the insinuation of the phrase is usually "WHEN the next war comes"—this country will be completely mobilized. Every man and woman, worker or businessman, white, black, or otherwise, will be drafted into either the armed forces or industry. He will be a subject of a police state, free only to eat, work, produce babies, and die.

They forget, too, that atomic bombs are indiscriminate.



Their son will disintegrate as quickly as Mr. Smith's. Their daughter, too, will waste away from radiation, as will Mrs. Jones', or worse, live to bear monstrous mutations, recognizable as human only because their mother is human.

The power to destroy ourselves is in our hands. War would unleash it. War must not come again! —Jim Wray

The United States should not go to war with Russia, but we should start calling her bluff! Let's begin with the defeat of Russia's fifth column in the U. S. Diplomacy and tolerance can be carried too far. Why not remind Vishinsky and his fellow comrades that we still have the atomic bomb and are not above using it to stop their aggressive spreading and mean it? The Marshall Plan should help too, if it is given congressional backing and if it is carried out properly.  
—Nancy Butts

The idea that we should just not talk about war and it will not come, pleases many well-meaning people because of the simplicity of its purely emotional appeal. When a frightened ostrich hides its head in the sand to see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil, it becomes only an easier prey for the hunter. A long time ago, Demosthenes was already trying to explain that to the Athenians. The so-called realistic attitude which favors a preventive war seems to be also impracticable at the moment. There is no sufficient military force to oppose at the present time the Red Army in Europe or in Asia. No doubt, in case of an anti-communistic war, the U. S. would receive the help of the greatest fifth column in history, in the countries which recently passed under the communistic jog, and in Russia itself. Nevertheless, even for these people and also for those of Occidental Europe, a new liberation, perhaps more destructive than the first one, though indispensable, presents too many risks to an exhausted population to be worth while; especially, if a more reasonable solution may be found. There is such a solution, the one the communists are fighting with fanaticism—the Marshall Plan as an expression of the Truman Doctrine—because they realize that it means the World Revolution indefinitely delayed, and, consequently, the gradual disintegration of the Marxist faith.

—A. Stenbock-Fermor

## I WOULD SHOUT

Today I sit upon the grass  
And watch the young.  
Their hair flies about their shoulders.  
Their shoes are soiled.  
Their sweaters hang loosely on their bodies.  
I hear the young.  
They are sure.  
They are intolerant.  
They have a plan for all their lives:  
A day for this; a year for that.  
They are simple plans.  
Fear is not in them.  
Neither fear nor vacillation nor compromise.  
And my heart is weary within me.

I long to shout:  
Hold fast these dreams!  
They—even such as I—  
Will cry among you, saying:  
When you are older, you will understand  
That the acceptance of compromise is  
Maturity. When you are older, you will know  
That if you cannot have what you want,  
So must you take what you can get.  
And smile.  
You will grow older and you will know.

Do not listen, youth!  
Take their words and fling them back!  
Cry aloud that you will not believe them.  
Shout! Scream! Ring bells  
But drown the dulling murmur of the  
Voices of the old.

They lie. All day I sit and tell myself  
They lie. At night I whisper to myself  
They lie.

For it is not the being old that  
Makes you know. It is the knowing that  
Shall make you old.

—Mary Malta Peters.





It was late autumn and most of the leaves were down. The maples, the white-ash, the shaggy-bark hickory, and the poplars had long since flamed into sudden brilliance across the hills and, as suddenly, had gone. Only the red-oak kept its leaves, reluctant to part with summer's withered memories and, here and there, a bunch of sumac berries showed crimson in the late afternoon sun. High on the hills, where the silver birches stood like thin ghosts against the somber green of the hemlocks, a black bear nosed along the trunk of a downed white pine searching for grubs, and far overhead a lone teal winged his swift way southward, a moving mark against the pale November sky.

Down in the long, sweeping valley, in the center of a tiny field that was a tangle of sassafras and dead golden-rod, stood a lone apple tree, gnarled and bent as an aged crone; in its twisted branches hung a silver wasp's nest, the ghost of a long forgotten fruit. Here, facing the setting sun, a man leaned in a listless slouch against the trunk of the tree and with a crooked stick drew aimless figures in the dirt at his feet. He was a tall, bleak man, gaunt as a leafless elm; his eyes were grey like a winter sky, and the hand that held the stick was as withered and veined as an autumn leaf.

Suddenly the man dropped the stick and straightened.

From the edge of the wood came the soft whisperings of the chickadees, in the top of a butternut tree a jay jeered at a red-squirrel that paused for a split-second far out on a limb, a tiny parenthesis of quiet in a long story of motion. Deliberately and calmly the man reached into the right-hand pocket of his worn jacket and pulled out a revolver. The last rays of the setting sun glinted on the steel barrel as he slowly placed the muzzle of the revolver against his right temple and pressed the trigger.

The sharp report of the gun cowed the chickadees and the jay into sudden silence; only the hills played with the sound until it became a whisper, then a memory, as the stillness surged softly back over the field and over the woods. For a tiny moment the silence held, then, high in the old apple tree, a final leaf let go and rustled crazily downward into the dark oblivion of decay. At the edge of the woods the chickadees returned, one by one, and began to whisper shyly among themselves, while, from the top of the butternut tree the jay and the red-squirrel scolded at the huddled form in the field.

Darkness moved quietly westward. The long shadows of dusk leaned across the field and fingered slowly up the silent hills. Deep in the hemlocks a barred owl hooted and was answered by the bark of a fox far down the valley; then all grew still as the inky blackness sifted over the wood and field and covered up the hills. But through the stark branches of the apple tree Capella glowed dully above the eastern rim of the sky and, far to the north, Polaris showed constant and clear against the rising night.

—Stuart James

Musk hidden eaves,  
Terraces throbbing with thin voices of the past,  
A vacant staircase,  
And the death smell of lavish dinners,  
Doors locked.  
Rooms stained with young love, closed forever.  
And the sea smashing against porous rock—  
I walk into madness.

—Kaye Haenichen.





## ONE WAY STREET

*A short story by* **SAM BURCHERS**

I took two one dollar bills from my thin, sweat soaked billfold. Placing them on the register desk I reached for a pen. I had scrawled my given name down on the registry when the hotel night clerk, a sloppy looking guy with a dirty mouth, said the room would be fifty cents more.

"Two dollars, you said!" I was sure of it. I had paid particularly close attention because I had just previously walked out of two similar flop-houses that asked three or more for a single.

The clerks left hand came up in short jerks as he reached and pulled on his cheap boiled collar. "I made a mistake. Fifty cents more please." His voice whined like a scrubby dog that had one bone, but thought he might get another.

You cheap thug, I thought as I reached in my pocket for the extra four bits. Even at two o'clock in the morning you gotta pull a caper for a lousy half buck. Why I ought'ta . . .

Grabbing the room key off the desk, I started for the elevator. 417 was the scratching on the key tag. Probably a 6' by 8' room jammed between two janitor closets.

The lopsided elevator coughed a few times and started upward. As it rumbled to the seventh floor, the dragging

side of it screamed like a jumping piece of chalk over a blackboard. When I got out my feet made a grinding sound as they shuffled along the filthy carpet. My room key squeaked, the door opened, and the pungent odor of animal fat and body odor jumped out of the stilted room quicker than if I had invaded the city sewer. The light switch revealed a rusty iron bed, a paint chipped bureau, a desk but no chair, and wash basin as the furnishings of my two fifty haven.

I threw open the window, took a few quick breaths of street air, and tried to rub the room smell out of my nose. Stripping down to the waist, I palmed the conventional hotel soap bar in my hand and washed my face. Pressing my face close to the basin mirror, I grinned broadly. My teeth were white enough, but the taste in my mouth didn't confirm the look.

"You've a nice physique, lad—too bad you don't put it to better use. Beside a crooked nose and a scarred chin, you also ain't hard on the feminine eyes." I laughed aloud. "Yeaw, but you can't buy three squares a day on such as that. Look at yourself, go on—now what do you see. A man, I say to myself. But what kind of a man? Oh, a man with a sort of easy going look in his eyes. Just a drifter, no more, no less. Is that all you're ever going to be? Just a bum, a Johnny come lately? Is it? Yes, I guess it is." Now that this is settled, I laugh again, with myself and at myself.

Grabbing my unpressed coat off the bed where I had thrown it, I opened the closet door to hang it up . . . Only it didn't turn out to be a closet, instead it was the connecting door to the next room.

Some gal stood there facing me, scarcely three feet away. Now what in the devil . . . She must have heard me talking to the mirror and became curious. My ticker primed up a couple of beats because of the unexpectancy, but I'm sure my face registered no surprise.

However, the sight of her certainly wasn't disagreeable, on the contrary, she was very striking. A tall comely brunette in her early twenties or thirties maybe. I can never tell a woman's age, and especially at two o'clock in the morning in a poorly lit cubby hole of a room. I think she had dark sparkling eyes. At least that would be my guess



if she would open them a little farther. She had an intelligent looking chin, but her full lips were painted too red. I wanted to take my handkerchief and wipe about half that goo off her pan, but then why should I bother. Her shapely limbs and long broad hips made up for the slight bulging tell-tale stomach that stretched her thin dress around the middle. In a way I was glad to see her. I like surprises.

Parting her lips she withdrew a dangling cigarette. "No, sonny boy, you can't buy groceries on good looks."

This didn't go too well with me, but for the moment I let it pass. From the first startling second that I saw her, something didn't ring true about the whole set up. At first I didn't have any doubt about what her profession was, but somehow she didn't fit in that category. She was too fresh looking, too sophisticated, despite the heavy unbecoming make-up she wore. I admit I found her very desirable in her tight fitting rose tinted dress. Her hair was disheveled and there was the general atmosphere about her of having been slept upon.

Turning and walking to the bureau drawer, I lighted a cigarette. Then sitting on the edge of the bed, I started unlacing my shoes. She sort of tip-toed through the door and leaned against the wall.

My curiosity was at a high pitch. What did she want? At any rate, she was a poor imitation of what she was trying to represent.

"I haven't any money," I said. My right eyebrow lowered and I waited for her reply. I either expected her to shrug her shoulders and leave, or else to show what kind of a hand she was holding, and if she thought I was to be her joker in the hole. She did neither.

"So?" she said, in a very matter of fact manner.

"So what the hell do you want?" I answered.

She coughed, not an anemic T.B. hack, but one of embarrassment. As if she had something to say, but wasn't quite sure how to put it. Finally, she moved toward me. Her soft lips were parted and she was searching for words. I recoiled. I don't know why, but nevertheless I edged backward just a shade. Then I tried staring her down.

"Please," she asked. "Have you a drink?" Her eyes were still holding mine.

"In the suitcase, on top. Help yourself." She was stalling, but then maybe she did want a drink. I could use one, too.

"Thank you," she said. "I need one." Her shaking fingers took the bottle, she made a grimace at the cheap label and poured two fingers worth into the glass. She held a second glass up. I nodded, she poured a second drink. The squeaky bedsprings creaked as she sat down beside me, handing me the glass of blended alcohol.

"My name is Sue," she offered. "Have you a name?" She asked me like she really thought I might not have one.

"Yes Duchess, I have a name. But it wouldn't mean anything to you. I just hit the states tonight; been gone quite a spell." I thought that would be enough by way of introduction. I picked the half full pint off the floor where she had placed it and refilled the glasses, hoping she wouldn't continue the discussion.

"No, I'm not a sailor. What difference does it make. I'm probably nothing you'd know or care about." She shrugged her shoulders and took her second drink like it was lemonade on a hot afternoon.

"Look Duchess," I blurbed out. "I don't believe in long engagements and I see no reason for playing verbal croquet with you." I felt warm and smooth all over, just like a kid after his first drink. I reached out and pulled her toward me. I honestly believed she wanted me to, and the feeling was mutual. I took my handkerchief out and forcefully wiped the sticky lipstick off her well formed lips. She helped me. I think she was glad to get it off. Suddenly, she was the first girl I ever loved. The one I thought I was leaving behind for the big time. She yielded too easily. For a moment her moist lips were against mine and the next second she was pushing away from me. Quickly, I released her.

"I'm afraid you don't understand," she said. Her eyes were no longer holding mine. She turned away from me and faced the wall.

"I understand all right." Like hell I did. What was this dame up to? If all she wanted was whiskey, I'd give her the bottle and tell her to go back to her own room to drink it. Then she was crying, deep throated throbs. The

kind that come from the inside but never seem to be able to work themselves out.

Not knowing what to do, I grinned broadly. I always grin like an ass when I don't know what else to do. We must have sat there the better part of fifteen minutes, she crying and I wringing my hands. Finally, because I couldn't stand it any longer, I reached over and placed her head on my shoulder. Warm sticky tears flowed down my chest. Her sobs were softer now, and only came in intervals.

I looked down at her huddled figure and asked myself why—why she was here in my arms. My first impression had been right. This girl had class, a lot of it and it stuck out all over. The way she walked, the way she carefully pronounced each syllable when she spoke in her soft unassuming way. What could have made a girl of her calibre come into the arms of a strange man. I wasn't flattering myself. If I hadn't bumped into her, she would have gone out in the hall or out in the streets and found another. I was just a tool. A means to some desperate end. She would never tell me what her underlying motives are. Those kind never do. But then if what I assume is correct, why did she turn away from me. Is she afraid? Couldn't she go through with what she came to this third rate hotel for. Maybe I'm dreaming, maybe . . .

I straightened up, ran my nervous fingers through my tangled hair, and walked to the window.

The silent night was so black I could see only a very little of what was going on below in the street. A few dew-wet automobiles stood stationary along the curbs of the one way street below. How much my carefree existence was like that one way street. Even so as the reflecting image of my face on the window, and the darkened street below blended together. My very being ran just like that street did, in one direction along a crooked path. There was no turning back, what was passed was passed. There were no U turns for memories or anything else that makes a man wish to look again at the display windows of his life.

Perhaps I could help her. But who am I to tell her right from wrong? What right has anyone to tell another that they are wrong? Some people want to make the world a better place to live in. Well, maybe this is it, maybe this

is a better world. Why look for a better one. Take me for instance. Do I regret my misshapen life? Do I? I don't think so. I've never regretted for any length of time anything that I have ever done. Marriage, security, and a home—I've never given much thought to it. My relations with the opposite sex have always been quick and satisfying. Not always satisfying, but at least quick. No entanglements, no regrets, nothing but the bitter stick of enjoyment. This young lady is wanting something. It might be most anything, but it's probably something very intangible. Who knows, she's unlikely to know herself. Where do I fit in? I'm a means to an end, and that end is just another block down my one way street of life. I wonder . . .

"Say Kid," I muttered, "You—uh." She was asleep on my bed. I suddenly realized that I too was sleepy. My chest was heavy and my head ached, dawn could not be very far away. I pulled the shade down. It rattled as the wind came through the open window.

Sitting down on the bed, I leaned over her. Her lips were closed and her breathing was regular. I stretched out on the lumpy mattress beside her. My eyes sought thoughts from the spots of shadow on the faded colorless wallpaper. She turned to me in her sleep. I embraced her. Her eyes slowly opened and her lips parted . . .

I awoke the next morning to find her gone and the door to her room locked, but I could hear her moving around on the other side of the door. I shaved, packed my bag, dressed, and went downstairs. I had timed it just right. She was leaving the lobby, a cabby was holding the door for her. As she continued to the outside, I followed, pausing only long enough to toss my room key to the room clerk. When she stepped into the cab, I quickened my pace until I was alongside of her. The change in her was dazzling. She was elaborately dressed, not gaudily, but fashionably. Her face was clean and superbly made up. She glanced at me hurriedly and motioned to the driver. Her taxi was moving and I jogged along beside it waiting for some sign of recognition from her. There was none. I stopped running. The taxi disappeared into the traffic.

For a few minutes, I stood there on the sidewalk watching the traffic as it honked and rumbled in the one direction.



I counted the money in my pockets and billfold. There was one dollar and sixty nine cents. Enough for a couple of filling meals. I knew of a freighter that was leaving for Capetown with the tide. The skipper was a good friend of mine. He'd be glad to have me aboard. That girl. I could have loved her. There was a gal in Capetown that reminded me of her. Only she was a half-caste.

I hailed a taxi. "That way," I said.

The hack driver spat out the car window and chuckled. "Buddy," he said. "This is the only . . ."

"Yeah, I know," I interrupted. "This is the only way I can go."

## THE RE-CREATION

*A poem by* JOYCE VALERIE JUNGCLAS

My muse could but summon forth music so sad as to make the world cry.

She dressed in her mourning clothes—black for the millions of souls that would die.

She looked through the clouds and the mist at the creatures who lived far below,

And wept as she thought of how blindly their weaknesses nourished their woe.

They hurried down streets where tall buildings and cars loomed as symbols of gods.

They danced with their women, they drank their rye whiskey, they slept with their broads.

They went to their churches one hour one morning one day of the week.

They sighed for their sins, asked forgiveness—then prayed for the poor and the meek.

They went to their movies and read their lewd books and invented their wars and their bombs and their tomb,

Then one man among them, the ultimate wizard, invented their doom.

He took all the power the Ultimate Power had given all men,

And ran it through test tubes and weighed it and measured and weighed it again.

His hand wrenched the powerful energy out of the heart of God's earth.

And broke it, and mashed it, and mixed it together to give it new birth.

Then with these same powers, the ones which were given to strengthen mankind,

He re-made the atom in ways that enraged the All Prevalent Mind.

Then slowly it happened, a gloom settled over the earth and the seas.

The wizard of men knew the reason, and cried as he fell to his knees.

The others all over man's planet stood waiting and wondering why

The gloom had o'er taken them now, as a cloud, black as hate, filled the sky.

Then others, in panic and terror fled blindly the oncoming scourge

Which rocked the foundations of earth to the Muse's vociferous dirge.

She sang her fierce song as a light with the rage of all furies broke forth with her breath—

And blinded the creatures, and sent them forth screaming to hideous death.

Long silent volcanoes spewed forth their mad torrents of lava and rock.

The Shepherd, in wrath, watched the powers of nature destroying His flock.

Earth writher as it opened to swallow the creatures into its great depth—

To crush them to nothingness, stamp out their spirits, and stifle their breath.

They ran through dark valleys, up mountains, where furies  
of wild winds were hurled;  
He spoke; mountains crumbled upon all the vices and sins  
of the world.  
The floods of new oceans heaped violent tidal waves over  
the shore,  
And ashes were ashes, and dust turned to dust, as it had  
been before.  
The earth heaved and trembled as if from the whirlwind a  
voice had just said,  
"Go forth from your mansions of ignorance—make known  
your sins—be ye all dead!"  
The fire and the fury gave way to a wasteland of ashes  
and smoke.  
Then one man, a young Jew, arose from the dust, and the  
new world awoke.  
He said, "I am saved, I'm the last of mankind," and he  
prayed for the light.  
Light came, and beside him a woman stood weeping and  
trembling with fright.  
He knew she was black, and a Christian, but comforted her  
as he said,  
"Fear not, we will live to begin a new world though all  
other are dead."  
And then an old Priest, though death-smitten and blind,  
stumbled onto the pair,  
And said, "Let me marry you, woman and man, so your  
children may bear  
Forever legitimate daughters and sons as their parents  
will do,  
To propagate goodness and kindness for all men both  
Christian and Jew.  
He married them then, and they kissed and walked forth  
through the dust hand in hand.  
The muse sang with joy as she looked into worlds she could  
see they had planned.



## ON GRENADINE ETCHING

*Book review by* MARY MALTA PETERS

**G**RENADINE ETCHING, by Robert C. Ruark is the historical novel to end all historical novels, and I shouldn't be surprised if it did. Here is a brilliant satire coupled with flawless technique, and, of all things, a plot.

From the first sentence, Mr. Ruark has his reader captivated. Little has been written that is not incorporated in the book—and to the original's disadvantage. One finds Hornblower, Bligh, Anthony Adverse, Rhett, Scarlet, and scores more. Amber, of course, is in the person of Grenadine, with her ankle length silver hair, her one green-flecked brown eye, her other brown-flecked green eye, and her ever-exposed bosom. Like Amber, Grenadine is first seduced at fifteen, and again like Amber, she loves it.

The novel begins with Grenadine's birth. She is delivered by a de-licensed physician in New Orleans. Since her subsequent adventures include everyone from Hannibal through U. S. Grant, and since her sons are in school with FDR and she is but 75 when the book is completed, I should hesitate to assign her a birth date.

Thanks to the heavy hand of fate and the author, she is taken to the negress Maman Toddy for her rearing. Maman Toddy has long since sworn revenge on the entire white race, and is the acknowledged master of voodoo in New Orleans. She teaches Grenadine all she knows of the black art, and imports for her closest friend, the gorilla Brandy. Brandy lives a long and frustrated life, ending in insanity and violent death at the hands of the New York police—all because in her youth, she did not know whether she was a boy or a girl gorilla, and after she found out,



she did not know whether she was a pretty girl gorilla or an ugly girl gorilla. Maman and Grenadine were never able to find a boy gorilla to tell her.

Brandy, however, is not the whole story—nor are the loves of Grenadine. Hovering in the background, though I must confess quite forgotten, is the revenge of Maman Toddy against the white race. Mephistopheles could have found no greater.

Mr. Ruark's writing is always entertaining, whether he is interrupting his description of Grenadine's bosom to insert, "Pardon the author, he must have been carried away . . ." or is merely concluding a paragraph of lush description of the green grass, the blue sky, the misty clouds, with a "It was a nice day." He also has the faculty of finding the apt simile, as in the passage: ". . . a piano whose keys were so yellowed as to bespeak a simile which I muttered pleasurably to myself: *as yellow as the keys of an old piano.*"

Never, however, does he let his own style interfere with his purpose. Ruark does not forget Gertrude Stein, Edward VII, James Joyce, or the instigator of Kilroy, and his chapter 26, quoted here, carries a suggestion of Hemingway.

#### MADRID

"That's Hemingway, over there at the table with Gertrude Stein," Jose said

"Who is Hemingway? Has he a first name?" Grenadine answered, reaching for a garlic olive with one hand and some prawns with the other.

"Yes. Ernest. He is a young man who must write it clearly, the way it is, or he will not write it at all, and he must write it so you can feel the clean cold taste of wine on the tongue and the itch of sweat as it rolls heavily over the body since that is the way it is that is the way it has to be and no other way is a successful substitute because that is sham and sham is something writers indulge in for money and naturally money is the ruination of all writers because as soon as they sell a book they get greedy and start writing for the movies and Sam Goldwyn replaces Gertrude Stein in their minds and soon they have nothing but money and their talent withers and they are forced to work for three thousand a week and that kills the soul to a point where a

*man no longer can write the way it really is instead of the way it really ought to be and he misses the hard clean nobility of the bullfight and the sweet smell of death and jasmine intermingled on the quay and the classic purity of a traffic accident escapes him and the thing of being gored by a buffalo is only messy instead of poetic while politics become impersonal and not a thing of the soul to be nurtured and kept carefully such as sex in the pure sense and not in the sense in which everybody else sees it, a way of saying that a jump in the hay really is the only true poetry because that is how it is and how it was and how it always will be as long as people try to separate what they want to think from what they really think, a way of thinking which is coming always closer to the people who really think and refuse to accept that which is unacceptable except to people who want to accept it."*

"What," Grenadine asked, "In the name of God are you talking about?"

"I don't know," Jose said frankly. "But what do you think of young Hemingway?"

"I spit in the milk of his grandmother," Grenadine replied, signaling the waiter to bring the check.

Grenadine is unquestionably entertaining. As unquestionably it has a purpose which it fulfills—and far more effectively than had Mr. Ruark written a philosophical treatise on the historical novel. After reading *Grenadine*, one cringes to realize that he has avidly consumed the lines of *Gone With the Wind* or *Captain from Castile*, (not to mention the rereading of certain scenes.)

The whitebeards of literary criticism are still shaking their heads dejectedly over Amber, tearing it to such shreds as to emphasize the trash that went into the paper as well as into the plot.

*The Hucksters* met with a little less dejection, from the whitebeards if not from Mr. Ruark. Personally, I cannot quite imagine a Gable enamored of a babe who wandered around loving his little toe, and hoping he wouldn't think her a nymphomaniac.

Ah, how much better it would be for all of us to read *War and Peace*, the *Forsyte Saga*, *Vanity Fair*—this is literature! You can finish any of them in six months, if you do nothing else.

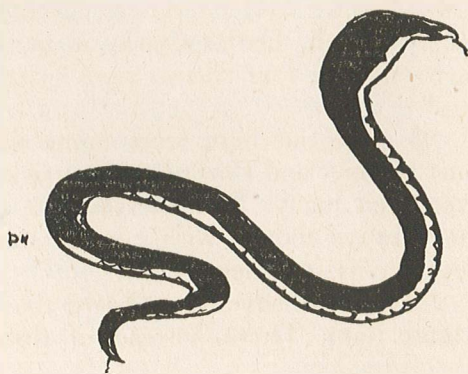
I am reminded of the story of Edward Bok, the immigrant pauper who rose to great wealth and prestige. When he first came to America, young Edward was amazed by the wealth of printed pictures in the ten cent stores. He scraped together his pennies and purchased those most pleasing to him. As he earned and learned more, the prints lost their appeal for him: he turned to water colors, then to oils. When he had at last become the fabulous Mr. Bok, he found he had lost taste for everything but the works of Franz Hals. The enchantment of enjoying many things was lost to him.

It is no different with you and me. I cannot return to misty expectations over the latest in the Bobbsey Twins series, and I sometimes find myself skipping sentences in the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. I'm growing up and away from them.

When I read *Grenadine*, I know I should be growing up and away from Hornblower, Scarlet, Amber, and the rest. I shall probably never again be able to ferret through *The Sun Is My Undoing* for data on the slave trade, without a twinge of conscience that my taste be so underdeveloped.

When my subscription to the Ladies' Home Journal expires, I'll know I should take my renewal money and invest it in *Dr. Faustus*. What will I do? I'll close all the doors, search the closets and under the bed, sigh—and send them a check in a plain envelope.

Read *Grenadine*. Enjoy it. It is good humor. But don't take its message too seriously.



## the miraculous Abdul Ram

Short story by

HAROLD McKINNEY

OVER the doorway to the bar the light of the bulb bathed the sign, *Railroad Institute—For Members Only*. Across the pebbly driveway, beneath the tamarind trees, was a table. Two fans whirled noisily and whipped the hot still air into the semblance of a breeze, driving the clouds of mosquitoes away. The tinkle of ice against glass mingled with the splash of soda.

"Ismail!" Jock Symes roared, "bring the Scotch—jaldie!"

From the interior of the bar came the bearer's patient reply, "Coming, Sahib."

Jock swung around to face his guests. Burt Marlow, fellow officer on the Northern India Railroad, looked pleased at the thought of the whiskey. Dr. Domonic De-Souza, brown and handsome, grinned his appreciation to the American, Dallas Clark, as he accepted the proffered cigarette. The four friends were having their weekly "meeting."

"I came out here from home fifteen years ago," said Burt Usher, "and I'm still to be attacked by a snake. Haven't even seen many. Yet, everytime a group gets to talking, they always end up with a snake story. And you can't believe the half of them."

"Then you have never heard the saga of the miraculous Abdul Ram. There, instead of disbelieving the possible,



you must believe the impossible," said the dapper little doctor.

"Abdul Ram?" asked Dallas, "sounds like the name of one of my coolies. What did he do that was so miraculous?"

"Oh, he is not yours. In India there are thousands of Rams. But only one like this. No, he is Jock's Abdul Ram."

"He was mine all right, but never because I wanted him. Soon as we have a fresh drink, Dallas, I'll tell you and Burt about it.

The door of the bar slammed as Ismail scurried toward them. In the gloom, the red sash about his waist cut the white uniform in two. The brass plate on his turban, punched with the numeral "1" attested to his position as Head Bearer.

Ismail deftly poured burrah-pegs for his favorite sahibs. Then, with a grin, he settled down on his haunches. As he did every time there was a "meeting," he left the serving within the club to the lesser bearers, and himself listened to the conversation. He had heard the story of Abdul Ram before.

"Over twenty thousand natives are killed by snakes every year in India," began Jock. "The krait and Russell's viper kill their share of victims but it is the cobra that takes the heaviest toll. Many Indians think the cobra is sacred and do nothing about the bite except chant and take holy pills made of cow dung, urine and mud. It's a wonder that so many recover. But those bitten by the King cobra rarely, if ever, throw off constrictions of the venom. He's the most vicious snake in the world, the only one that will consistently attack man and it's the largest and most deadly poisonous reptile, too."

Ismail nodded his head in hasty but silent agreement. Had not his own father been sent to Mohammed by a King cobra? The Sahib Symes should know. India, too, was his home.

"My tale is about that killer. Many times while directing operations on train-wrecks at night, I have seen my own men bitten. In a few minutes their chest muscles became rigid bands that squeezed the life out of them. They suffocated. And there was nothing I could do for them. I've

heard that one Punjabi caste has an antidote for the poison. It's supposedly made by chewing the leaves of a certain tree and forcing the plug into the victim's mouth. With all respect to medicine, we can't claim as much for our own anti-toxins unless they can be administered immediately. As it stands, death usually occurs within fifteen minutes. But this is about Abdul Ram, a most unusual man.

"When I was transferred here a few years ago, all was quiet and orderly. That is the way it should be in May when the temperature is hovering around 130 degrees. But the quiet didn't last long.

"At the end of the first week, Doctor DeSouza here came rushing into my office waving a telegram. I expected to hear there had been a wreck-up of the Frontier Mail. When he told me that a mere gate-keeper had been stung twice in the same week by King cobras, I confess I thought he was playing the fool. But then he added that the man had gone back on duty. No anti-toxin had been injected. It hardly seemed possible. Yes—he had his medical subordinate's report. No—the doctor was positive they had been King cobras and not some harmless snake.

Turning to the American, Jock continued, "Out here, Dallas, where superstition is a way of life, such a report caused a furore in my headquarters. Everyone from the sweeper to the president missed his afternoon nap. Our ignorant workers could talk about nothing else. As in everything, they saw the hands of their Gods in the cure of Abdul Ram. So little work was done that I finally issued a statement saying the snakes had been harmless. You see, the King cobra has such a small hood that he is often mistaken for an ordinary snake—but not for long

"Finally we all got back in that lethargic state where the mind is blank against the heat, and rice and curry lies easy on the stomach.

"But Ram had become something of a legend. I know that history deals with the lives of great powerful men, and legend about the lives of poor powerful men, but Ram was just plain poor. All he could do was tend a gate and get bitten by snakes. Much too obscure a person to think about.

"So he went back to minding his gate and we went back to dreaming of our annual leave in the hills. I suppose



we had the better of it because Ram was on duty nearly all the time, every day of the year. That gate of his was put up to safeguard the slow moving herds of animals. Actually cattle, goats, sheep, dogs, and babies follow the paths around the gates and cross the tracks at their leisure—but the gates do look officious and manage to hold up the faster motor traffic.

"Ram lived with his family in a little shack beside the gate. And in May, that months when snakes are most active hunting and breeding at night, the heat made sleeping indoors impossible. Ram made the mistake of stirring in his sleep. A dangling hand quivered. Sssst!—a startled King cobra chewed two incisions in the wrist. Happens every night in India.

"Ram must have known what happened but stoically accepted his fate. The next day he was all right. Four nights later, the same thing happened again. This time the family finally thought about getting the railroad doctor.

"It was noon the next day when the doctor heard about Ram. Learning it was the second attack by a King cobra he slowly finished his meal, and then ambled over to view the remains. He found Abdul on his feet, a little groggy, but still able to tend the gate. His report was the most upsetting thing that happened during my first year."

"I can't see anything miraculous about a guy getting bitten a couple of times by a snake," said Dallas. "A lot of them must recover."

"Not when a King cobra does the attacking," replied the Doctor. "But that's not all of the story."

"No—but I used to wish it were," continued Jock. "After Abdul Ram, life settled into a routine. The Hur tribesmen wrecked a train once in a while and decapitated a few of the richest passengers. There was the daily event of some third-class passenger being torn apart when riding the outside footrails. And we went on trying to keep the trains on a thirty-five mile an hour schedule. Business as usual, so to speak. Really nothing exciting.

"The monsoons came, poured forth their blessings on the parched earth and departed. The coolness of winter was forgotten in the first heat of spring. Then May rolled round again. And with it came the news that Abdul Ram had been

bitten by another King cobra. That's all the first telegram stated. I realized it was the will of Allah, who likes things orderly, and the man had been ill-advised in not dying in the first place. Then came the second wire that Ram was back on duty. Again without medical attention! That's too much even in this country!

"Abdul Ram was summoned. The Indian doctor accompanied him. DeSouza went over the doctor's testimony and then checked the fang marks on Ram. I wanted Ram exposed as the faker he must be. The only trouble was there seemed nothing underhanded about the blighter. We tried to make him admit some fraud but he stuck to his story and the doctor substantiated every word.

"I didn't know what to do with him. When he came to my office that day, I expected to see some reincarnated Indian God. I suppose he was starting to haunt me. But he appeared to be just another of the countless swarm that populate this country. The only things peculiar about him were a musty odor and a brilliant look in his beady eyes. Out here, odors are disregarded and I attributed the glint in his eyes to the fever of his sudden popularity.

"He was most happy at being the center of attention. His oriental soul expanded with the amount of commotion he caused. Oh!—how he did strut. I was almost positive he had let those snakes bite him on purpose. He declared he was the best gate-keeper in all India. I declared I wished he were dead.

"My workers declared an unofficial holiday. I couldn't stop them. They thought Ram was a God; he knew he was one, and I was beginning to have my doubts. Hindu and Mohammedan united. They built a little pavilion for him, hung garlands about his neck, and then stood in the blazing heat for hours to touch him. He was considered the God of Snakes. By touching him, they became immune to snake bite. On the way home that night, two of them were bitten and died but that didn't stop the rest.

"Meanwhile, my organization bogged down. Trains were running with skeleton crews, people had to carry their own baggage and there wasn't a sweeper in the station. At last, DeSouza and I had to kidnap Ram and his family. We packed them, and nearly a train load of presents, off to the



other end of the line. I would have sent him to the middle of hell to get him out of my hair. Then came the job of putting my superstitious staff back into their little grooves. One more dose of that Ram and they would have made him president of the railroad.

"As time will, it counted off the months until May came again, bringing the heat from which there is no relief. That entire month, DeSouza and I suffered the torments of the damned waiting for something to happen to Ram but no reports came in. That is none came in until the end of the month!

"Yes, Ram had been bitten again—by a King cobra. Only this time, I was glad to learn, poor, poor Abdul was dead. I kept the news from everyone but DeSouza. He, I sent out to get that body. Alive or dead, I didn't want Abdul haunting me and putting the railroad out of gear again.

"DeSouza and I put off our celebration until after he returned—I promised to have two bottles of anti-snake bite Scotch waiting. I authorized him to get the body by any means. It was a job racing against the heat and a devout family determined to dispose of the body as custom decreed. But we had to be positive the cobra had gotten the right man."

As Jock paused, Ismail took advantage of the interlude to refill the glasses. Then he squatted to hear the rest of the tale; a tale that he had heard many times but one that always found sympathetic understanding in his asiatic soul.

"Get on with the story, man!" Burt said.

"Yeah, what's the rest of it?" added Dallas.

"Well, DeSouza used his position and a few rupees to get Ram; it was the day after the attack took place. He had the body carried to the operating table in his private car. You can imagine how surprised he was when he started to perform the autopsy and Abdul Ram sat up on the bench and salaamed!

"Get out!" cried Dallas.

The Doctor chuckled softly in the darkness. "It's true."

"With wonderful forethought," said Jock, "DeSouza locked Ram in the car and brought him here. It was then,

after giving Ram a thorough physical examination, that we discovered his marvelous secret."

"Well" said Burt.

"The enigma was this. Ram had been bitten in his youth by a cobra and had recovered. Through the succession of attacks, his system became charged with venom—something like Mithridates. You recall that all the attacks occurred in May—the month of breeding. Well, Ram's sweating body threw off all the alluring scent of a passionate King cobra. The reptiles crawled to him expecting love, only to find their old enemy—man! There's no way to tell how many disillusioned snakes wriggled away to brood over their frustrations. However, it is medical record that at least four King cobras took it on themselves to dispatch innocent Abdul. He was just too fascinating—a real snake-charmer!"

Jock raised his glass and drank deeply. Ismail rocked on his haunches, a smile splitting his glistening face. Burt squirmed in his chair and muttered to himself.

"But what happened to Abdul Ram?" cried Dallas.

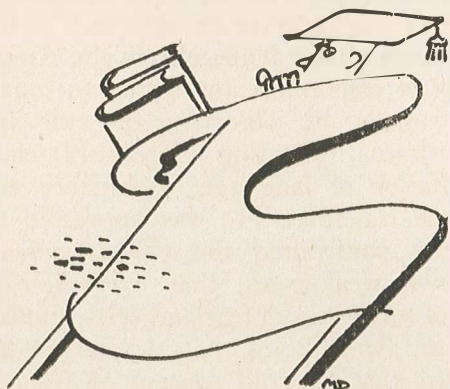
Jock slowly lowered the drink to the table. "First I thought of letting two locomotives pull him to pieces. You see, I couldn't let him become a God and ruin the railroad. But being a kindhearted man, I finally changed his name and gave him the best job an Indian can hold."

"What's that?"

"Head Bearer at this club!"

A hush fell over the garden. The moon beamed down and put its magic touch of silver on all the world. The men rose and bade one another good night. As each departed, Ismail respectfully salaamed. Then he picked up the glasses, wiped the top of the table, and went toward the door of the deserted bar. As the light flickered out, he could be heard chanting the glory of Abdul Ram. Up the moonlit road, the American cautiously skirted a leaf stirred by the dry wind.

# THE CRITICS CORNERED



## SUBJECT: POETIC DRAMA of MAXWELL ANDERSON

Many of the plays of Maxwell Anderson have been written in the attempt to lift the drama above the degrading sordiness of everyday life to the grandeur and poetic scope of the Elizabethan and Greek dramas, and to present a play centered on a person of majestic and noble character. In his historical plays, he largely succeeds; that he seems to fail in such plays as "Winterset" is because it is almost impossible for an audience to see tragic greatness in their contemporaries. His purposes and ideas are excellent, and the modern stage might profit by following them more closely.

—Helen Ellis

*Winterset*, *High Tor*, *Elizabeth the Queen*—all these are the real thing; *Joan of Lorraine*, I regret to state, is not. Of course, it's pretty hard to go absolutely wrong in a play about a saint, especially a picturesque one like Joan. The Joan story in Anderson is well enough—certainly not strikingly original as in Shaw, yet not without moving passages. The framework plot of Mary Grey and Masters, however, is so feebly motivated and developed that for me at least it hung like a dead weight on the play. Mary Grey's qualms about the play and her ignorance of the theatrical world seem incredibly naive. Furthermore, the sudden resolution of her doubts in about two lines of dialogue strikes me as about the weakest denouement I have seen since my early acquaintance when "ten-twenty-thirty" mellerdrummer. Why, Mr. Anderson, inflict cruel and unusual punishment on Bergman and Martin?

—Nathan C. Starr

Although I am not a complete admirer of Anderson's plays, I think that anyone must admire his approach to the drama. I think it is he, more than anyone else in the American theatre, who has been responsible for trying to regain the stature of great tragedy by observing the rule and theories of the Greek drama. Quoting Harlan Hatcher, "He observed the exaltation of language, its cadence and its rhythm in the supreme tragedies. He was impressed by the way noble characters confronted the powers outside themselves, or their own weaknesses, that overwhelmed them, and the paradox of victory in defeat and self-conquest in the face of annihilation. And he saw that, despite the assurance of modern critics that this old concept of tragedy was replaced by that of blind, impersonal social forces crushing to death a poor naturalistic weakling like Falder in *Justice*—, audiences still wanted to leave the theatre believing in something noble and good. The function of the dramatist, as of the poet, is to show man that he is better than he thinks he is."

—Stan Schutz.

Maxwell Anderson contends that prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion. Since a play is fundamentally "an emotional effect upon an audience" Mr. Anderson is to be commended for his practice of writing his plays—even those dealing with contemporary themes—in verse, the original language of the theatre.

Little matter that some of them, like *Winterset*, are printed in verse form, and others, as *Joan of Lorraine*, are printed in prose. What the audience hears is their imagery rhythm of poetry. Little matter that sometimes he writes for a reading posterity rather than the immediate actor who must cope with lines that play tricks on the tongue.

The important fact is that, in spite of some half-realizations and faulty experiments, he is in the vanguard of the move toward a more imaginative theatre. For as surely as house lights continue to dim and Act I curtains continue to rise the theatre will break from its realistic bound journalism and advance (or *return*) to that imaginative theatre.

He is not ashamed of having a dream and trying to realize it. His Esdras in *Winterset* is Anderson himself speaking when he says ". . . yet in my heart a cry toward something dim in distance, which is higher than I am and makes me emperor of the endless dark even in seeking!" By Dionysus, we need more playwrights with that unashamed seeking!

—Wilbur Dorsett





# THE GREAT P. U.

JACK TEAGARDEN

PATRICK Ulysses Shay—the great P. U.—announced one day that he was finally ready to die. I knew that his decision was final when his secretary, the harassed Mr. Glass, phoned me to say that the Great Literary Arbiter wanted to see me. Shay and I hadn't spoken to each other for seven years, though we often found occasion to refer to each other's characteristics in absentia. Since I had won the last round I knew that only a major occurrence would cause him to acknowledge my existence.

"Are you sure he said 'Leon Smythe'?" I asked Glass, in a stunned voice.

"Well, sir, I gathered from his general remarks that it was you to whom he referred," Glass replied.

"Never mind what he called me. What else did he say?"

Glass sighed wearily. "At first, he dictated an eight page resume of his life, works, and basic philosophy, sir. Then he said, 'Scratch that out. Yes, I mean all of it, Boswell. Just tell the newspaper johnnies that I shall be the first octogenarian ever to die of sheer boredom.' They'll print it, too, sir—and it isn't fair to him. He's been a very sick man. He hasn't been able to lie down in bed for weeks; his heart, you know—"

Glass's voice sounded strangely pinched, and I realized with a shock that he was actually moved by the imminence of Shay's death. It was probably silly sentimentality, but I became aware of a matching tightness in my own throat. I told Glass I'd be over right away and hung up.

When I arrived, Glass was waiting for me at the portecochere door. He wore the usual grey suit, and carried the inevitable note-book, but his cravat was awry, and that sight finally convinced me that a crisis was at hand.

"Oh, do hurry, sir," he said. "He has dismissed all the physicians, and he's waiting for you. He's drinking sassafras tea, sir, but even that doesn't seem to calm him. He imagines that someone in the neighborhood is playing Debussy, and I'm afraid that the excitement will hasten the end." Suddenly he stopped, and grasped my hand. I imagine that it was the first time he had had physical contact with a human being for years, but the situation didn't seem to disturb him; the man was upset.

"Please, sir, you must dissuade him. You are the only person who can influence him. He really admires you tremendously."

"Piffle! I'm merely the first person he thought of. The wretched old solipsist—. Ah well, after all, the man's in a bad way! What's his latest perversion of God-given intelligence?"

Glass continued to walk ahead of me, opening doors. "It's his will, sir. You'll know what I mean when you hear it. It's a wicked thing he's going to do."

I had no doubts of that. Now I knew why I had been called to the death bed. I was to acknowledge the man's final triumph. I guessed that the aged demon had probably left his money to a society for the prevention of actors or a new Irish Rebellion, but of course, I underestimated him.

Finally we arrived at the famous tweed-covered door. Glass announced me, and the famous old man's querulous voice informed us that we were causing a draught—to come in, and close the door.

The room was full of what the master would call healthful breezes, and the pungent scent of herb tea made it smell like an old apothecary's shop. The floor was bare and the furniture was sparse, but over the mantle was a magnificent plaster coat of arms, done in lavender and gold. The short bed was startling in its paper-strewn confusion, but, of course, the creature in the bed dominated the entire scene. Shay was propped up in a sitting position, by several large pillows. He wore a black monk's habit, complete with cowl which was embroidered with a yellow "S." His bony hands gripped a native black thorn cane, which lay across his lap and his astonishing white beard trailed across the right side of his chest.

"Did you come for tea, my dear Smith?" he said, deliberately mispronouncing my name. "There'll soon be food here for your long-beaked kind. Boswell, draw the mutation a cup of hemlock."

I sat down and waited. My significant silence irritated him immeasurably. As he glared at me, I realized that he was expecting to be comforted with insults, and I was eerily aware of the aura of fear that surrounded him. I assure you that the death of an agnostic is shaking; even when the person concerned is convinced (as was Shay) that there is no personal immortality, he ceases to doubt eternal damnation when confronted by eternal silence.

Finally, Shay spoke again: "Smythe, you're here to witness my will. Your repayment for the famous signature will be a foreknowledge of the document's contents. Glass here will be my executor, but I want you to see that he doesn't blunder the procedure."

The man was painfully short-winded, and I wanted to spare him the pain of conversation, so I merely held out my hand expectantly.

"In the name of Zeus and Osiris, man, has your English deserted you entirely?" he snapped. "I'm going to call in one of those extorting quacks in a moment to witness the will with you, but I want you to know the significance of what I intend to do. Put your chair where the light falls on you; I want to watch your face."

I shifted my chair, then sat down and waited.

Shay pulled his fingers through his beard. "Time has done something to me that no man could do. I have become time's fool. 'For him thou laborest by thy flight to shun, yet runneth with him still.' But I have a plan. It can only be carried out after my death, but I'll die happy, knowing that it will be done. I am going to make fools out of a whole generation of men. Do you realize what that means, Smythe? I'm going to do something that has never been done before by the single act of a single man!"

I started to speak but Shay interrupted:

"Quiet! I can do it; I can. What's more, I'm taking advantage of your ridiculous conscientiousness, by extracting from you the promise that you will not tell my plans—either of you—and that you will take my last book and

order to have it published eighty years after my death. This book will prove that I could do what Dryden, Pope and Johnson couldn't do."

I shifted in my seat. It was obvious that I couldn't allow my name to be used as part of the legalization of such a document. It didn't occur to me to doubt his sincerity, or his ability—he was that kind of man. I told him, I refuse to sign. It's obvious that you are not yourself."

"Not myself! I will submit to any sort of mental examination. The matter in this smoothed-out brain pan of mine is still more cogent than that of any of the mental Pharisees of the realm."

Glass cleared his throat and said, "If I may have the temerity to . . ."

Shay snorted. "Temerity! You indigenous cellulose grubber!"

Glass opened his eyes very wide. "*I will* speak, sir. I refuse to be a party to this, this—escapade."

Shay's beard seemed to part transversally, as his jaw dropped. "By the great Tao, this is like being bitten by a guinea pig! Subside, specimen, or I'll have you put back in your glass case."

I stood up and said, "It's obvious that we will get nowhere with this matter tonight. You can get in touch with me through my . . ."

Shay's eyes narrowed. "I can get in touch with you through your curiosity; and if that fails, which it never has yet, I'll effect a true "touch" through a certain recent epistle of yours which fell into my hands. You'll listen to me, or by Allah, I'll let your own words make you the social outcast you deserve to be—my 'Lion Cub'."

I sat down. There is no need to go into the matter, but the sobriquet Shay had used convinced me that he could provide a measure of discomfort. Of course, there was really nothing damning in the letter to which he had reference, but it might have been misinterpreted.

Glass tugged at his collar. "But sir, I . . ."

"Of course, 'aye'," Shay flashed. "Nobody tells me 'nay'. I still have the power to strike you from my will, midge." He turned the cane in his hands. "Gentlemen, (if I may use the word so loosely), you are both as completely in



my power as is the entire world of letters. Even in my present predicament, I can break you—and you both know it. It is psychological time that we waste. Smythe, are you prepared to hear my will?”

I nodded. I was prepared.

Shay produced the document from a pocket in his monk's habit, and began to read it jerkily. He had provided handsomely for Glass, and his other servants; his personal papers he left to the Dublin Museum, and approximately a quarter of his estate went to relatives; however, he had left the bulk of his possessions to a person by the name of “Cyrus Gooby,” of Painter's Station, Utah! When he read this section gloatingly, I interrupted him:

“Cyrus Gooby! Who?”

Shay dipped the paper abruptly. “Wait. My explanation follows.”

As he read the remarks which attended the bequest, my jaw dropped. Patrick Ulysses Shay was acknowledging, in writing, that “said Cyrus Henry Gooby” was—not his peer—but his superior in mentality, works, and potentiality! He spoke in laudatory terms of Gooby's “significance-fraught essays,” his “skillful underwritings,” and his “Jove-like depth of perception.” I realized that this will would be published all over the world, and that Gooby was destined to be catapulted into fame. Just as I was beginning to admire Shay's last magnificent gesture, I heard, with a start, “and, I hereby do dispose that a memorial tablet of bronze, bordered with bas-relief lilies-of-the-valley, and inscribed with the legend ‘Amor Omnia Vincit’ be erected in a suitable place in the home-town of Sarah White Gooby, mother of Cyrus Henry Gooby; said tablet to honor the memory of the fair creature who provided the “bright intervals” of my American tour, thirty-nine years ago.”

Shay was silent. His eyebrows made an incongruous gothic arch beneath the brim of his cowl, and I realized that the movement of his beard was caused by a smile.

“What do you think of that?” he asked, dryly.

“I think it's indecent of you to flaunt your immorality. You know that this will is destined for print. Don't you realize that you are going to stain the memory of this woman, rather than exalt it? And what of her family? Are you . . .”

“No, Smythe, I am not. This will is to stand as read. The crown prince of modern letters is about to come into his own: with these words I bequeath him my kingdom.”

The critic in me defected the moralist, and I asked, “What has this man written?”

Shay chuckled asthmatically. “His book and essays will be at your house when you get home. Accompanying them will be a copy of my analysis of them.”

“But why haven't I heard of him before? Even though he is an American, surely such works as you describe cannot have escaped notice.”

“You fool, Smythe. Can't you see what I'm doing? I'm *creating* a genius. Even though he cannot truly claim me as his biological progenitor, he will never know. The man has a moderate amount of intelligence, and a published book. When my written analysis of him appears, the whole world will acclaim him. He is only thirty-eight years old, and his future utterances will determine the literature of a generation—a ‘generation of pipers’ to his tune. Is it wrong to will a man wealth and prestige?”

“But you cannot hoodwink all of the people at one time!”

Shay gestured wearily, and said: “Tell him, Glass.”

Glass looked down at his perspiring white hands and nodded affirmation. “It's true, sir. Mr. Shay's analysis of Mr. Gooby's book points out morals, and provides a key to an amazing series of astute judgments of the world, religion, tolerance, and literature. But the author did not intend such interpretations. Mr. Shay has constructed it all with his facile theorizing. The preface overshadows the book, even as it explains it; and yet, one is inevitably led to the belief that Mr. Gooby intended the implications. It's unethical, it's dishonest, it's . . .”

Shay made an offensive noise with his lips. “Smythe, I put into that essay all the force of my genius. Gooby and his book will become a classic, and the natural vanity of any writer will keep him from admitting that it is what it appears to be. There is no fault in my plan.”

I interrupted, “But you are disregarding the human element. You will make the man miserably unhappy.”

Shay's hand stroked the cane. "Unhappiness is the price of fame. He will be a prince—if only a bastard prince. Only in this way can he achieve greatness. The world believes in heredity. It is not enough that this man be thought clever in his own right; his presumably inherited genius will assure him of it."

Glass tapped his finger-tips smartly against the footboard of the bed. "I will expose the entire deception!"

Shay asked in an ominous monotone, "And just who will believe you? Dr. Cragge has taken my essay to the printer with instructions that it is to be printed, as soon as I . . . expire. It is convincing, and who can say that it is not true?"

I asked, "But do *you* know if it's true? Have you ever seen the man?"

Shay answered, "No, of course not. My law firm had him investigated. He affects a van-dyke beard—which is probably all that the insipid lout can manage. He is married to a colorless girl he met in graduate school. He teaches Elizabethan Literature at 'Utah Normal', and he has no heirs. He is perfect—for my—experiment."

Suddenly, Shay flung back his head. His hands tightened on his cane, and his feet jerked. Glass and I moved at the same time. The great man's secretary rushed to the door for help, and I moved to the bedside. As I attempted to stabilize Shay's sitting position, the will slid off his lap, and fell to the floor. Shay was glaring at me, the exposed portions of his face purple. I looked away from him, toward the door, and saw that Glass had not yet gone out. He stood there, hand on the knob, looking at the floor, and his whole body was lax.

I said, "Get a doctor, man, or it'll be too late!"

Glass walked to the window, and stared vacantly at the sheep which roamed over the lawn. When he attempted to speak, a sob escaped him. Finally he said, "Mr. Shay doesn't need mortal help, sir."

Shay's head rolled limply on the pillow. The cowl obscured his face. In the fading light, the embroidered "S" resembled a snake.

I retrieved the will from the floor, walked over to Glass. Mr. Shay has been helped."

Patrick Ulysses Shay did not die intestate. The newspapers were correct when they said that his will had been made for nine years. If it was not his "Last Will and Testament," it was his last legal one.

Shay's best essay was never printed. A note which Glass took to the printer rescued the unopened manuscript. A good secretary signs unimportant letters, and Glass had become proficient in approximating Shay's signature.

Glass, enriched by his former master's bequest, is now in Australia, giving a series of lectures on "The Great P. U." Maybe it is because he was so close to the great man that he seems to be well on his way to becoming a critic of the first rank.

On my table there is a slim volume, written by one "Cyrus Gooby". I am smugly certain that it will never be famous, despite the intriguing title, "The Use of the Comma in Shakespeare's First Folio."



