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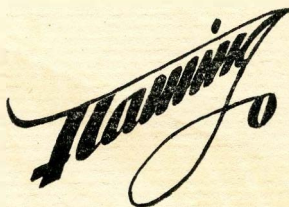
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## EDITORIAL

Remember the time—when Caesar split up Gaul?  
He didn't think about Saint Paul,  
Or the Pontus Maximus.  
He did the job, in three parts.  
And what about when Sambo met those cats?  
He didn't mess with flapjacks  
Or mustard and pickles.  
He made butter. Lots of it.  
And even, when Stalin made his split.  
He didn't hesitate a minute,  
But cabled FDR for his Okay  
And got it.  
But when we smeared Hiroshima,  
Uncle Sugar lit a Fatima,  
And burned his finger tips.  
Quick, Harry, the Ungentine!

—Hall Tennis





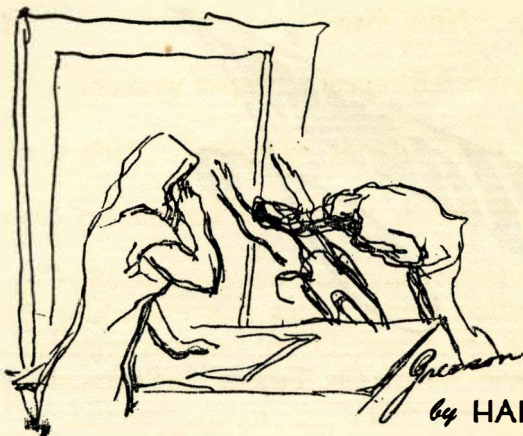
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## "NICE GUY"

by HAROLD P. McKINNEY

I'M an operator. If there's something you want and you can't get it, you turn to me. Maybe I get it; maybe I don't. Steam shovels, textile mills, airplanes—I may dig one up anywhere in the country. But sitting in the boudoir atmosphere of the Longwood Inn, I couldn't find the words to tell Jeanne I wanted to marry her.

"Nice!" she said. "That's the word. Larry, you're too nice. After Mr. Pickleseimer, working for you wouldn't be very exciting."

I didn't listen to Jeanne's opinion of her boss; I'd heard it before. But I was thinking about that word "nice." The way Jeanne said it was no compliment.

"I don't know about that," I disagreed. "Everything we do together, we do well. Even when we have arguments, the friction is from outside—not between us. Nice? But what more can you ask?"

"That's wonderful," Jeanne said, "but not to work with. Zacharias Pickleseimer isn't what I would call nice but . . ."

"But I'm too nice, eh! From now on call me 'Meany' Hayworth!"

"Oh, Larry," Jeanne laughed, "you misunderstand me altogether."

"I'm serious. If I'm too nice, I'm going to change," I said.

"Well, let's not talk about it anymore tonight." Jeanne looked as furtive as a pretty girl can. "I'm worried about a shipment we made to Frisco yesterday. Even the government is interested."

I tried to look like an FBI agent. "Secret weapons, maybe."

"Something like that," Jeanne whispered. "It's confidential."

"Don't worry," I leered, "I haven't been a spy since the war."

If I had known how that shipment was going to affect me, I wouldn't have ridiculed Jeanne's idea that everything the Pickleseimer Tool and Die Works turned out was important.

My fingers brushed against the diamond solitaire in my pocket.

"Jeanne," I started, "the work I want you to do is . . . ."

"Isn't that Ray coming over?" Jeanne asked.

Of all the times for my best friend and so-called partner, Ray Davis, to stagger it, he had to pick this one. That red mop of his was shaking toward us over the heads of the dancers.

"Let's ignore him," I said. "He may go away."

"Hello, you lucky people!" Ray greeted us.

I gave the ring a hopeless thrust to the bottom of my pocket.

"Don't let me interrupt," Ray went on, "I just dropped by to make love to Jeanne and tell you I got the P-51."

Jeanne looked questioningly at me; I couldn't tell. Ray drank too much but always seemed to have control of his actions.

"A Hollywood outfit," I explained to Jeanne, "wants a P-51 for strafing scenes. How much did you pay for it, Ray?"

"Three thousand," Ray said. "Now let's have a drink." I whistled softly. "Are you sure that thing will fly?"

"Like a rocket ship. Got Al Simmon's personal word."

"Al's word is OK, but what shape is the crate in?" I asked. "You're supposed to be able to pedigree a plane at a glance."

"I haven't glanced at this one. Al was in a hurry and . . ."

"Where did you close this deal—at the Hangar Club?" I asked.

"Yeah. We had a few drinks first and at the last minute . . ."

"Never mind!" I said. "You check that crate out in the morning."



"What a way to do business," Jeanne said. "Mr. Pickle-seimer . . ."

"And never mind Mr. Picklepuss! If Al says it'll fly, it'll fly. Most of my business is done sight-unseen." I didn't add that it is rarely concluded between Scotch-drinking war buddies.

"All right, Larry." Ray looked relieved. "I'll wring the 51 out in the morning. Now, if you all will excuse me, I see an old friend of mine." He went over and started talking to the barkeep.

"Ray was awfully worried when he came in." Jeanne smiled at me. "You know, Larry, you're such a nice guy that . . ."

Nice guy! What did she want me to do—bawl Ray out in public?

"Look Jeanne, let's call this gay evening quits," I interrupted.

Jeanne stiffened, then relaxed. "Bacon and eggs at my place?"

"No," I said. "I'll drive Ray home. You can take my car."

Jeanne was outside and in my car before I could say any more.

"Are you angry with me, Honey?" I foolishly asked.

As Jeanne backed away, she called, "No, Larry, you're much too nice for me to be angry with you." Then she was gone.

I went in and dragged Ray away from the bar. On the way home I asked, "Ray, you think I'm a tough guy, don't you?"

Ray threw his arm over my shoulder and grinned, "Larry, ole boy, you're the nicest guy in the whole wide world!"

I would have punched him on the nose but I was driving.

The next morning at Tony's, I planned my project for the day. I wasn't going to be nice to anybody! It was a good day for it. Unrequited love is hard to sleep with and I'd had a bad night. At the moment, I was dissecting Jeanne, that thing called love, and the world around them. One of the citizens of that world, Leonidas Crump—the original cigarette moocher, stopped at my table.

"Hi'ya, Larry. Seen my new Calibrated-Adjustacator?"

He handed me an object resembling a combination coat-



hanger and ruler. The stainless steel and the etched markings on the ruler gave me the feeling science had worked years to make this step forward. I get the same feeling when I see a pin-ball machine.

"Unh!" I said. The coffee hadn't loosened my vocal cords yet.

When Leonidas wants a cigarette, he can make his own conversation. "And what is the Cal-Ad you may ask? I'll tell you. It will hold anything in place from an egg to a baby's bottle. Precision built . . ."

"Mechanical junk!" I snapped, forgetting my vocal cords.

"Got a cigarette?" Leonidas asked patiently.

"Yes, Leon, I just bought a pack of them." I fingered a quarter, then let it ding on the table. I was planning to shrivel Leonidas's soul—if he had one. "You wouldn't have to mooch smokes if you . . ."

Leonidas picked up the quarter and said quietly, "Thanks, Larry. People think I enjoy bumming cigarettes. Only a nice guy like you would understand." I took a cigarette from him when he returned from the counter, then he explained the miracle housewives would find the Cal-Ad to be. ". . . and the amazing thing is the set-screw and ruler. Reliable to the thousandth of an inch. No vibrations can move it."

"Some spiel," Leon," I interrupted, "but I like my eggs on a plate. You'd better stick to your crap-game. Now don't let me keep you, I have to get to work myself."

"OK, but keep the Cal-Ad; I'll feel better about the smokes."

I shoved the Cal-Ad into my pocket. As I watched Leonidas walk out into the morning, I caught myself feeling sorry for him. Usually, I leave Mabel a quarter tip. This morning I put down five pennies and glowered at her as I paid my check.

"Headache, Larry?" Mabel asked. "You don't look so good."

"The service here is enough to give anyone a headache!" I said.

"Yeah," Mabel laughed, "it's the worst in town. Here, take these!"

What was the use? I pocketed the aspirins.

In front of Tony's, Hack Symanoski was leaning against his cab. Every morning when he is there, we exchange jokes.

"Hey, Larry, hear the one about the traveling saleswoman?"

"Yes, I've heard it! I've heard every joke that only a moron like you would remember." That should put Hack in his place!

"The one about the moron? Sure! That was a good one."

Hack's laughter followed me down the street. At First Avenue and Elm, Tim O'Hara, the motorcycle cop, flicked a white-gloved greeting. "Morning, Larry," he called. "The kids want you to come out and ride that bike." Habit finished my. "Good morning, Tim!", but I was glad when he started reading the riot act to a bewildered motorist.

In the elevator, Elmer was all eager smiles as he asked. "Mr. Larry, you got another hot tip for Belmont Park today?"

Elmer gambled too much; it was time to teach him a lesson. I gave him the name of a nag, Hope-It, that hadn't won a race since the milk company started using trucks. When Elmer stopped the elevator at my floor, I thought we had crashed against the roof.

"Mr. Larry," he cried, "that hoss am paying sixty-to-one!"

I wobbled into the corridor and said, "Keep your bet under five bucks, Elmer. And get your brakes relined—they're grabbing!"

Claudia Grayson, my secretary, is happily married and no one would ever think of calling her anything but "Mrs. Gee."

"Time you got here, Larry," she said. "Bill Ainsley called from Frisco. He wants to know if that steam shovel is all right."

My eyes couldn't seem to focus anywhere but on the cover of Mrs. Gee's novel. The clothes on the bosomy blonde seemed ready to give up the fight with the law of gravity at any moment.

"Anything else?" I asked tersely.

"Jeanne called. Oh, and Bill said it was nice of you not to jack up the price on the scrap steel. He was in a spot."

Nice! Always nice. "What did Jeanne want?" I asked.

"To have lunch with you. I can reserve a table at the Plaza."

Maybe Jeanne hadn't slept any better than I did. "Tell her I'll meet her at Tony's Spaghetti joint at two," I said.

As I went into my office, I pointed at the novel. "Get rid of that cover! It's indecent."

Mrs. Gee can analyze you with a sniff; this one told me I was a small boy.

The idea of the double office was Mrs. Gee's; not mine. She thinks it impresses out-of-state and foreign clients. Frankly, I get lost in all the chromium and leather and spend most of my time in the outer office. But today I wanted to be alone. I tackled Bill Ainsley in San Francisco first.

"Steam shovel you call it? I can work up more pressure in a paper sack than you can in that can. I want to tell you something!"

I didn't get to tell Bill anything. He kept whistling into the phone and yelling, "Testing-one-two-three." I let him talk.

"Larry," Bill asked, "were you out with Ray Davis last night?"

"Yes I was, but that's got nothing to do with you!"

"I thought so. Now, take a quarter of a lemon, saturate it with salt; chew it up and swallow it, then . . ." Bill started.

"What are you talking about, Bill? Have you gone crazy?"

"Don't interrupt, son! After the lemon, drink a glass of ice-cold milk. In a short while, your hangover will be gone."

"Ahh, I don't have a hangover." I wasn't convincing.

"About the steam shovel. It was repaired yesterday."

"Well . . . just the same . . . Yeah, I'll see you later, Bill."

I didn't have any better luck with Jack Wedemeyer in DC. Before I could get started, he told me the money for the textile mill had been deposited by the Arabian Purchasing Mission that morning.

"Larry," Jack continued, "you sound tired. Why don't you and Jeanne hop a plane into Washington and spend a week-end with me?"

"Thanks Jack," I said, "I'll let you know if we can make it."

Then Ray called—from the bar at the Hangar Club.

"What's the matter with that P-51?" I asked. "Won't it fly?"

"Fly? My gosh, will it! Al cut four feet off the



wingspan."

"What's it look like. It's got to be perfect for the movies."

"It's not a plane anymore. It's a fountain pen playing rocket ship," Ray said. "But it does look like a P-51 from the side."

"It won't do! That's three thousand bucks down the sewer," I screamed. "Now look here, Davis, I've stood for a lot from you."

"Go ahead, Larry," Ray said. "I've really got it coming."

"You said it! Of all people, you and airplanes are supposed . . ."

"I wouldn't feel so bad if you were just my boss," Ray went on. "But this was taking advantage of a friend. I'm always doing some . . ."

"Yeah, you've done things like this before. But . . . Well, this is a plane you bought, not the Brooklyn bridge. We take chances . . ."

"That's nice of you, Larry, but no excuse will cover this."

"Ahh, shut up! Maybe you can fly it in the Air Races."

When I hung up, Ray was still heaping the ashes. I knew he was going to get plastered and I would have joined him but I had to meet Jeanne. I was getting tired of carrying that engagement ring.

The ring was in my pocket when I got to Tony's. I was through with quibbling and trying to be subtle. Before lunch was over, Jeanne would be wearing that ring—or else! Mabel greeted me.

"Gee, Larry, your headache looks like it has a headache."

"It's nothing," I said, "that some pizza-pie and vino won't cure as soon as Jeanne gets here."

"That's too bad." Mabel shook her head sadly.

"What!—no pizza?" I said mockingly.

"No Jeanne! She phoned and said something about Mr. Pickleseimer and a shipment. Wants you to meet her tonight."

"No!" I cried. "Second fiddle to Pickleseimer, am I?"

Hack Symanoski didn't get mad when I told him what to do with his jokes; but he did set a new taxi-cab record to the factory.

The Tool and Die works were in as stormy a condition as my thoughts. Only two clerks tried to tell me I couldn't go into Pickleseimer's private office as I pushed them out of the way.



Pickleseimer was a big, handsome man; he looked even larger with his coat off and loosened tie drooping over his shirt.

"What the hell are you doing in here, Hayworth?" he barked through a big, black cigar.

"I didn't come to see you, Picklepuss!" I snapped.

Jeanne was shouting into the mouthpiece of a telephone.

". . . But we need a thousand of those set-screws and scales! The machines are in Frisco . . . We don't know if it was sabotage or not but those parts are missing . . . Yes, he's with the shipment and he'll have just enough time to install the parts before the *Lalanie* gets there."

She placed her hand over the mouthpiece and talked to me. "I'm sorry about lunch, Larry." The voice came over the wire again. "Oh, that's too bad," Jeanne said. "We don't have time to tool them. Bye."

I was tired of glaring at Pickleseimer. "Jeanne!" I roared, then brought my voice down to a mild shout. "I love you, but . . ."

"Jeanne, call Wilkes in Seattle!" Pickleseimer yelled.

Jeanne was staring at me. "What did you say, dear?"

"I said to call Wilkes in Seattle!" Pickleseimer boomed.

She started dialing the phone. I leaned over the desk and faced her. "Jeanne," I pleaded, "this is your last chance."

"But, darling," she said, "I don't understand . . . No, not you operator! Get me the Wilkes Tool and Die Works in Seattle."

"Larry!" Pickleseimer yelled. "Save that mush until tonight!"

"Jeanne, are you going to talk to me or not?" I shouted.

"Larry, I can't now . . . Operator! I want Mr. Wilkes personally."

I knew I was acting like a fool and I didn't like it. I wanted to get out of that office but first I had to make a gesture. I reached into my pocket for the ring and my fingers hit the Cal-Ad. I hurled it to the floor and grabbed the ring.

"Here's something to remember me by!" I tossed the ring among the papers on Jeanne's desk. "You'll never see me again!"

"Tell Wilkes to have those parts in Frisco by 5:00!" Pickleseimer was telling Jeanne as I turned and bumped into him.

"Hayworth, get out of my office and don't come back!"

Pickleseimer ordered. "I know you are a nice guy but . . ."

That was when I let him have it right on the chin. He hit the floor and blinked up at me for a few seconds.

Jeanne talked into the phone while leaning over the desk to peer down at her boss. ". . . and I know they're an odd size." She looked at me. "Larry, that wasn't a very nice thing to do!" Then into the phone. "Oh, that's too bad." She hung up the phone. "Besides, Mr. Pickleseimer was boxing champ at Michigan."

I'd been waiting for Pickleseimer to get up so I could slug him again. But I wasn't too disappointed when he said, "Hold it!" In his hand, he grasped the Cal-Ad.

"Where did you get this—this thing," Hayworth?" he asked.

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught Jeanne's fascinated stare. "What's it to you, Picklepuss?" I growled. There was something close to chagrin in her glance. "Come on Pickle, I don't care if you were champ in Madison Square Garden." I danced around a little. Pickleseimer was studying the Cal-Ad. "Come on! I'll blind you with my footwork." Jeanne was looking at the Cal-Ad now.

"Larry," Pickleseimer said, "I must have a thousand of these things."

"You can have that one when I'm finished with you."

"Stop clowning!" Pickleseimer was all seriousness. "I'll give you ten thousand dollars for one thousand of these."

I stared at him. What a chance to show Jeanne I wasn't a nice guy; and it would be a break for Leonidas at the same time.

"This set-screw and scale is identical to the part that's missing."

Hopes for Leonidas and myself raised a little higher.

"For real dough," I said, wishing I had a black cigar to talk through, "I might be able to dig up a thousand of those Cal-Ads."

"See here, Hayworth, I'm offering to do business; not let myself be robbed" Pickleseimer retorted!.

"Both of you seem to forget something," Jeanne said. "Those parts aren't worth a thing until they're aboard the *Lalanie*. And Larry, you mustn't take advantage of . . ."

"How much time have I got?" I asked, glaring at Jeanne.

"I forgot about that," Pickleseimer groaned. He looked

like he had swallowed part of his cigar." The *Lalanie* sails at 5:30."

"Larry can get them there if anybody can, Mr. Pickleseimer."

"I don't know about that," I said truthfully.

"And if it's money he wants," Jeanne continued coldly, "it would be worth twenty-five thousand dollars to this company!"

I felt like a miser. "That's not what . . ."

"Not enough, Larry Hayworth?" she said. "Do you want more? All right. If you still want me, I'll come work for you if you do this job!"

Now I know how the tread on an O'Sullivan heel feels. I wanted to make Jeanne understand but she looked as yielding as an ice-cube tray.

"Say!" Pickleseimer bellowed at Jeanne, "whose side are you on?"

"Nobody's. It's just that those machines are so important."

Pickleseimer turned to me. "All right, Hayworth, get those parts aboard the *Lalanie* so my man can install them, and I'll pay you twenty-five thousand dollars. But I don't see how you can do it!"

I was way ahead of him; in my business, you have to be ahead.

It's 5:30 now," I said. "The *Lalanie* leaves Frisco at 5:30; 7:30 our time. OK, it's a deal—to both of you."

Jeanne started to say something. "Get Mrs. Gee on the phone!" I commanded.

"Yes, sir," she said. "I mean . . . Oh, never mind."

While Jeanne called Mrs. Gee, I made a list of the people I would need. At the same time, Pickleseimer called his agent in Frisco and explained to him that somehow we were going to get the parts to him. By then, I had Mrs. Gee.

"Listen carefully, Mrs. Gee. I must talk to Leonidas Crump . . . No, he won't be in his office. Have Elmer, the elevator boy, drag him away from that crap-game. It's in the Men's Room . . . Yes, Elmer will do it for me. Call me back at Jeanne's office."

The next call I made was to Tony's; Mabel answered the phone.

"Is Hack Symanoski there yet?" I asked.

"Nah," she said, "he just left."



Gee. After I close up, I'll come over to Mr. Hayworth's office."

Going out the door, I looked back at Jeanne. There was defiance and challenge in her eyes; I accepted both by slamming the door.

In the lobby of the Atlas Building, a crowd was gathered about the closed door of the single passenger elevator. We went up in the service lift. Mrs. Gee was seething with news.

"Bill Ainsley said he knew the Captain of the *Lalanie* and something about a sanitation inspection."

"How about Ray?"

"Hack called. He and Ray will be over when they finish their drink."

That Ray! "Call the airport and tell them to have the P-51 ready and gassed by 3:30."

Pickleseimer had questions. "Everything seems to be working all right but do you think that plane can make Frisco in time?"

"I don't know; it's just an outside chance we ever get started."

"You're not going to let Ray fly if he's . . ." Mrs. Gee started.

"No! He doesn't go unless he's sober and wants to try it."

Ray and Hack chose that time to stagger in, arm in arm. Rather, Ray was in Hack's arms. He broke away from Hack to totter over and throw his arms around me.

"Larry, my ole buddy, I been looking everywhere for you."

"Ray," I said, "You're going to fly that P-51 to Frisco if you sober up." I turned to Hack. "Throw him in the shower!"

Pickleseimer, Hack and I went to work on Ray. We tried hangover remedies on him from tomato juice with a raw egg to plain buttermilk. Ray had his own ideas.

"A hair off the old dog," he pleaded. "That does the trick!"

"That dog must look like a Mexican hairless by now," I said, poking part of a lemon into his mouth.

Ray begged for gin to go with the salty lemon but we forced him to drink cold milk. It seemed to help. He started singing snatches of "San Francisco" and "California, Here I Come" as we held him under the pelleting shower. By then,



he was in better condition than any of us.

"Please, Larry, no more of this vile stuff! What time does that boat sail?"

"5:30 Frisco time—and it's a ship!" Pickleseimer was ex-Navy.

Ray wiped the water off of his watch. "And it's 3:35 now." The expression on his face became one of despair as he muttered, ". . . fuel about four and a half hours . . . have to refuel in Denver . . . five hundred miles per . . . bucking headwind . . . half hour to pier." As he slowly shook his head even Hack became dejected.

Pickleseimer reached for the phone. "Well, I'd better call Washington. Thanks for trying anyhow."

"Wait!" Ray cried. "Can you rig that package in strong canvas?"

"Sure. But what good would that do?"

"The P-51 has a special bomb release on it. I'll spot-bomb!"

"But that's too dangerous!"

"Nah! Not if the Skipper will keep the passengers below."

"Maybe we can arrange that but it will be so dark by . . ."

"Not on the West coast. Now no more questions! I've got to hurry!"

I had a lot more questions but I was afraid to ask them.

In ten minutes we were riding down in Elmer's elevator with the Cal-Ads in a mail sack. We had to leave Elmer and Leonidas in the lobby to soothe the snarls of the building superintendent. Hack took his cab; the way he drove through traffic would save time. The ride to the airport usually takes thirty minutes. Until I heard the wail of the police-siren, I thought we were going to make it in ten.

"I give up!" Pickleseimer said, the color starting to flow back into his face. "The way this maniac drives, we'll all get life."

I felt like kissing the face that shoved through the window to glare at Hack; it was Tim O'Hara's.

"By golly, Symanoski, this time you've broken every rule in the book and some that ain't invented yet! I'm going to. . ."

"Tim!" I said. "You've got to . . ."

Tim looked at me and then back at Hack. "And you were risking the life of an innocent passenger like Larry, were

you? Now, I am . . ."

Ray had been still as long as he could. "It's all right, O'Hara. Hack only had five or six drinks with me. I'll vouch for . . ."

"Tim!" I shouted. "It's all my fault. I've got to get to the airport as fast as I can. It's urgent!"

"That's different. Hack, you're lucky Larry's with you." Tim started for his motorcycle. "Come on, follow me!"

It took us eight minutes to follow the demanding whine of the siren to the airport. On the way, Hack started to say, "This reminds me of the joke about the motorcycle cop who caught the young girl for . . ." but he never had time to finish.

The P-51 loomed formidable and powerful in front of the hangar. It did look like some giant had slipped a calling card under the clip of his fountain pen.

Ray and the mechanic went to work rigging the package to the bomb-release. Once it was in place, Ray leaned into the cockpit and pressed the bomb-toggle. He grunted with satisfaction as the package dropped to the ramp. No words were wasted until Ray was sitting in the cockpit adjusting the straps of his parachute.

"Ray," I said, "don't go if there is too much risk."

He smiled down through the canopy. "Nothing to it, Larry. Gives me a chance to make up for buying this crate."

"Send me a message when you're refueling at Denver."

"Yeah," he grinned, "I'll send you a message from Denver."

I really liked that red-head and I felt bad about letting him take such a chance with that cut-down crate.

"You want to say any last words?" I asked, trying to match his grin.

"Sure. You and Jeanne name the first one after me." The starter of the plane whined. "Scotch-and-soda!" Ray yelled, as the motor roared.

Then he was gone, taking off down wind across the field.

As we wiped the slip-stream from our faces, the mechanic shook his head and said, "Boy, that Davis can fly anything with wings—only that thing ain't got no wings!"

"That airplane is safe, isn't it?" Pickleseimer asked. "It'll fly from here to San Francisco, won't it?"

"If I was flying it, it wouldn't" the mechanic replied. "But with Ray Davis in it . . ." He shrugged his shoulders.

I explained to him and Tim O'Hara that Ray was going to try to drop the package on an ocean liner.

"Get out!" the mechanic said. "Nobody can fly that good. In the first place, it would be a tough shot with a bomb. Second place, that stuff will be junk when it hits. He might as well fly over the ocean with his eyes closed, drop the package, and hope it goes down the smokestack and lands on a mattress at the bottom!"

Going back to town, Pickleseimer and I were too busy with our own thoughts to listen to Hack. He kept on laughing at his own jokes anyhow. The news Mrs. Gee had, provided a brief flurry of excitement.

"Jack Wedemeyer called. Arnold will clear all infractions of law up to and including murder—but only if the machines get to their destination. Bill Ainsley said the Captain of the *Lalanie* will hold the ship in port for half an hour while it is inspected for rats!"

After that there was nothing to do but wait until Ray got to Denver.

Leonidas had taken most of Pickleseimer's cash away from him at gin-rummy when the first news came. It was from the manager of the Denver airport.

"Mr. Hayworth, I have a message from . . ."

"Did he get gassed up?" I asked.

"He's gassed up all right, but not on gasoline. The only thing I saw of him was a blur in front of the control tower and a monkey wrench that skidded to a stop in front of Flight Ramp 9. Eight passengers have cancelled their . . ."

"What's the message? Please!"

"It says, 'Larry, why don't you and Jeanne have twins? Name one Scotch, the other Soda. Call Al Simmons and thank him for leaving the bottle in the plane. Try to find out the name of the nudist colony near . . .'"

"Doesn't it say anything about gasoline or how the plane is flying?"

"No, just some more stuff about . . ."

Has he got enough gas to get to Frisco?"

I told him everything I knew about the plane.

"It all depends," he said. "Maybe! If the headwind stays the same. But he's going to run into local storms over Rockies. That's what I wanted to talk to you about."

By the time he finished, I was positive I had sent my best friend to certain death.



"But he may stop at Salt Lake City," the airport manager added.

Yeah,—or Russia! Thanks, and you can sue me in the morning."

"Don't worry about that. I know Ray and he's told me what a good guy you are. Hope everything turns out all right."

I hung up. For the next two hours I could do nothing but worry and call weather control at the airport. Things looked black when Elmer rushed in.

"Mr. Larry," he cried, "I got good news!"

I grabbed him by the arms, hoping desperately. "What is it?"

"Dat hoss, Hope-It. It won going away!" I sunk back in my chair. "What's the matter, Mr. Larry? You ain't worrin' about my job. The super-man just bawled me out after I told him I was helping you."

"It's all right, Elmer," Mrs. Gee said. "Mr. Larry is worrying about something else."

She took Elmer into the outer office and I could hear them talking. Pickleseimer lit his fifth cigar, then snuffed it out.

"That fellow Davis is a good man, Hayworth. I hope nothing happens to him."

I felt worse than ever. Then Jeanne came into the office. She started to come to me but then went over to sit by Pickleseimer. They talked with Leonidas in low tones.

About 8:40 the phone rang; it was Bill Ainsley.

"Larry! Ray just flew over—or through—San Francisco!"

"Thank God!" I said. "And thank you Bill. I . . ."

"Save it for my funeral! I've got the *Lalanie* on ship-to-shore and my operator is cutting you in. Keep your fingers crossed!"

I would have crossed my toes, too, if that would have done any good. The next voice I heard was that of the Captain of the *Lalanie*.

"Hello, Hayworth, I'm sorry I couldn't wait longer."

"Thanks, Captain. I know it was a lot to ask . . ."

"Nothing at all. Bill told me what a nice . . ."

"Where are you now, Captain?"

"About four miles off-shore. I can see a strange looking aircraft making for us. We're blinking identification."



"That's Ray! Are your decks clear?" I asked.

"Yes, the passengers are taking the fire drill very well. Here comes your plane. But low, very low! My God, what's he . . .!"

I heard a voice scream, "Hit the deck!" and then the roar of an engine thundered in my ear.

"That red-headed fool!" the Captin shouted. "I thought he was going to fly down the funnel. Hayworth, this is ridiculous! My men are sprawled all over the bridge."

I heard another voice asking, "Can I give you a hand up, Skipper?" And the Captain's reply, "Thank you, Mr. Christian—wait a minute, here he comes again!" Then the roar of the engine.

"Hayworth, you'll be pleased to know your pilot was right side up this time. For a minute I thought he was going to land on the bridge." His voice faded to a mutter. "I must be seeing things; I'll swear that was a bottle he was waving."

My heart felt like it was under the tongue of my shoe.

"He's just making sure the deck is clear, Captain," I lied.

"If he had a broom tied to that stubby wing, he could sweep the decks clear himself. Here he comes again!"

There was a series of roars as Ray went back and forth over the ship.

"It's pretty dark out here," the Captain said. "And that plane is flying very fast. Perhaps he's not going to try. Wait a minute! Here he comes again, Hayworth, slower this time. Wobbling a bit."

I was giving the office a running commentary as I heard it.

"I think," the Captain said, "this is going . . . This is it! The package is dropping!"

". . . Dropping," I said.

"Bullseye!" screamed the Captain.

"Bullseye!" I screamed.

My office was in an uproar. Pickleseimer was hugging Jeanne and Leonidas was dancing with Mrs. Gee.

"Right on the target!" the Captain said. "He hit the swimming pool!"

"What's the plane doing?" I asked.

"He's coming back over in a victory roll." I heard the roar of the engine—and then a sputter. "The plane is wobbling, Hayworth. The engine's stopped!"

"Hold it!" I shouted. Ray's konked out."

"He's going to pancake about five hundred yards ahead!"

the Captain shouted. "There's still a chance . . ." His voice began to bark out orders. "Stand by to pick up man overboard! Reduce to one-quarter speed! Break out the starboard boom! Rig up a jacob's ladder! . . . Hayworth, he's putting her down. There's the splash! Wait . . . wait. Wait! She's floating! Your pilot is climbing through the canopy! What a man! He is waving a bottle! Take over, Mr. Christian—I'm going forward and direct this myself, Hayworth!"

The next ten minutes in the office were the longest I have ever spent. After an eternity, the Captain's voice came over the phone.

"Resume Speed! . . . Hayworth, your man's all right. Seems a bit intoxicated, though. Probably the shock, eh?"

The smile on my face told Jeanne and the others what they wanted to know. Bedlam broke loose around me again.

"Probably is shock, Captain," I agreed. "I'm sorry about the danger I put your ship in."

"Nonsense, Hayworth, nonsense! Haven't seen a show like this since Midway. But I'm afraid I'll have to take the red-head as far as Hawaii with me. Here he is now."

Then Ray was on the phone. "The plane sank, Larry," he said.

"To hell with the plane!" I yelled. "Are you all right?"

"Sure." He moaned. "I swallowed some water, though."

I heard the Captain laugh; I laughed too.

"Ray! How did you manage to hit that swimming pool?"

"Nothing to it. I just used my head."

"What do you mean—used your head?" I asked.

"Between you and me, Larry, this tub was wiggling all over the Pacific Ocean. I got tired of lining it up so I reached down for my bottle. Nerve medicine, you know."

"What happened, Ray?"

"My head hit the bomb toggle. Bombs away! Right into the pool."

"You idiot! Nobody'll believe that," I laughed.

"Well, I told you I used my head. Now I have to meet an old friend at the bar. Kiss Jeanne for me and make me a god-father."

The phone went dead.

After a toast to Ray from my private stock, Mrs. Gee and Leonidas went into the outer office. I wished Pickle-

seimer would go home or any other place just so Jeanne and I could be alone.

"You win, Larry," Jeanne said. "I'll start work tomorrow."

I remembered the ring. "We can go out to the factory and clean up your desk tonight," I said.

Pickleseimer, as usual, butted in. "Larry, I thank you."

"Me? It's Ray and—well, everybody—you should be thanking."

"And why do you think everybody came through the way they did?"

"Why they did it because . . ." I started.

"Not for money, Hayworth!" Pickleseimer said.

"No! Because they are all nice . . . they are all good guys!"

Jeanne was smiling up at me. I ached to hold her close.

"Hayworth!" Pickleseimer said. "I don't mind the money; it was worth it. As for Jeanne, I knew you would get her and I don't mind that. But calling me Picklepuss, I do mind!"

He was smiling as he slugged me. I sat on the floor and thought it was funny that he kept on smiling. Jeanne knelt beside me and drew my head against her breast. It was a nice feeling so I relaxed.

"Mr. Pickleseimer," she said, "that wasn't a nice thing to do!"

"No," he agreed, "but it was fun. I hope you two will be very happy." Then he was gone.

I groaned and smiled nobly through my pain.

"Oh, darling, are you hurt?" Jeanne asked.

"Just hold me a little tighter," I murmured. Then she was kissing me. When we parted, I smiled up at her. "That's the kind of work I want you to do from now on."

"You mean? After all that talk about working. Why?"

"You thought I was too nice a guy to marry," I said.

"But I've always wanted to marry a nice guy like you!"

I just smiled. If anybody wants to think I'm a nice guy, that's her business.

# POEM

The Atoms dance and glance and prance,  
Their rhythms are no sweet Romance.  
They leap around sage Einstein's head,  
And over Marx's volume read.  
They pirouette on Empire State  
And skip between old Wall Street's gate  
Their footlights are the burning quest  
For economic peace and rest.

These dancers peep and lear and gloat  
At the Statesman's *secret* note;  
And into private meetings go  
Although they have no status quo.  
"Dancers, now that you have Power,  
Let us question you this hour.  
We're puzzled by one dark iota:  
Is this a Prelude or a Coda?"

—John Whitmire



# "SPIDERS SPIN NO WEBS"

by DALLAS WILLIAMS

ELLEN awakened suddenly, feeling the last fragments of sleep disappear from her eyes. For a moment she lay very still, wondering if she had imagined it. Then she felt it again—that crawling sensation across her left foot. She screamed and leaped from the bed. With a single bound she was in the middle of the tiny room, standing in the white pool of moonlight that was the only relief from the blackness. Clutching her nightgown in her thin fingers, she pulled it more closely around her and turned to look back at the bed. The crack which zig-zagged down the dark wall behind the headboard seemed to point to those sheets, lying bunched-up where she had thrown them away from her.

Shivering, she looked down at her feet, now washed white by the moonlight. How dark everything else became in comparison, and yet, only a minute ago they had been . . . ugh. The coldness of the bare boards pressed up beneath them, and she moved slowly toward the window. The wind was blowing the curtain, in little flutters at first, then in a long stream. Ellen pushed down the window and leaned weakly against the sill.

Why couldn't Paul be here now. How she needed him. He would go to the bed and shake out the covers and show her that there was nothing there. She could hear his rich, low voice saying, "You see how you imagine these things, Ellen?"

And she wouldn't mind the reproach in those dark eyes. They would be serious for only a moment, and then light up again as he pulled her close to him and hugged her very tightly.

Ellen looked down at her hand. Her fingers had closed around the curtain, and she was hanging on to it, swaying a little. She straightened with an effort and disengaged her fingers from the filmy marquissette. By now, she told herself, you should be used to a few hours of being alone. This wasn't the first time he had worked late in the laboratory. Yes, and when it was in your very own house—just a few short flights of stairs down to the basement . . .

Ellen sighed heavily and turned away from the window. She tried a few experimental steps toward the bed, but after the first three she stopped. What if the thing had crawled out on the floor? It might be anywhere, in fact there was probably more than one. She curled up her toes and shivered again. If anything touched her again, she would die. She caught sight of something hanging over her head a few feet away. With a gasp, she stepped hurriedly back, but a moment later sighed with relief. What else could it be but the light cord hanging over her dresser. A quick pull and the room would be flooded with light; wonderful, beautiful light. Holding her breath, Ellen approached the cord and pulled with all the strength she could summon.

The room remained in darkness. "Oh no," she breathed, "no!" Nothing had ever gone wrong with the electricity before. She gazed up at the place where the light bulb should have been. She felt the muscles in her eyes pull as she stared. Only the empty socket dangled from the fixture above. Her head swam as she braced herself against the dresser. Her hand touched the cold glass covering Paul's photograph. Paul disliked having his picture taken, but Ellen was glad now that she had insisted. It was the nearest thing to having him with her, at times.

And yet—she looked back up at the empty socket. Paul must have taken the light bulb. That would mean that he had been here in the room since she had gone to bed. How considerate of him to be so careful not to awaken her. He must have come up from the laboratory, needing a light bulb, and just taken it very quietly.

Well, it was better for her to be without a light than for him to be in that predicament. She shuddered at the thought of being in that laboratory in the dark. She had gone down there in broad daylight, and never would go again. It was horrible. The heat and strange smells were bad enough, but it was the insect cages, with those enormous, leggy spiders swarming in their mesh enclosures that had affected her so violently.

Paul had carried her back to the room, and when she was safe in her bed again, he had been terribly apologetic. "I should never have let you go down there," he had said. "Now try to forget about it, and don't let it give you bad dreams."

"Oh, anything but spiders," she had pleaded. "I can't stand them—why must you have so many" She had listened as calmly as possible while he explained his experiment.

"You see, they're the only thing I can use," he concluded. "Why honey, you're crying! Please don't be silly about this thing." But she hadn't been able to stop until he left the room.

She wondered if perhaps he did not despise her a little. How could he help it? She was so weak—and he just the opposite. Could he ever, ever understand how it felt to be afraid like this? The thought that she had been trying to push out of her mind ever since the discovery of the empty light socket crowded forward again, and she knew the facts could no longer be avoided. That thing in her bed was one of Paul's spiders. He might have carried a whole cage with him when he had been in the room for that light. There were probably twenty or thirty.

She rushed to the door and felt for the handle. As her hand gripped the cold metal it turned easily, but the door did not open. For a moment she stared at it mutely, then full realization dawned upon her. When he had left the room, Paul had allowed the door to close, without fixing the latch. The old mis-made lock, which they had intended long ago to change, slipped from the outside. There had been several occasions that she had forgotten to look at the latch, and had locked herself in. But it was strange that Paul had forgotten. He was always the careful one. But how could anyone careful bring fifty crawling spiders into a room with him and let them escape?

Frantically she pushed against the door again. It was no use, she was trapped. Hadn't something run across her arm just then. She screamed, and as before, ran back across to the patch of moonlight on the floor. Bending, she inspected the arm, paler than ever in the almost unnatural light. No, thank God, it hadn't been bitten—yet. No trace of a mark or swelling, and yet there was a tickling feeling up and down her legs, across her back, and in her hair. She couldn't stand it another minute. They were all around her, coming closer and closer . . .

"Paul," she screamed, "Paul, please, please come . . . ." The moonlit place in the middle of the room was dwindling. The room would be completely dark in another minute. She listened hopefully for some sound besides the wild beating of her heart. Finally it came. Up the stairs, footsteps getting heavier—in another minute she could be out of this room and free of the hundred crawling monsters that overran it.



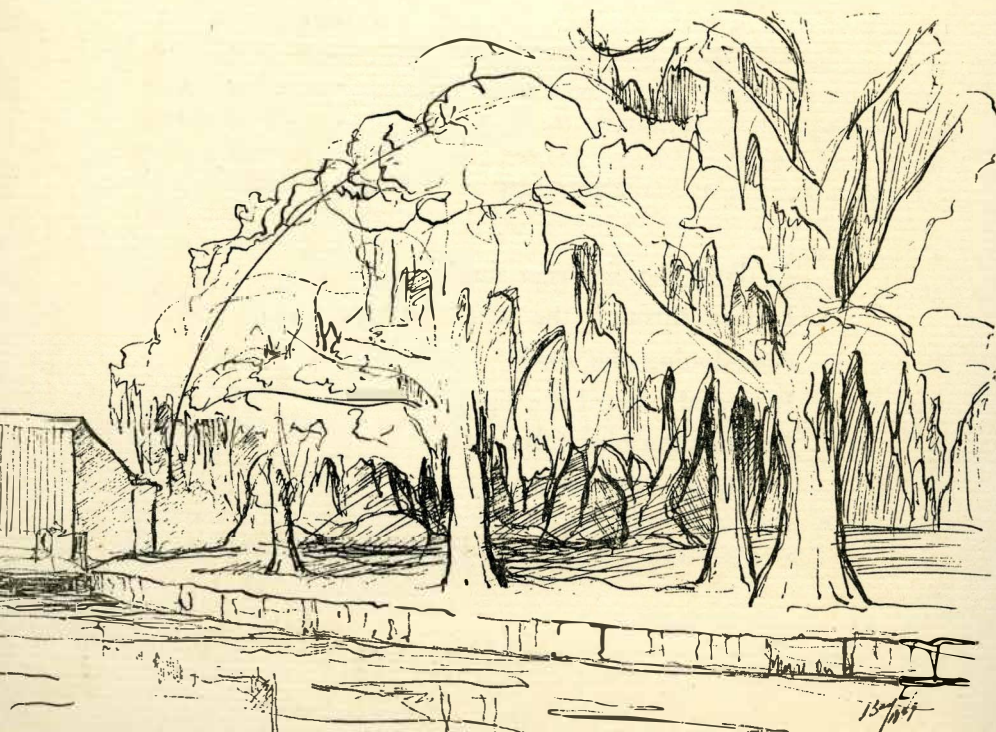
# NATURE AND AN ASPECT

Flamingo readers may be interested to know a little something of my efforts seen on these two pages.

When asked to contribute a set of drawings, I was told to make pen and ink line drawings. This presented a seldom considered problem; that of interpreting what I see by line alone. Actually, line does not exist in Nature, it is merely the edge or edges of form, such as these very words which you are now reading. One can easily realize the limitation and discipline of pen and ink drawing. Hence with an economy of line, I have attempted to interpret the beauty and rhythm of line as seen in Nature.

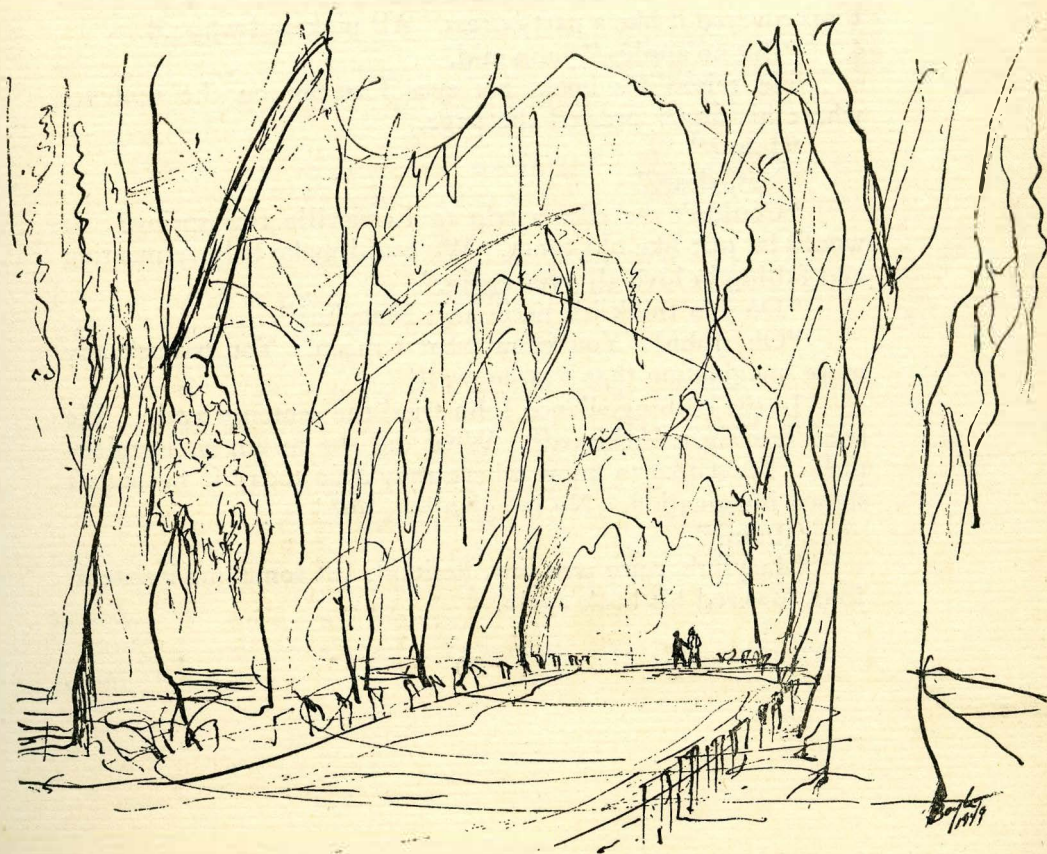
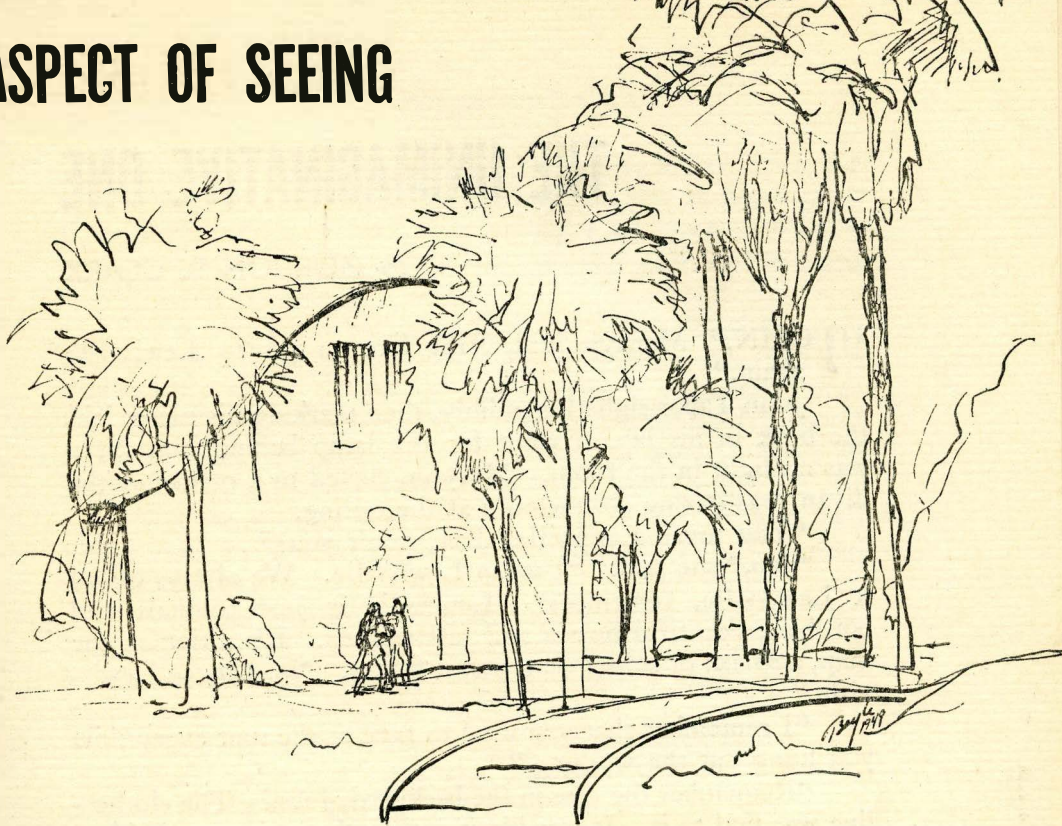
So much in our daily life is nothing but sheer *representation*. We also find in mankind a vital rhythm of life which dispenses with a great deal of monotony. If ever we feel this monotony let us try to open our minds at the sight of nature.

*Robert W. Boyle*





# AN ASPECT OF SEEING







*Ronda Spain --- Paul Bissel*



don't mate, not permanently. It's we misfits for or against the rest, but we don't fit in for long. Once you got sand in your shoes, it won't wash out. You don't tick the conventional way. Why, I'd cease to exist as an individual and become a regimented robot.

A wife would butcher my freedom, make me keep a steady job, come home evenings, play bridge, and burp the baby. By God, no thank you! I'd be a hound dog on a leash, checked at every turn. It wouldn't do, it just was no shakes. She had held her whatever it is women get you with over me like you tease a kid with a peppermint stick. She'd held it there and said: "Here Gus, you want me? Then marry me." I was buying her love, but love should be a free thing—to be had for the desiring. She'd slyly trapped me and now it was almost too late. The coil was tightening fast.

Everyone was whispering at me. I had to keep calm, had to think this thing out. Sue's father grabbed my arm and said: "Steady, boy, steady," his sweating, friendly face flushed lobster-red.

All I could think of was get out, get out . . . do anything, but get out. Better to be a social outcast than a husband. But how? To break and run?

Sue's mother was crying louder now. Her sobbing obliterated everything. How long had it been? How long had I been standing there? If only I could think. The preacher was bobbing his head in my direction. His lips moving ever so slowly, but I couldn't hear a word. It was all one big jumbled noise with women crying, or one woman crying. I couldn't tell. My ears were booming, flooded with a strange frustrating emotion. Women—I had to go through with it.

Sue fainted, a heap of white satin on the aisle. I stood immovable, cursing myself for a selfish, egotistical, self-centered idiot. Sue came to in a hurry, an awful big hurry.

Preacher Brown smoothed everything over fine. What had looked like a possible out had been another slight delay, they'd get me in the end. I was licked. If only I could think. Sue was clinging to me, her brown, limpid eyes saying things I didn't want to read. I smiled meekly. Again the prosecutors tensed forward to hear me say what I'd been stalling for these last few seconds, or minutes, or had it been hours.

The bride was trembling against my side. She was warm and good and sweet and I was a louse. I said it. It jumped out like an escaping frog before I could stop it. "I do!" I

screamed, the high church ceiling mocking my words back at me.

What had I done? No, never. Later they would say I was a dirty dog and they'd be right, because I've never seen a one-bitch hound. All I loved was love and life and be damned for the rest. I shouted again, breaking all ties with my social blunder.

"I do . . . I do not want to get married. God bless you, Sue, and goodbye."

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A secret love makes a bitter pair:  
They lack the warm and friendly ring  
Of comradeship, and the healthy air  
That open hearts search for each spring.

—Anonymous

# THE LARNARD GIRL

by MARY DOUGLAS GRAHAM

YOU couldn't tell looking at her she was crazy. She seemed quiet enough; about thirty you might guess and attractive once. She spent most of her time setting on the Larnard's porch rocking and watching people pass by. Those large grey eyes of hers looked right through you—not in the keen way you'd think I mean, but through you as though you weren't there at all. I don't mean to tell you people weren't bothered about her—having her there free like that all the time. But I was never worried a bit. She was such a fragile, childlike thing, and her voice was the sweetest, softest voice I ever heard, made you feel like you was listening to some half-forgot melody. Besides, the docs said she was harmless, just a little loose in the screws.

My place is near the Larnards, though sure it's better land. There was a fellow, Mark, doing chores for me stopped by sometimes to try to talk to the girl, but she naturally never had much to say for herself. One day I got a feeling seeing him standing there looking up to the porch where she was leaning over talking that he looked somewhat similar to—but I couldn't place it then—not until that fearsome night of the search when I looked at that blanked window. Pretty soon Mark had the girl thinking he was her father. As I recall, most people thought it was cute her calling him dad and all his being so much younger. Besides it was good for her to have someone interested enough to hear through her babbled. She was always bringing him little things she found in the house to show him, talking with him like crazy and sharing what pleased her. He was considerate kinda, as though he were trying to figure something out.

Then all of a sudden she was missing. Just like that. Well, about everybody in town went looking for her. Men put down their work, closed shop and hit it for the woods and farms to search. I think they was concerned for the poor thing! There herself off alone somewhere. Then too, you couldn't quite have a looney running loose like that with so many children in the town—it's sort of hard to keep them in more than a day. Her ma, old Mrs. Larnard, was fit to throw a hysteria



"I'm sorry, John. Only you know I've always been the imaginative one. And I know it would do you so much good if we drove out there this spring. Why, I can remember every minute there. Dancing, shopping, playing golf in the park, hiking in the country."

"Also the soot I mentioned," John said. "And the corporal's pay. The furnished closet they called a room. Up two flights for a bath. So hot we had to spread wet towels over ourselves to keep from melting. Your ankles used to swell from the heat. At one of those dances you were snubbed by a captain's wife. Ah Lewisville, dear old Lewisville!"

"But we met in Lewisville," Marylin said. "And two weeks later we were married. I'll bet you've even forgotten where we met."

"We met at a party. I was with a girl named Flora. Flora had long, black hair, wore beautiful clothes, and drove a blue convertible. She was angry with me that night for paying so much attention to you."

"The next night we had a date, and you were late."

"Yes," John said. "In the afternoon Flora and I went driving. We got to talking and I lost track of the time."

"What did you and Flora talk about?"

"Oh, the usual things." John's finger was getting numb. He flexed it against the page. "Gosh, she was a beautiful girl. She wanted me to drive up to Cincinnati with her for the weekend."

"But we had a date that weekend." Marylin's words were emphatic. "We went to the races and I bet on a horse named 'Cameo'."

"Yes, and you lost. You lost on every race. That's why I had to leave so early that evening. I was so broke I had to walk all the way. I was almost too late."

"Too late for what?"

"Well, Flora was off at the Red Cross Canteen at ten. She was just getting ready to drive away when I caught her."

"You mean you went off with her that night, just like that! And only two weeks later you married me!"

Marylin's feet hit the floor solidly. She sat erect on the edge of the divan. The lamplight glinted in her auburn hair.

"I'd known Flora a long time," John said. "Almost a month. We were good friends."

"You must have been. You must have been *very* good friends!"

"It was beautiful that night, Marilyn. Cool, with the wind on our faces. The Ohio river turned to silver as the moon came up."

"Are you sure you noticed the moon?"

"Absolutely. It was almost overhead when we arrived."

"In Cincinnati?"

"In Cincinnati."

Marilyn stood up. She paced back and forth across the rug.

"Of course you stayed with friends?"

"No," John said. "As a matter of fact, we didn't."

Marilyn stopped pacing. She faced him and when she spoke her voice was trembling.

"If I'd only known! Running around with a common tramp and all the time telling me you loved me! I suppose *that* went on right up until the day we were married?" She paused. "Why, even after we were married! Those nights you said you were on duty!"

"Ah," John said. "Those mad, glad days in Lewisville."

"And when I think what I put up with!" Marilyn was breathing very hard. "That hot, stuffy room! Doing your washing! Cooking on that leaky gas burner! The other roomers making so much noise at night I couldn't sleep!" Her voice broke.

"You know, Marilyn," John said. "Perhaps a trip back to Lewisville would do us good. We could look up old friends . . . Where are you going, Marilyn?"

Marilyn wheeled at the door, her chin raised defiantly.

"I'm going upstairs," she said grimly. "I've got some thinking to do. And it's about Louisville, not Lewisville!"

John listened until the sound of her quick footsteps died away. Then he leaned back and as he raised his book a brief image of Flora came before him. When he began to read the sentence made sense. The next one did. John read on contentedly.

"John?"

Marilyn was standing in the doorway. She was wearing her blue dressing gown. Her freshly brushed hair, flowing about her shoulders, shone in the lamplight.

"Yes, Marilyn."

She advanced into the room, a tentative smile on her lips.

"John, I've been thinking. It would be silly, driving all the way to Louisville. And besides, you couldn't have done

what you said you did with that Flora person. Cincinnatti is over a hundred miles from Louisville and you called for me early the next morning. We went walking in the country."

"Come to think of it, I guess you're right," John said slowly. "I must have been imagining things."

Marylin came up to him. He reached up and pulled her down into his lap. Her arms slid around his neck and she hung on tightly.

"John?"

But John didn't answer. He was wondering if things would have turned out differently. If, as Flora and he were driving towards Cincinnatti that night he hadn't told her how he felt about Marylin. And if, after reaching Cincinnatti and grabbing a hamburger, they hadn't turned around and driven back to Louisville.

"John, darling," Marylin said, her lips close to his ear. "You have the wildest imagination."

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## AURORA BOREALIS

I watch now, in the narrows of the year,  
Aurora do her proud electric dance  
Across the night and wonder if by chance  
She speaks what we in love were deaf to hear:  
Of love's seasonal end, and how her clear  
Polar beauty will endure when your glance  
Strays and each word you speak becomes a lance  
More to be dreaded than brief winter fear.  
Yet soon the unprecise ellipse of spring  
Will unlock all the freshets of the land,  
Then do I need but to assume the rain  
Will once again renew the seed and bring  
A quick delight when I have touched your hand,  
Careless that the dancer will come again.

-Gordon B. Clark



# RONDA

by PAUL BISSELL

Day stands hesitant on the brink of Night.

Granite mountains, tall and jagged, shadow-dim the cool  
green valley below.

There, a twisting line of silver marks the tiny stream, vital  
still after its imprisonment by man:

Restlessly driving on, greedily searching other hills to level,  
other valleys to build.

Here, a wayside shrine marks the elbow of a precipitous path,  
weary with the ceaseless patter of donkey-hoofs toiling to  
and from the mist-filled gorge, where in long squat build-  
ings man takes his toll from the harnessed river.

Climbing up from the purple mists, cut apart by the greedy  
river, more golden than gold, more beautiful than mere  
beauty, stupendous, mighty, rise the giant cliffs.

Man marks their summits with his puny shelters: his masonry  
spans their ever gaping wound.

Naked, they bare themselves to the elements.

Scarred and time-twisted from their endless battle, still deep-  
chested and full-limbed they stand: heads back, proudly  
disdainful of dark hungry waters eternally gnawing—

Deep cuts the gorge, black now as a witch's curse

A gleam of darkness, where the river fearlessly leaps a dizzy  
height, hesitatingly falls, whips to a mist, then floatingly  
sinks down—down—down into the purple void.

Now only the mountain tips drip gold.

Night has wooed and won.

Tinkling donkey bells change the empty silence to quiet peace-  
fulness



*Ronda Spain --- Paul Bissel*





# SHAKESBEER

by RICHARD GLATTIAR

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Five Mortals

SCENE: A Tavern

How do you really know anyone? Your opinion may be entirely different from mine . . . I say you can't understand anyone, primarily because few of us understand ourselves.

But dern it, Max, there are some things we do know and feel about people. Hell, after a period of time you can get to know a person pretty well.

Now look, Stupe, you would have to be inside a person to really know what he is like, and even then you probably still wouldn't know . . . I say we never really know anyone.

Drink your beer, Max.

Do you still feel the same way about Othello, Stupe?

I'm convinced he's not a tragic-hero.

What do you mean by a tragic-hero?

Now damn it, Larry, let's not start with that thing again.

But your idea of a tragic-hero can be so different from mine that we'll be arguing about two opposite things.

I defy anyone to get behind words!

That's a brilliant statement, Stupe; the best this after-

noon. . . . What do you mean?

Damn it, just that. Words, words, words . . . they don't mean the same thing for each person.

Well, if I say, "I like him—but—" and you don't understand what I mean, we may just as well stop talking.

That's not the same thing though, Max.

What the hell is it?

We're getting no where quick . . . the conversation always bogs down when we broach this subject.

You're not helping, Gordo.

Now look it . . . the only thing we have to do on this earth is understand man. He's the only thing we have a chance at to really know . . . and I say we are not doing a good job of it.

Getting back to the tragic-hero, Stupe, let's suppose that this quarter represents you, and this nickel here is Constab.

Don't change them, Stupe—Larry, ask him why he changed coins . . . Stupe, that indicates how you are thinking. When Larry put the two coins out, he wasn't bothering about the different sizes—but you were.

I have to show some respect for the old boy—even if I do disagree with him.

That's not the point, Stupe.

Hell, it doesn't make any difference—

Go ahead, Larry.

Well, this nickel is you and this quarter is Constab. Now this half-dollar is what we call a tragic-hero.

Right.

Now your idea of a tragic-hero is different from Constab's and vice-versa—but the idea or your conception of a tragic-hero remains and his conception of a tragic-hero remains—as witness this half-dollar.

You still haven't proved anything.

Certainly I have—

Simply this—

Change the coins around again, Larry and pretty soon you will have Stupe confused—he's bound to agree some time.

The hell you say—

As I was saying, Stupe, the half-dollar remains. That which we call a tragic-hero remains.

Prove it—

Well, if this conception didn't remain you would have nothing to base your argument upon. You can have many



interpretations or many different coins, but the conception remains for each individual, like this half-dollar.

Don't say so much, Stupe—

What do you think is the flaw in the character of Othello, Stupe?

Damn it, he was stupid—

How?

He let passion blind him—and there *was* in him no redeeming qualities.

Well, did you see that—Larry buys himself one beer—can't you wait, Larry?

You guys talk so much, I'm forced to drink.

A true dipsomaniac.

Hell—

What's a dipsomaniac?

Please let's not go back to words again—

What's a dipsomaniac?

Don't you know, Max?

Hell, I've forgotten—

You mean you don't know what a dipsomaniac is?

No.

Shall we tell him?

Let's not—

Come on, what's a dipsomaniac? I get all these damn maniacs confused.

I suppose a dipsomaniac can be called a . . . ah . . . drunkard.

But don't forget, Stupe, your conception of a drunkard can be different from mine.

When I say drunkard, Gordo, I mean just that.

And Larry's a drunkard.

I suppose so—look at his eyes.

Stupe?

What?

I have a question for you.

Wait a second, Richy—Stupe, when I write your biography, I am going to say that at times throughout your life, you were a dipsomaniac.

That's all right—Flights of angels will sing me to my rest . . . What were you going to say, Richy?

I wanted to know whether you or I or anyone doesn't at times become blinded by our emotions?

Damn it, of course we do—

Well then why do you object to a similar condition in Othello?

Because he has nothing else except blind rage. He didn't fall from any great height—

What do you mean by a great height?

Now gull dern it, Gordo, I mean a great height like with Hamlet. Othello had no real great virtues. That the play is tragic is true, weepingly tragic, but you have no catharsis, and you have no feeling when you leave the play that a great man has fallen. No flights of angels sing Othello to his rest.

But, Stupe, he wasn't writing Hamlet over again—he was writing Othello.

Doesn't make any difference—I still don't believe that Othello fell from any great height.

Well we know that Othello was a great soldier, courageous, had great self-control in the beginning of the play—  
Yes, go ahead—

But this is the important thing to remember, and I think one should take cognizance of it. Othello has been married only a short time—

Do you know how long?

I gathered from the play only a few days—

All right—

And he is quite naturally in love with Desdemona—very in love with her. But then we have the entrance of an evil element in the form of the character of Iago.

We know that—

Well, then we find a transference of this intense love for that of intense hate. Where there was once something pure we now find stinking sin. And this is where the tragedy comes in. The good in Othello has been the profound love he has held for Desdemona, but Iago does his work and this love is destroyed.

Damn it all, I still feel that there is no place in Othello where one would get the feeling that . . . "Thus cracks a noble heart."

Hold it, Richy . . . Stupe, why don't you take Richy's attitude that Shakespeare was finished writing Hamlet. The play is Othello.

True, Gordo, but you still can't prove to me that Othello had any great proportions. And not having fallen from any great height, I can't feel sorry for him.

You didn't like the play when you read it through?

No.

Then I suppose there is some justification for your negative attitude.

And you will not read the play again.

Are you asking or telling him, Larry?

There's no need to ask.

How about five beers?

---

### VERS LIBRE

From him I took a flower cold.  
The shimmering camellia—trite  
And saying nothing as had he.  
And then one day I saw The Other One.  
She wore a purple orchid rare;  
Its heart as passionate as his.  
Bitterly I wept and crushed  
My withered token in the dust.  
A blinding anguish spent in tortured wrath  
The fiendish plot devised.  
I would destroy the orchid fair—  
Symbol of his love.  
I planned it well and in the still of night,  
I crept into her room with jealous heart.  
Its eager pounding was so soon to cease,  
For The Other lay upon the floor,  
The orchids blood mixed with her salty tears

—Hettie Goldrick

# THAT'S HIS BUSINESS

by STUART JAMES

**R**EDDENS Saloon aint no place fer wimmin of a Saturday afternoon, unless they're rip-roarin she-bitches. And Tom Farley's kid aint no she-bitch. No fault of hisn though, he aint give airy a'one of his younguns nothin but the flat of his hand since they was big enough to sit up and take notice. I seen the kid through the window makin her way across the tracks toward the Saloon, but I aint said nothin to Tom cause his business aint none of my business. And besides, it would a'took a fog-horn to be heard in all the hootin and swearin that was goin on. Tom was makin most of the racket hisself, a'slammin his fist down on the bar and a'bellerin like a old-maid cow in spring. "By the roarin Jesus, when a man's spent the whole day a'sweatin away on them dam tracks, he aint a'comin in here to sit about picking his nose. Koonie, fill up them glasses agin." And all the time Koonie looks at him kind o' sour-like, but he aint sayin nothin and he draws them drinks right pronto. Koonie aint no dumb bastard, he knows whose good fer most of his pay-check of a Saturday night.

Everybody a'lifts up his drink and hollers, "Here's to ya, Tom". And right then the Saloon door opens a crack and Tom Farley's kid sticks her head in. She's got big eyes like her maw, blue as anything ever I see. She stood there a second a'peekin at us, then sidles over to her ol' man kinda shy-like. You could tell Mrs. Farley tried to keep her neat, but her dress was way up above where it oughta been. Her legs warnt no bigger'n a broomstick and her knees stuck out like knots on a limb. She edged up to her paw and give a little jerk on the back of his over-alls. Tom turned round and kinda stared at her fer a minute like he warnt quite sure he seen right. Then sudden-like, he draws hisself up like I seen Reverend Hotchkiss do once when he was a'preachin on sin, and bellers out in a voice what would a'fetched a hawg from Alaska. "Carolina, what in Gawd's name are you doin here?" And he draws back his hand like he was gonna wop her across the ears. Carolina squinted up her face and blinked her eyes shet, but she stood right there straight and stiff as a linin' bar. That youngun's got a lot o' Mrs. Farley in her, I reckon. When she



seen he warnt gonna clout her, she tilted back her head, and holdin her arms stiff down to her sides like she was about to recite some book talk, she says, "Ma wants you to come home and fix the new brooder. It's actin queer and she's afraid of losin the new batch of biddies." Tom, he looked right concerned, but Judson, who was standin next to him, give a snicker and says, "I reckon you better scamper right on home, Tom, and set on them chicks a spell afore they takes the pneumony." At that Tom puffs hisself up like a adder and says, "Carolina, you tell yer maw I aint a'comin home tonight to fix no brooder. T'aint nothin wrong with it noway. Now git." Fer a minute Carolina stood a'twistin at her dress and then she begun edgin kinda slow-like over to the door. Tom screwed up a awful scowl on his face and took a big swig outen his glass. "Damnit all," he says to Carolina "you stop by Bate's store and git two gallons of kerosene, yer maw kin pay fer it tomorrow. Take it home and pour it right into that dang brooder and tell maw to turn it on full blast. It won't work no other way." Carolina give a little bob with her head and says, "Yes, paw," and ducks fer the door. I watched her through the window headin toward Bate's store, skippin along kinda stiff-legged with her braids a'bouncin out behind. The spittin image of her maw. I never could figure out why Mrs. Farley married Tom, but there aint no accountin fer some things, and besides, that's her business.

"Danged wimmin," says Tom, "there jest aint no pleasin em no-how. If a body stays to home, he's underfoot and ought to be out makin a dollar. And then when he's drove out, he's a loafer and spendin the last cent fer drinks down at Reddins."

"There aint no female livin what could coax me up to a altar and slap them matreemony hooks to me," says Judson. And he stretches out his neck like a crowin rooster and fetches up a belch that nigh blowed the windows out.

"Wimmin'll slave ya to death," says Tom, "mine's always ater me to fix this and fix that, and her at home all day and me a'slavin away on them damn tracks tryin to earn a penny." He brung his fist down agin the bar like he was fixin to squish it. "There aint no woman gonna make a fool out o' me. Koonie, ya ole bastard, let's have another round here, and fill one up fer yer own skinny self."

Koonie grins-up all over hisself like a houn' dog and draws the boys the drinks. Then he tips kind of easy like to the end of the bar and peaks in the kitchen, then tips back and draws

hissell one. Everybody says, "Here's to ya, Tom," and we all take a swig.

After that the drinks come thick and fast, but I notice Koonie's gettin mighty careless about keepin tabs on the kitchen, and first thing I know there's his ole woman a'eyein him from the door. She aint no banty, runs close to three hundred pounds, I reckon. Don't none of the men like to square-dance with her, cause when it comes to "Swing yer pardner," she just up and lifts em right offen their feet and flops em around like a rag doll. It don't do a man's feelins about hisself no good to be flung about by a female like that. "Gottlieb Kuhn," she says, "if I catch you a'drinking that pizen again today, you'll just find yourself out here a'doin the iron-in, and I'll be tendin bar." Koonie gits that whupped-dog look but he don't say nothin. She stands there a'eyein him and us, then she say, "Humph," and goes back in the kitchen. Everybody breathes easy again, and Jud asks Koonie why he don't put her in the ring and make a fortune.

I aint heard what Koonie answers because about that time ole Johnny Wagner comes in and asks me to relieve him fer a couple of hours flaggin on the crossin. I was glad to get out fer a breath of fresh air, and anyway I always did like the evenin time just after sunset. Settin in the flag-shack by the tracks, I could see the village layin there waitin fer night. Reddens Saloon, and Bate's Store, that's where the post-office is; the station and the shack where they keep the old town-ship fire-truck that aint nothin but a heap of bolts and balin wire. About a mile up the valley where the tracks curve along the river, I could just make out the Farley place, standin white as a church in the twilight. Mrs. Farley painted the whole dang place last summer, Carolina helpin. Seems odd a woman would a'took on such a job with all them other things she has to do, but that's her business, I reckon.

I set there watchin the few lights come on in the valley, and the stars pushin over the hills, and pretty soon the two hours was gone and Johnny come back. It bein Saturday night I headed back fer Reddens to have a couple with the boys befor hittin the hay. They was havin a regular hoorary time of it when I got there. I warnt no more than reachin fer my first drink when Christy Barnes, he drives truck on the state road and takes care of the fire-engine, come in from a trip to the back-house and meets Judson a'boltin fer the same place. Feelin frisky as a couple o' young colts they lock elbows and

Judson hollers, "Swing yer pardner," and round they go in a gol dern pigeon-wing. They git a'spinnin like a buzz-saw, then Jud fetches Chris a extra yank, and up-flops his heels. He don't fall down, but he jest stretches hisself out in the air about shoulder high like he was fixin to lie there all night. The next thing he knowed he took up on the floor with a wop that bounced his store uppers clean over the bar. But it aint hurt him a bit, too full of alkeehol, I reckon. Only there aint nothin left of his specks but the frames. He had them real thick lens kind that made his eye look like a blue marble in a fish bowl. Tom helps him to his feet and claps the frames on him jest like they was O.K. Christy looks kinda queer and shook-up when he fumbles his way over to the bar, but he don't say nothin. Tom, he buys poor Christy a drink and everybody says, "Good ole Tom."

But right then Tate Lester busts in the door with his eyes big as wagon wheels and bellers out, "Somethin's a'fire up the valley!" And with that he ducks out front and commences poundin on the ole bell hung up in the yard. There warnt no use in his doin that cause bout everybody in town was at Reddens already. The whole bunch begun stampedin around like a herd o' crazy cows. Koonie was bellerin fer everybody to git out so's he can shet up the joint; he's fire-chief. And over all the whooprah you could hear Tom Farley a'shoutin, "whar's my hat? What bastard's done hid my hat?" and all the time it's right on his own dang head. Everybody busted outen the door like the devil was a'clutchin at their heels. Pretty soon they quit dodgin every-which-a-way and head fer the fire-truck. Then Chris was up in the driver's seat and the ole engine was sputtin and poppin like it was fixin to blow up any minute. Koonie was on the runnin board ready to take the chief's seat when he leaned over and looked right close at Chris. "Chris," he bellers, "you know ya can't see a damn thing withouten yer specks." "Ya derved ole fool," says Chris, "I got my specks. There aint no bastard drivin this here truck but Chris Barnes." And with that he lets out the clutch and the truck gives a leap outen the shed like a bull pitch-forked from behind. He don't hardly give Koonie time to git his hind-end tucked in, and away he goes a'roarin up the road, the rest of us hangin on fer dear life lookin like hung-up clothes a'flappin in the wind.

We made the corner down past Bates's on two wheels, but then I reckon we was lucky to make it at all. Everything



might a'been all right if we hadn't met Reverend Hotchkiss a'chuggin up the road in his Model T. I reckon he figured his preachin days was over. I swear I could see his eyes biggern headlights and a'shinin like coals, and his mouth standing wide open. Koonie reaches over and gives a almighty heave on the steerin wheel and the next thing we know we're a'buckin across Widow Clouse's cornfield like a runaway mare. And all the time Chris is a'shoutin, "Which way, which way?" And Koonie, a'bouncin three feet offen the seat at every furrow, is bellerin, "Left, ya derved ass, left!" But Chris aint never knowed left from right, so he turns right and we go a'roarin up the road back to town. Finally we get stopped and turned around and Koonie takes over the drivin. And Chris just sits there bewildered-like, a'takin his specks off and a'puttin 'em on, and mutterin, "I can't see nothin."

When we hit the river road there was a dull red splotch in the sky up ahead of us, and we could smell wood-smoke. "Up your way, Tom," shouts Judson. In a few minutes we round the bend and everybody sees it. It was the Farley place all right. The house was just about gone. The flames was rushin up in the sky fer sixty feet, and through 'em you could see the frame house, like a danged skeleton. The big barn back of the house warnt burnin, but smoke was a'pourin out of it thickerin soup.

Tom's face was white as flour. "That goddamn brooder," ke kept sayin. "I wonder what she could a'done. I wonder what she done, the dang fool."

When we come a'roarin up to the yard we could feel the heat right through our clothes and the flames was cracklin so loud ya had to shout to make yerself heard. "We aint a'gonna reach the river with the hose," yells Koonie, "we'll hafta use the well." Then I seen Mrs. Farley. She came outen the barn leadin one of the horses. She had done throwed a blind-fold over its eyes, and she was a'talkin easy and a'pattin the horse's neck like she was fixin to take a Sunday canter. She led him right quiet-like toward the edge of the field where I seen their other horse, and right near there the kids was huddled up together in a bunch, all six of 'em, their faces lookin like white dots in the firelight.

When we jumped offen the truck I seen Carolina bust away from the rest of the kids and come flyin across the field right up to her paw. She was screamin afore she ever reached him. "We done just what you said to do, and it blowed up."



And she hung right to him a'cryin and a'sobbin up at him, "Just what you said, and it blowed up."

I didn't hear what he said cause I was busy tryin to help them drunks git the hose offen the truck and over to the well. Then I seen Tom shake hisself loose from Carolina, and he begun actin like a crazy man. First he gits hisself all tangled up in the hose, and then he straightens up sudden-like and bel-lers across the yard to Mrs. Farley, "Whar's the cow?" Mrs. Farley's just about reached the edge of the field with the horse and she points to the barn. Then she reaches up and whips the blind-fold offen the horse and holds it up. "Take this," she hollers. "I don't need no damn blind-fold," Tom yells, and he makes as straight a beeline as he's able fer the barn door. About three seconds later out come the dang cow a'rarin and a'buckin with Tom a'clutchin to her tail. She shore had took the fit and there warnt no stoppin her. She come a'ragin and snortin right fer the well and we all scattered like quail fore a houn' dog. She ketched the well-box a bang with her horns and sent it a'flyin, and then she give a extry big buck sideways and afore you could spit that dang cow had done flopped her whole hind-end, legs and all, right down the well. And there she stuck, a'bellerin so's you could a'heard her on the moon. We all rushed over and got around her, a couple on the horns and a couple on the front legs, and heaved. But it warnt no use, she was growed fast. Then we tried to git the hose down along-side of her, but there warnt a place big enough. And right then we heard a loud "Kapoooff," and that barn busted out in flames like somebody had sprayed gasoline on it and tossed in a match.

Well, there warnt nothin to do but stand around and watch her burn. We all bunched up near the truck, cept Tom, he jest set on the ground a little off to hisself and watched. At the upper end of the field we could see Mrs. Farley standin stiff and straight in the firelight, holdin the youngest kid in her arms with the rest huddlin around her feet.

We jest set there wihtout speakin a word, till finally Koonie up and says, "I reckon we might as well go on home, boys." The barn was still flamin some, but the house was only a heap of ashes and a chimney standin there kind of lonesome-like in the night.

Judson says, "Do ya need somebody to help ya watch, Tom?" But Tom he jest shook his head.

We all piled on the truck and didn't nobody say nothin.

As we pulled off down the road I looked back and seen Mrs. Farley makin her way toward Tom. She come up beside him where he was a'settin, and all the kids with her a'pushin around her skirts. And right to the last, till we turned the bend, I could see her standin there by Tom, starin into the fire.

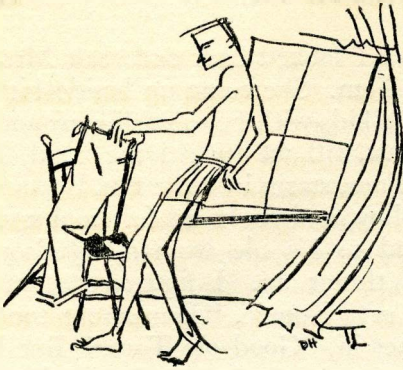
Koonie drove back right slow, and the wind felt cool and good. "Tom was mighty good to his ole woman," Judson was sayin, "she shore messed things up. I figured he was gonna give her hell." "Yup" says Koonie, "Tom shore took it good." And everybody chimes in, "Good ole Tom." But I aint sayin nothin. I figure if a man wants to take it along easy toward his ole woman, well, that's his business.

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### TO A GALLEY SLAVE

They ploughed the sea, yet never saw the sea;  
Their eyes were not allowed the luscious feast  
Of azure spread before them, West and East;  
They were not worthy of such needless glee.  
Beneath the master's lash, their back were bowed  
With toil; and bare and bled, when strength was gone.  
They had no friends, nor families; they were lone,  
Save for each other's miseries. Apart the crowd.  
Yet, on and on they drudged. On, endlessly,  
To feed the world, and larger cities build.  
And one by one, they passed; weak voices stilled.  
Behold! Skyscrapers, railroads, ships at sea  
Stand as bold monuments upon their human keel,  
And flesh and blood have been transformed to steel.

—Mattie M. Kelly



## PARTY LINES

by ROBERT F. JACKSON

"WE not be back till after 12," said Mrs. Malcheck. "So, be sure you hear that phone if she ring. Your cousin, Stella, say she call from Hartford about your wedding Saturday."

"OK, Ma. We're just going to put the curtains in the attic windows. We'll hear it. Goodbye."

Wanda watched her folks drive off. Then, with a happy sigh, she turned off the downstairs lights. As she started up the stairs she thought, "I'm damn glad there's no party or shower tonight. Ted and I can be alone for a change."

Ted, her fiance, was lying on the bed blowing smoke rings at the ceiling. He turned and smiled at her. Wanda said, "If this place is going to be ready for us to move into by Saturday, we've got to get busy!"

"Nice of your folks to let us use this attic apartment until we can find a place. Come here and let's talk about it." Ted grabbed her wrist and pulled her down beside him.

"This won't get the curtains fixed," Wanda said.

"That's right. You know, it's hot up here. I'd better turn the light out," said Ted, pulling on the string.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Errol Flynn, we're not married yet! Besides, you're wrinkling my clothes."

"There's some hangers in the closet."

It was kind of stuffy up there. And she had been engaged to Ted Palaski for six months, not counting the time he was in the Army.

"OK, it is hot, but don't take all your clothes off," she said to him.

Wanda fumbled in the dark as she hung her dress and slip up. Ted's shoes dropped to the floor and he hung his



shirt and pants over a chair.

"Now we'll have to put the curtains up in the dark," Wanda said.

"Curtains! Who cares about curtains?"

Ted reached through the darkness and took Wanda into his strong arms. After all, Wanda thought, Ted was her fiance and Saturday was only three days away.

Downstairs the phone jangled.

"Let the damn thing ring," said Ted, as he held her tighter.

"No! It's Stella. She supposed to call. I've got to get it. And I can't find my clothes in the dark."

"Oh, well, I'll turn the light on then."

"God, no, the curtains aren't up!"

"Come on then," Ted said, "it's dark downstairs."

They rushed barefooted down the two flights of stairs with Ted cursing any relative or friend who would call at a time like this.

The phone was still ringing as Wanda grabbed it.

"Hello! Hello—Hello. I guess they hung up," Wanda said.

"Why in hell couldn't your cousin wait until . . ."

Lights were switched on and there was a loud cry of, "Surprise!", as their friends rushed into the room.

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## SPANISH MOSS . . .

You are a worn-out woman  
Twisted and hanging there,  
Suffering the wind's curious fingers  
Poking your tangled hair;  
Swelling with raindrop children  
The shower has left you to bear.  
Will you smile when the sun comes back,  
Or do you even care?

—Dallas Williams.

# THE HOUND

by SAM BURCHERS

TWO fast words would finish me off, a victim of the old biological urge. Me, who for thirty-one long years has gallantly withstood the "Waterloo" of the male species—marriage. As soon as I said "I do" all that would be finished. My notorious career as a gentleman bachelor would end, having come to that most ignominious fate known to the male sex.

The wedding, with its church smell of cleansed souls, was almost over. Sue's family and our friends were waiting with their pockets bulging with rice. They had come to witness the execution of the condemned. And they would shriek with rejoicing as the gold hangman's noose, the symbol of virtue over sin, squeezed the lifeblood out of the prisoner.

Only now did I fully realize how I'd been trapped by a shapely pair of legs and a full vibrant bust. She'd done it as coldly and methodically as a North woodsman sets traps for the fur-bearing animals of the frozen brush country. True, I had done the proposing, but she had put the words in my mouth. Yet at this moment she was only another attractive woman, one of many. My mind had tricked me. Only now I wanted my nickel back.

They were still waiting for me to say "I do." The preacher couldn't figure the pitch. Could it be he'd never had a groom balk before? Nodding his righteous head and moving his lips silently, he tried to squeeze the words into my mouth. Well, it wasn't going to be that easy. I'd think of something. But maybe I was in too deep. Maybe he'd finish the wedding figuring I froze up. I stalled.

"Ahem, ahem, ahah, ahem," this couldn't go on forever. They were crowding me with looks now. They were closing in, scowling with words of shame as they came. Sue . . . poor Sue. She was biting her lip and somehow the lace veil was caught between her teeth. I thought, if she cries, I'm a goner. Can't fight tears. Then she sagged slightly as if I had sucked the breath from her body. Couldn't she understand? Didn't they know, didn't any of them know. My kind isn't the marrying type. Marriage is for women. My kind

don't mate, not permanently. It's we misfits for or against the rest, but we don't fit in for long. Once you got sand in your shoes, it won't wash out. You don't tick the conventional way. Why, I'd cease to exist as an individual and become a regimented robot.

A wife would butcher my freedom, make me keep a steady job, come home evenings, play bridge, and burp the baby. By God, no thank you! I'd be a hound dog on a leash, checked at every turn. It wouldn't do, it just was no shakes. She had held her whatever it is women get you with over me like you tease a kid with a peppermint stick. She'd held it there and said: "Here Gus, you want me? Then marry me." I was buying her love, but love should be a free thing—to be had for the desiring. She'd slyly trapped me and now it was almost too late. The coil was tightening fast.

Everyone was whispering at me. I had to keep calm, had to think this thing out. Sue's father grabbed my arm and said: "Steady, boy, steady," his sweating, friendly face flushed lobster-red.

All I could think of was get out, get out . . . do anything, but get out. Better to be a social outcast than a husband. But how? To break and run?

Sue's mother was crying louder now. Her sobbing obliterated everything. How long had it been? How long had I been standing there? If only I could think. The preacher was bobbing his head in my direction. His lips moving ever so slowly, but I couldn't hear a word. It was all one big jumbled noise with women crying, or one woman crying. I couldn't tell. My ears were booming, flooded with a strange frustrating emotion. Women—I had to go through with it.

Sue fainted, a heap of white satin on the aisle. I stood immovable, cursing myself for a selfish, egotistical, self-centered idiot. Sue came to in a hurry, an awful big hurry.

Preacher Brown smoothed everything over fine. What had looked like a possible out had been another slight delay, they'd get me in the end. I was licked. If only I could think. Sue was clinging to me, her brown, limpid eyes saying things I didn't want to read. I smiled meekly. Again the prosecutors tensed forward to hear me say what I'd been stalling for these last few seconds, or minutes, or had it been hours.

The bride was trembling against my side. She was warm and good and sweet and I was a louse. I said it. It jumped out like an escaping frog before I could stop it. "I do!" I



screamed, the high church ceiling mocking my words back at me.

What had I done? No, never. Later they would say I was a dirty dog and they'd be right, because I've never seen a one-bitch hound. All I loved was love and life and be damned for the rest. I shouted again, breaking all ties with my social blunder.

"I do . . . I do not want to get married. God bless you, Sue, and goodby."

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A secret love makes a bitter pair:  
They lack the warm and friendly ring  
Of comradeship, and the healthy air  
That open hearts search for each spring.

—Anonymous

# THE LARNARD GIRL

by MARY DOUGLAS GRAHAM

**Y**OU couldn't tell looking at her she was crazy. She seemed quiet enough; about thirty you might guess and attractive once. She spent most of her time setting on the Larnard's porch rocking and watching people pass by. Those large grey eyes of hers looked right through you—not in the keen way you'd think I mean, but through you as though you weren't there at all. I don't mean to tell you people weren't bothered about her—having her there free like that all the time. But I was never worried a bit. She was such a fragile, childlike thing, and her voice was the sweetest, softest voice I ever heard, made you feel like you was listening to some half-forgot melody. Besides, the docs said she was harmless, just a little loose in the screws.

My place is near the Larnards, though sure it's better land. There was a fellow, Mark, doing chores for me stopped by sometimes to try to talk to the girl, but she naturally never had much to say for herself. One day I got a feeling seeing him standing there looking up to the porch where she was leaning over talking that he looked somewhat similar to—but I couldn't place it then—not until that fearsome night of the search when I looked at that blanked window. Pretty soon Mark had the girl thinking he was her father. As I recall, most people thought it was cute her calling him dad and all his being so much younger. Besides it was good for her to have someone interested enough to hear through her babbled. She was always bringing him little things she found in the house to show him, talking with him like crazy and sharing what pleased her. He was considerate kinda, as though he were trying to figure something out.

Then all of a sudden she was missing. Just like that. Well, about everybody in town went looking for her. Men put down their work, closed shop and hit it for the woods and farms to search. I think they was concerned for the poor thing! There herself off alone somewhere. Then too, you couldn't quite have a looney running loose like that with so many children in the town—it's sort of hard to keep them in more than a day. Her ma, old Mrs. Larnard, was fit to throw a hysteria

what with her being so old and always so careful about the girl. There was just the two of them and that rattling, big old house. Personal I don't see why anyone wouldn't go a little off whack, that place was so empty and full of haunts; not kid's haunts, understand, but the kind that are memories, that lurk not really in the wood of the walls and the catty-corner closets, but which inhabit the heart. And Mrs. Larnard looked like her own ghost. She was standing now on the sagging porch wringing her skinny, white hands and crying.

We got up posses and began to circle the town. More and more people began to join in and before night you could see the thin line of them off in the fields against the bloody sunset, streams of them coming and going from the town, some in bunches 'round the trucks where the women had brought out coffee and sandwiches. They were in crowds at the sheriff's office and the hotel. Men came over from Somersville and Yellow Creek to help. Some brought dogs and what with their barking and the men shouting checks, the cars stopping, starting—racing around, there was no doubting it was getting plenty big and plenty noisy.

By nightfall they were breaking out torches and the thing was pretty well organized into squads and all that there. It was that deputy which was in the army that did it. He had us all divided up like the gol-durned infantry. Those who weren't out looking were locked snug indoors. There's one thing everybody knows about odd ones and that's that they're like a pet bull, likely to burst the fence without notice any minute. Well, that night as I was heading home for a bite and some rest and watching the torches like firebugs moving in the distance, I noticed of a sudden that the light in Mark's room was out. Somehow it struck me as funny. Sure he could have been out with the rest of them and I hadn't any call to go worrying about his being gone. But it kind of set me thinking and I remembered a few things I hadn't paid particular note to before. It's peculiar about things like that sometimes. After a while I took my gun and my dog, Toby, and headed off toward the High Bluff. It was far out of hearing and sight of the thrashing army. There was only Toby, me, the dew-dripping trees, and fear walking at my heel. There wasn't much moon, but I knew the way. An owl was the only being I heard in all that distance. His voice faded in the shadows stilled by the silence.

It was easy to recall the coming of Mark now. He was a



steady-seeming boy from over Jamesville way. There wasn't much doubt in my mind when I took him on that he would be a good worker. There were those who saw how thorough he was that tried buying him away from me. But he had stayed.

There aren't many as know how come the Larnard girl's the way she is. Most think as how she was born to turn out that way. But a long time ago there was a man, Glencoe, owned the farm next to the Larnard place had two sons. There are some as say the older Glencoe boy was the brother to the Larnard's gal. But that was only rumor. The two sure got along good though, grew up together fishing, swimming, riding after possum and coon. They were like butter and toast, Saturday and Sunday. Mind you that was back before she popped her brain. Then one day the Glencoes up and left. The boy returned once to see the Larnard girl but after that he went to war. There were many of us was mighty glad to hear he was safe when it was all over. He came back married to one of those foreign girls. That's about where the Larnard girl got started throwing a hysteria. The gol-darned female hanged her three cats to a tree and was starting in on the cow with an axe when her paw stopped her. They took her away for a while then. But after she came back she was all right, quiet like as I said. There has always been something distinct about the Glencoe family that brands them as being of the same clan. That's how I recognized the boy who was working for me as being the younger of the two brothers. The older one never looked quite as much Glencoe as he did.

There was an old cabin the kids had had up on High Bluff. I knew about it because those two sort of liked the woods, even took Mark along sometimes, and I'd used it when I was a boy and needed my own world as children do. As I figured it that night there just wasn't any place else Mark Glencoe would be taking the girl. He must have known about the cabin as he grew up and maybe he guessed recently what it had meant to his big brother and the pretty neighbor girl—just as I was guessing as I was striding through the night, the dog slithering along beside me. And I was doing him one guess better because I was thinking the girl wouldn't be taking to the atmosphere much in the way he was expecting. The way I cut the grain the picture was different. There are some scars that heal and some that only scab over. And I was seeing those cats swaying, oh, so lightly, limp sacks hanging from the cherry tree.

It was just this side of midnight when I reached the cabin. From under the door and around the window, light was gleaming. It looked homey from the dark woods. Cocking my gun, I stepped up to the door and pushed her open with my foot. You could see the whole room lit though it was with only one lamp. They were there! But there wasn't any need for the gun. I guess I didn't notice it then but it was sort of pretty the way she was sitting in his lap. They had been that way quite some while—with her belt wrapped around his neck and her kissing him.

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### EPISTEMOLOGY

Each theory that is embraced as true  
by neophytic mind  
soon is replaced by one more new;  
and limbo you will find  
is made up of these dethroned views  
catalogued in time.

But for the theory of theories,  
by Diogenes represented,  
for the right, the everlasting truth  
take the most recent one presented.

—Robert J. Jackson.

