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Flamingo

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Flamingo

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This issue of the **FLAMINGO** is dedicated to Willard Wattles. On the following pages we present, in loving memory, a few of his poems. As no student-written poetry is included in this **FLAMINGO**, the poetry prize for the issue has been given to the Willard Wattles Scholarship Fund.

NONCHALANCE

Why is it that I cannot fear
When others are afraid,
But in the lightning's center I
Walk barefoot, undismayed?
Though frail the walls of flesh that hold
They are as granite too,
Thin-carven as a pane of stone,
For light to filter through.
When other careful-minded men
Seek prudent shelter, I
With nonchalance of thunder-doom
Assail the splendid sky,
As if I knew how far could reach
The dreadful hand of God,
And just escape his fingers with
A not unhostile nod.

(E. P. Sutton and Co., 1918, "*Lanterns in Gethsemane*")

WITHOUT ADJECTIVES

A tree and a horse and a friend,
These three at the journey's end
Will heal; or if there be
Only a friend and a tree;
Still if fate grant not even these two,
A tree . . . will do

TO THE ULTIMATE LANDLORD

Shut up the old house,
Close the door,
Draw all the curtains down:
Let the long shadow take the floor—
For I am out of town.

COURAGE, MON AMI

Oh, it is good to camp with the spirit,
Oh, it is jaunty to walk with the mind,
When the heart sees all the future to share it,
Knowing the road that stretches behind.
Courage, my comrade, the devil is dying!
Here's the warm sun and a cloud scudding free;
The touch of your hand is too near for denying,
And laughter's a tavern sufficient for me.
Hang your old hat on the smoke-mellowed rafter,
Strike an old song on your crazy guitar;
Hey, hustle, old lady, it's heaven we're after—
God, but I'm glad we can be what we are!

(Angel Alley Press, "*Compass For Sailors*")

IRON ANVIL

I can make them delicate, fragile, and ethereal
Little lilting, petalled songs of columbine and rose;
I had rather shape a sword upon an iron anvil,
Beating out a splendid blade with sledge-hammer blows.

Any one can fashion them, string the beads of amber,
Dainty, dancing tripping things, of love and lips and hands;
I could blow a trumpet with a brazen clarion,
Till avalanching echoes break on thunder-haunted strands.

See, I thrust the yellow flax upon the twirling spindle,
I can spin a thread of dreams to weave the cloth of gold—
I who bore as Atlas bore the world upon his shoulders,
And felt about his granite knees the wine-dark ocean rolled.

WITH ALL HER SPARS

When oceans rise
And overwhelm,
There must be some one
At the helm

And when a ship,
With all her spars
Is lost, there must be
Somewhere stars

By which the sails
In bitterest night
May set their broken
Course aright

So when the dawn
Comes, gray and dun,
No sailor shall
Deplore the sun,

But say, "There must
Be land afar
Because each night
We see a star."

(Angel Alley Press, 1928, "*Compass For Sailors*")

COME WITH ME

There is a road that ventures down
Through many an olive-shaded town,
By many a nook where I have seen
The Jordan willows turning green,
By many a well where women wait,
By many a barred unopened gate,
All the way to a hill-side house
And a night beneath the olive-boughs.

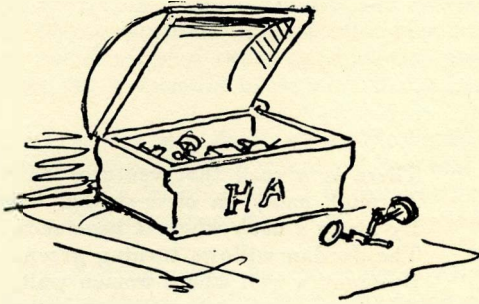
And I have strangely come upon
A walker in the windy dawn
Who has not found where'er he went,
The hand or face that brings content
Within a shy and shady space,
But turned away—I knew his face
For one I summoned long ago;
I wonder I remember so!

I have called him. He will come
With youth within him like a drum,
And strength within him, warm, unspent,
To fold peace in his arms, content,
And faith within him like a star,
And feet to wander with me far—
I would not show to every one
That long gray pathway in the sun.

I would not show to every one
The road that I have come upon,
The road that I at last must ride
With a ragged ass-colt by my side;
For he shall know, and he shall see
The hill-side house of Bethany,
And I will teach him many things
Of purple old rememberings:

Death and love beside me sit,
But few there are who know of it.

(E. P. Sutton and Co., 1918, "*Lanterns in Gethsemane*")



SUMMER CLOTHES SEPARATE

GERARD WALKER

STANDING before his lengthy dressing room mirror, Mr. Herbert Ashley adjusted a black bow tie. Herbert Ashley was not a man of uncertain tastes; rather he saw to it that his dinner clothes fit, and that the right tie was always worn with the right suit, the right shirt, the right socks, and the right shoes. He took a distinct interest in his appearance, selected his clothes carefully, all of which were specially made for him in New York. Much time and effort was required to maintain Mr. Ashley's standard, and many important hours daily were spent in his room living up to it. He could not, of course, accomplish it by himself.

"My gold cufflinks tonight, Hilda," he said, whereupon the ever present black and white clad figure turned on her heel, and without delay was shuffling through Mr. Ashley's jewelry, looking for the specified item. For Hilda knew and admired his impeccable habits. She took pride in keeping the contents of his bureau drawers faultlessly neat, his business suits on one side of the closet, and his sports clothes on the other, his ties laid neatly over a silver bar in the closet for that purpose, and his hats arranged systematically on the top shelves.

It was with dismay and almost fright that Hilda confessed she could not find the pair of gold cufflinks. There were others she knew, but she was quite aware without being told, that Mr. Ashley wanted the monogrammed ones for the evening.

"They don't seem to be here, Mr. Ashley," she announced, with a tremor in her voice, and a worried, starry look in her eye. Mr. Ashley turned from the mirror, and looked at Hilda for a few seconds without speaking.

"Hilda," he started, slowly and calmly. "You always put them in the box at night, don't you?" His voice registered no disturbance. Hilda knew he would not be irritated, but she also knew there was a possibility that he might think less of her for a moment.

He stood with a fixed gaze on her for a moment, and then he moved slowly towards the box on the bureau. Hilda's small white hand remained on it, just on the right. Mr. Ashley peered down at the contents, and then slowly maneuvered his fingers inside of it, sorting the tie pins from the collar pins and the many sets of studs.

"I've never seen this box look so untidy, Hilda," he said, looking straight into her anxious hazel eyes. And then he turned his eyes in the direction of the box and continued the search.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Ashley," she said unsurely. "I just didn't get around to fixing it last night." Hilda wanted him to cut her off, but instead he stood there looking at her, not quite smiling.

"I know, Hilda," he said. "You can fix it up while I'm downstairs, tonight." Mr. Ashley spoke reassuringly, and calmly, as usual. He always spoke that way to Hilda.

"Yes, Mr. Ashley, I will." Hilda's eyes lost their worried look for an instant.

"And here are the cufflinks," Mr. Ashley said. He lifted them slowly from the box, and as he did so his hand brushed against Hilda's, which still remained resting on the side of it.

"Oh," Hilda said. "How could I have missed them." There was a pause of silence. They stood looking at each other. Then Mr. Ashley spoke.

"They were separated, which they usually are not. You just didn't recognize them," he said, and then he returned slowly to the mirror where he installed one cufflink in his sleeve. And then he started on the other cuff.

"Hilda, would you push this through please?" he asked, and Hilda moved from the bureau to where he was standing. She started to work the cufflink through the tightly starched holes. Mr. Ashley looked down on her brown head as she worked, and saw her small white hands manipulating the gold cufflink. In a few seconds it was all over. Hilda went back and continued on the jewelry box. A few minutes elapsed and no words were exchanged.

Mr. Ashley was in the last stages of his dressing. He

had on all but the coat of his dinner clothes. And his hair was still uncombed, Hilda noticed. Her pale hands were moving slowly and surely, placing each set of cufflinks in its special compartment, and placing the various collar and tie pins in neat order.

And then Hilda noticed his coat was on. She silently removed a black comb from an initialed leather case on the bureau and handed it to him. Hilda knew he always combed his hair last. She then backed towards the closet, where she took a whisk broom off a hook. It was a small one, designed for brushing clothes. It had been a Christmas present to Mr. Ashley. He had always kept it.

Hilda realized that there were a few minutes before Mr. Ashley would go downstairs. She would brush his coat in a few seconds, the minute he had handed the comb back to her. She felt a quick, momentary tingle go through her slight body, and she took a deep, silent breath.

And then Mr. Ashley turned and faced her, the comb outstretched. He looked at her as she took it slowly from his hand. Then he turned and faced the mirror again, and with the small whisk broom in her hand, she started brushing the back of his coat, near the collar. She brushed slowly and accurately. Hilda was always hesitant to repeat her strokes over the same places. She brushed sideways across the back of his shoulders, and then in long even strokes down his back. Mr. Ashley turned around and Hilda took the brush off his coat while he moved. She then brushed a few specks of lint off the front, near the lapels. She liked brushing the front.

He didn't stare. Hilda never felt him stare. She never felt uncomfortable. But she knew he was looking. Her eyes concentrated on the places she was brushing, and she only looked up at him once. That was after the last stroke. This way, Mr. Ashley knew when she had finished.

"Thank you, Hilda," he said quietly, and he walked towards the door. Mr. Ashley moved quietly on the carpet, and Hilda followed.

And then he stopped and turned around. Hilda was taken off guard. She had been close behind him, and in order to stop herself from running into him, she had raised her hand, and it had brushed gently against the side of his dinner coat.

Mr. Ashley looked down at her and spoke, in the same clear, calm, low way.

"Mrs. Ashley and I will have cocktails in the library tonight."

"Yes, Mr. Ashley," Hilda said, and she looked up at him. "In the library."

"As usual," Mr. Ashley said.

"Yes, Mr. Ashley, as usual."

Hilda shut the bedroom door behind him, and followed Mr. Ashley down the red velvet carpeted stairs. She followed two steps behind, all the way down. Through the dimly lighted downstairs hall she followed him and through the pantry door.

This was the last stage before Mr. Ashley would go into the library. Just a few minutes more, Hilda thought. They were now both in the pantry. Mr. Ashley walked methodically over to where a small door above some shelves remained closed, and he opened it. He reached inside.

Meanwhile Hilda stood with her back to him, arranging a cocktail shaker and glasses and hors d'oeuvres on a silver tray.

And then Mr. Ashley raised a glass to his mouth and drank in three short gulps the two inches of straight whiskey that Hilda had poured for him tonight, as she had every night. She heard him finish, and knew he was wiping his mouth. Then she walked over to where he was, picked up the glass, took it to the sink, rinsed it out, and put it back on the shelf. And then she turned and faced him. Mr. Ashley spoke.

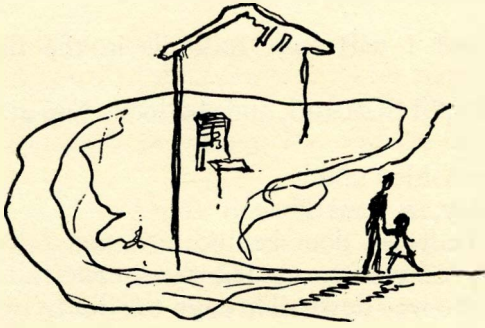
"I'm ready to see Mrs. Ashley now."

"In the library, Mr. Ashley," Hilda said.

"Yes, Hilda, in the library." He hesitated a moment and then spoke again. "Mrs. Ashley is also taking summer clothes with her, Hilda. She wants them packed separately."

"Yes, Mr. Ashley," Hilda said. "Packed separately."

And the cocktails were carried in.



FOR A WHILE

DALLAS WILLIAMS

OUTSIDE the window of Mrs. Larkin's store, the boy and girl stood with their noses pressed against the glass. Little circles of foggy mist appeared on the glass, and in the chill of the early November evening the children stuffed their hands deeper into shabby coat pockets. When the glass in front of their faces got too foggy, the boy withdrew one hand and rubbed the glass clear for both of them again. Both pairs of eager, round eyes were focused upon the contest of a basket on the rough wooden platform beyond the window.

"Jesus, what pups," said the boy.

"I wish they'd wiggle," said the girl, whose light, curly head reached not quite to her brother's shoulder.

"They're asleep."

"Ya don't s'pose they're dead, do ya, Joe?"

"Naw," Joe said. "Ya kin see 'em breathin' kinda quiet in their stummicks. Jesus, don't they look soft an' warm?"

The little girl nodded without lifting her gaze from the basket. "An' their eyes is just a couple o' raisins, squeezed tight. Kin they see yet, d'ya think?"

"Sure," said Joe. "They mus' be a month, at least. The mother dog ain't in there with 'em."

"Maybe she died gettin' 'em born," said the girl wisely. "Like ma with Jeff."

"Annie," said Joe, "you shouldn' talk about that, the same time with dogs."

The children huddled closer together. Inside the store toward the back, the light flickered off. A figure moved about in the dim interior.

"Guess Mrs. Larkin's gonna close up now," said Joe.

"That ain't Mrs. Larkin," said Annie, "it ain't fat enough to be Mrs. Larkin."

"Nobody else in there though," Joe said, squinting into the small room. "Wonder where she is."

"Prob'ly next door at the cafe," said Annie. "I seen her in there eatin' lots o' times. She eats an awful lot. That's why she's so fat."

"If I had pups like that, I wouldn't leave 'em," said Joe. "Maybe whoever that is in there wants to buy one."

Annie stared soulfully at the puppies, cuddled together. "How many are there, do you guess, Joe?"

He counted slowly. "Eight. What wouldn't ya give for just one, huh, Annie?"

"Aw, I don't want one so bad," said Annie. "But Jeff now, wouldn't he just love to hold one of 'em in bed with 'im?"

Joe reached his arm around Annie's shoulder. "Yer a good girl, Annie," he said softly. "Always thinkin' o' Jeff." Then he turned away from the window and stepped back, pulling her with him. "C'mon," he said. "It's almost dark. Pa'll be gettin' home pretty soon."

"Naw, he won't," said Annie. "He's always late now, cuz he stops at the barber's and comes home smellin' of hair tonic."

"That's whiskey," Joe said.

Annie stepped forward to the window again. "He said it was hair tonic. . . . Oh Joe, just look at 'em. Just look."

"I know," he said. "But we better go."

The door of the shop opened quietly. A man's voice, very low, came from inside. "You kids want to come in and look at the pups?"

Joe and Annie looked up and stared. A tall, grey-haired man had appeared in the doorway, and stood smiling down at them. His face was deeply lined, and the lines around his mouth drew a sad look into the face, even as it smiled. But his eyes were bright and gentle at the same time. Above them his eyebrows arched thin and uneven, as if they had been sprinkled with salt and pepper and not quite brushed off. They arched higher as he leaned down toward the children. "Well," he said gently, "aren't you coming in?"

"Naw," said Joe. "Thanks, mister, but we got no money. Couldn' buy a pup anyhow."

"Oh Joe." Annie gazed happily at the man, and then down at the puppies. "Joe, it wouldn' hurt to look."

The man held the door open. "That's right," he said. Annie started for the door.

Joe hesitated and puled her back. "Mrs. Larkin tole us not to be hanging' around her store," he said, scuffing his shoe on the sidewalk. "Tole us that one time we came in an' played with a couple of dogs she had in the window. Guess she don' want anybody around that don' have money to buy sump'm."

Annie stood on tiptoe and whispered into Joe's ear. He stared at the grey-haired man, and then into the store. "Ain't Mrs. Larkin around?" Joe asked.

"No," said the man. "She doesn't seem to be, just now."

"I'm glad," said Annie. "She's mean. Only people she's nice to is animals."

"Annie," said Joe severely.

"Well?" said the man, nodding toward the door.

They followed him into the store. Annie giggled softly and pointed out to Joe the funny way the man shuffled with one foot. "Looks like he's got stones in that shoe," she whispered.

Annie trembled and clutched Joe's arm as they stood, waiting and breathing the warm, animal smell of the room, as the man reached down into the bundle of soft little puppies in the basket.

"Look, the way he touches 'em," she whispered. "Like they was dandelion fuzz, an'd come apart if he shook 'em."

The man straightened up slowly and turned, holding a puppy in each hand. Solemnly he handed one to Joe, then turned to Annie. "Here," he said.

Annie bit her lip and blinked back the tears that sprang to her eyes. "I don' know," she stammered. "Maybe I shouldn'."

"Why, don't you want him?" asked the man.

Annie nodded vigorously. "I want 'im too much," she said. "An' he can't last."

"I know how you feel," the man said. "Most things don't last. And they're always what you want the most." He stared absently across the room and spoke as if she were not there at all. "The precious things—those are what you can't keep."

"A girl let me play with her doll once," said Annie. "But

then she took it back. It had real hair curls," she mused. "Only I didn't want it half 's much 's I want him." She looked at the puppy, hungrily again.

"Maybe you're right," said the man. "You don't have to take him. I just figured wrong."

"Oh no, I do want to hold him, just for a while," Annie cried reaching up her arms, as the man turned away.

"Just for a while," the man repeated softly. "Sometimes that's all there is—just a while."

"Be careful not to squeeze him," he said smiling down at her as she cradled the puppy in her cupped hand.

She held him against her cheek and listened, holding her breath, straining to feel the quick, faint beating of the heart.

Joe turned his puppy over and touched its tiny, round belly. The puppy squirmed awkwardly and waved his paws.

"Don't drop him, Joe," warned Annie.

"He won't." The man stood by watching and smiling. "Here, why don't you sit down over on those crates, so's you make a lap for 'em to lay in?" He led the way to a dim corner of the room and pulled out two wooden boxes. Joe and Annie sat down cautiously. For a long time they sat, stroking the puppies and looking up now and then at the man. He talked to them in his gentle, low voice, and said how lucky Joe was to have a little sister like Annie.

"He's an awful nice man, isn' he," said Annie, when he had walked to the back of the store and through the curtain that divided Mrs. Larkin's back room from the rest of the shop.

"But who is he?" Joe whispered.

"Let's ask 'im," Annie whispered back.

"Where'd he go?" said Joe.

Annie stood up and peered around the room. "I don't know. Joe, I bet he wants us to take the puppies. He was so nice an' all, an' now he's gone!"

"He'll be back, don't worry," Joe said. "But maybe we oughta put the pups back in the basket in case Mrs. Larkin comes back."

Annie bit her lip. "I want mine so bad, Joe. An' look, he likes me too. He's chewin' my little finger."

"We gotta put 'em back an' go," said Joe. He walked over to the basket in the window and set his puppy down with the others. He stood watching as they moved sleepily around, gathering his special one into the snug little group. "C'mon Annie," he said finally. "Put yours back now."

There was no answer.

"Annie," he called again. He ran back to the corner where the two crates stood. "Quit your hidin'," he said.

His voice echoed through the quiet room. From a wooden pen along the wall, a pair of dogs began to yip. Streetlights flickered on out in the street, and Joe's shadow loomed large on the curtain behind him.

"Annie," he shouted, "where are you?" The curtain billowed toward him, and he seized it and fumbled for the opening. A cold breeze streamed in from the open door at the back of the room. He stumbled toward the door and knocked into the corner of a table. In the darkness, something that sounded like a plate crashed to the floor at his feet. In the front of the shop, the overhead light flooded on. Joe blinked and steadied himself against the table as a sharp voice cut through the air.

"Who's back there?" Heavy footsteps sounded across the floor and the curtain was pushed back to accommodate Mrs. Larkin's bulky form. "Well," she thundered, "what're you doin' here?"

Joe looked up steadily but took a backward step. "I'm lookin' for Annie."

Mrs. Larkin glared at him. "A likely story," she said. Then after a rapid survey of the two room, "She doesn't seem to be here!"

"I know," said Joe. "The man took her away." He ducked toward the door, but Mrs. Larkin grabbed his arm. "Lemme go," he cried. "I gotta find her."

"Find her!" said Mrs. Larkin scornfully. "The man! A likely story! What were you two doin' in my shop anyway? I tole you I didn't want you hangin' around."

"We wouldn' have come in, but—"

"Don't you talk back to me."

"Lemme go!"

"You little vandals! Look what you done." Mrs. Larkin pointed to the broken plate on the floor.

"I didn' mean to," screamed Joe. "Lemme go find Annie."

"Not so fast," said Mrs. Larkin. "I got a feelin' there's some funny business goin' on here. That little brat sister o' yours probably run off with somethin' an' you was just about to."

"I'll just look around," said Mrs. Larkin. "You're not

goin' nowhere till I see there's nothing missin'." She pulled Joe after her through the curtain, and stared suspiciously around the room. "As I remembers, you an' your sister was pretty sweet on pups. Before I let you go, we'll just see if all my pups is still here."

* * * *

Annie stumbled through the darkness after the grey-haired man. His hand was large and warm around her small, cold one. It had been warm over her mouth as he lifted her up, back in the store, and she had been aware of his strong arms and warm, tobacco smell as he had carried her gently out into the darkness. He had carried her a long way before he put her down. He had talked to her in his low, gentle voice. "I'll take care of you," he had said. "And the puppy, we've got him right here." When he put her down, he had tucked the puppy carefully inside his jacket.

"It's good of you to get me the puppy," said Annie. "You knew I wanted him didn' you?"

"I knew," he said.

"But Joe," she had cried. "Joe's still back there. Let's go back and get Joe."

"No," said the man. "Let's just you and me walk along together for a little while. Joe'll find his way back."

"But he'll wonder where we are. Can't we go back and get him?"

"He'll understand," said the man.

"I hope so," said Annie. "But I guess it would be better to get the puppy home before he gets cold."

The man squeezed her hand and stared down at her eager, upturned face. "Damn it," he said slowly. "I *will* take you home."

"Joe'll probably still worry," Annie went on, "But oh, he'll be so nice and surprise when he sees us with the puppy." She moved closer to the man and touched his leg. "Why do you step harder on this foot than the other one?" she asked. "Do your shoes hurt?"

The man laughed. "I put rocks in one," he said.

"That's what I told Joe. Jesus, I hope he doesn' worry too much."

The man's eyes were even more gentle than she remembered when he looked down at her. "You worry more about your brother than about you, don't you?" he said.

"Oh, I guess he'll be alright," Annie said. "We don't live very far."

"Where *do* you live?" said the man.

"Don't you know?"

"How'd I know?" He rested his hand on her shoulder and fingered her hair as they walked along.

"You knew I wanted the puppy," said Annie. "And you knew Joe'd understand. I just thought you'd know about Jeff and that was why we were goin' home."

"Jeff?" asked the man.

"My little brother," explained Annie. "He's gotta stay in bed 'cuz he's sick. He's always been sick. That's who the puppy's for."

Suddenly the man tightened his arm around Annie's shoulder and pulled her into the shadow between two buildings. "What's the matter?" she said, and then his hand was over her mouth again. "Don't be scared," he whispered, stroking her hair. "Just stand quiet." They waited, standing together, shivering a little, until a figure passed by on the sidewalk, so close that Annie could have reached out and touched him. When the sound of footsteps had died away, the man whispered quietly, "You won't cry out, will you?"

Annie shook her head. "Who was that?" she asked.

"A policeman."

"But we haven't done anything," said Annie.

"I know," said the man, "but there's the pup. That doesn't look too good."

"Oh that's right." Annie held out her arms. "Let me hold 'im for a while," she said.

"No," said the man. "We might meet another policeman. You just lead on to Jeff."

They paused at a corner as a car moved slowly past. The man held up his arm so that it shielded his face. "Lights sort of bright—hard on the eyes," he explained. Annie nodded. They crossed to the opposite sidewalk.

"That way," said Annie. She pointed down the row of buildings that lined the narrow street. "We live up there. Over the second hand store. Is the puppy alright?"

"Sure," said the man. "Not even a wiggle out of him."

"Pa'll probably be mad," she said. "But when he sees how Jeff likes him, I guess it'll be alright."

"I don't want to get you in dutch," said the man. "How'll your Ma feel about it?"

"Ma's dead," said Annie.

They said nothing for half a block. Annie fixed her eyes

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"Sure," said the man. "Not even a wiggle out of him."

"Pa'll probably be mad," she said. "But when he sees how Jeff likes him, I guess it'll be alright."

"I don't want to get you in dutch," said the man. "How'll your Ma feel about it?"

"Ma's dead," said Annie.

They said nothing for half a block. Annie fixed her eyes

on the sidewalk. She watched the two shadows they made fly past them when they walked under the streetlights. She turned to look behind them once, just to make sure it was only their shadows, and it was. But the man probably wondered the same thing, because he turned and looked too.

"Y'know," said Annie at last, "I don't know your name."

"Why, that's right," he said. "You don't."

Annie wondered for a minute whether he was going to tell her. Then he said, "It's Jim Larkin."

"Larkin," repeated Annie. "Just like Mrs. Larkin in the store. Funny—you're not a bit like her. She's mean."

"Is she?" He passed his hand across his eyes. "I haven't seen her for quite a while."

"Was she mean before?" Annie asked.

"Not so mean," said Mr. Larkin. "Just—not quite happy. Let's talk about something else, Annie. You see, I remembered your name."

"Look, Mr. Larkin," said Annie carefully. "Look there's stars tonight. Sometimes there aren't no stars."

Mr. Larkin tilted back his head and looked. "Nice," he said. "They're not very far away tonight either."

"How far away are they?" said Annie.

"Oh, about as far away as people are from each other," said Mr. Larkin.

"That's not so far."

"Not always," said Mr. Larkin. "But it can be."

Annie tugged at his sleeve and stopped beside a darkened doorway. She pointed up at a window which glowed faintly two stories above. "That's Jeff up there," she said. "C'mon."

Mr. Larkin stepped back and shook his head. He stared hard at her.

"What is it you're lookin' at?" said Annie.

"One of the nearer stars," he said.

"But ain't you comin' in—with the puppy?"

Mr. Larkin reached into his jacket and handed her the puppy. "No," he said. "You go on up now, and take him to your little brother."

"But you've gotta come too," Annie said. "Please." She touched his hand. Suddenly Mr. Larkin bent and kissed her softly on the forehead.

"Goodbye," he said.

"Where are you goin'?" asked Annie.

"Not far," said Mr. Larkin. "You go along up now."

"I think I'll wait for Joe," said Annie. She smiled at Mr. Larkin, and he nodded and turned away. He started across the street and Annie watched for a long minute as she rocked the puppy against her chest.

* * * *

Inside Mrs. Larkin's store, the policeman glared back and forth from Joe to Mrs. Larkin. "Now just one of you talk at once," he shouted above their voices. "We're not gettin' anywhere with you both blabbin' together."

Mrs. Larkin thrust Joe in front of her with a violence that sent him almost sprawling to the floor. "He was trespassin'," she said angrily. "An' his sister made off with one of my pups. He's not leavin' this shop 'til I get that pup back."

"But Annie didn't steal the pup," screamed Joe. "I tell ya the ole man stole 'em both. They was both here til I turned my back—and then they was gone." His chin quivered and he blinked fiercely to keep back the tears. "Ya gotta believe me, mister."

"Don't you do it," declared Mrs. Larkin. Her fat chin wobbled with her intensity. "Him an' his sister are just a couple o' vandals. They're always hangin' around. They were just waitin' for the time when I was out. Prob'ly saw me goin' nex' door for a bite to eat, and just grabbed the chance."

"We did not," said Joe. "We wasn' coming in at all, excep' the ole man told us to. He said we could play with the pups—an' we—"

The policeman regarded him patiently. "What old man?"

"It was a tall man with grey hair an' sort of a limp when he walked," said Joe eagerly, thrilling to the policeman's belief. "He was real nice with the pups, an' good to us too, but he's taken Annie someplace, an'—"

"Oh," said Mrs. Larkin suddenly. "Are you sure he walked with a limp?"

"Yeah, I'm sure," said Joe. He looked at her and noticed that her face was no longer flushed, but very pale.

"Jim," she whispered. "It must have been Jim."

The policeman stared now. "Someone you know?"

"He was my husband," Mrs. Larkin said in a low voice. "He's been in the penitentiary for years. I didn't know he'd come back."

"What was he doin' time for?" demanded the policeman.

"You better go find 'em," said Mrs. Larkin. "Nothin'll happen to your sister," she told Joe. "Only you better go find her before they both get lost," she said to the policeman.

He hurried to the door. "You both stay here," he said. "I don't want to lose anyone else. I'll contact headquarters and we'll get 'em rounded up."

He slammed the door and Joe turned angrily to Mrs. Larkin. "I ain't gonna stay here with Annie out there. I gotta go out an' find her."

"He said you should stay," said Mrs. Larkin. "I don't too much care what you do." She sat down heavily on a bench and buried her face in her fat, wrinkled hands.

Joe watched in silence, shifting from one foot to the other. Then he said at last, "What was your husban' in jail for?"

"This," said Mrs. Larkin, looking up. "He got sent up ten years ago for kidnappin'."

"But why'd he do it?" asked Joe.

"Couldn't help himself, I guess." Mrs. Larkin stood up and walked over to the basket of pups. "Here, you can help me put these to bed in back." She picked up the basket and he followed her to the row of wooden pens along the back wall. "Jim liked my animals too," she went on. "But he loved kids."

"But you don't, do you?" said Joe.

"Mrs. Larkin bent over a pen and handed the puppies in gently. She ignored Joe's question, and spoke so quietly that he had to strain to hear. "I never had no kid," she said. "Sometimes when you can't have somethin', you go out an' take it." She looked back at Joe. "Like I thought you done with the pup." Joe nodded. Mrs. Larkin said, "Jim brought a child home once an' had 'er livin' with us, like she was our kid. He was jus' like a father to her. But the police said he'd kidnapped her, and they took 'im up."

Joe stared at her. "I'm sorry," he said. "I hope they don't put him back again—but I gotta go look for Annie anyway."

He ran to the back door, flung it open, and rushed out into the darkness. His feet carried him through the brick alley behind Mrs. Larkin's store, and out on the lighted street. He felt the cold rush of air to his lungs as he stopped on the corner and looked right and left. Except for one or two cars, the street was deserted. One car slowed to a stop at the cor-

ner. Joe shrank back as the front door opened. "Ride, sonny?" asked a man's voice. Joe turned toward home and ran faster than he had ever run in his life.

* * * *

When he reached his home doorway, he saw the small figure crouched on the step. "Annie," he panted, dropping down beside her. "Annie, are you all right?" He grabbed her by the shoulder.

"Be careful of the puppy," said Annie. "Course I'm all right. What took you so long getting here?"

"Annie, where's that ole man?"

"Mr. Larkin?" She shook her head sadly. "He went away. I tried to get 'im to stay, but he wouldn't."

"Where'd he go?"

"I don' know. He crossed the street, and then—I don' know. But Joe—lookit, he left us the puppy."

"We gotta take it back," said Joe firmly.

"Take it back?" Annie stared incredulously. "Not give it to Jeff? You're crazy. Mr. Larkin give it to me."

"C'mon," said Joe. "We gotta. It wasn't his. An' it ain't ours. C'mon."

"Couldn' we jus' keep it fer tonight?" wailed Annie.

"No," Joe said. He stood up and pulled Annie up by the arm. "Want me to hold 'im inside my coat?"

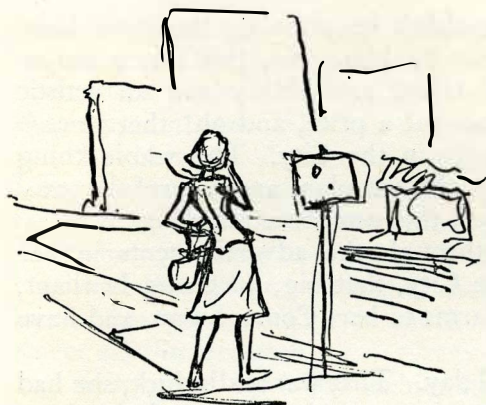
"I'd kinda like to hold 'im on the way back," said Annie. "I won't let 'im get cold." She tucked her thin coat up around the puppy. "I still don't see why we can't keep 'im, Joe."

"You kep' him for a little while," said Joe, as they walked slowly down the street.

"I almost wish we hadn't at all," Annie said. "It's harder when you've had something and then—"

"Yeah," said Joe. "But at least Jeff didn' know. That's lucky."

"An' Mr. Larkin doesn't know," said Annie. "He thinks we're gonna keep 'im. I'm glad he doesn't know."



SO CHIC AND SO SMART

D. E.

SUSAN had tried so hard, so very hard, to decide. *Really* she had. After all, it would take one sixth of her weekly salary—imagine that!—a whole day's work, if you wanted to look at it that way. She could ill afford it, that whole one sixth of a week's wage. Not on what they paid her.

But after all, it had to be done in the right way. You just don't go out and have your lovely, long, dark curls cut off by some butcher, some *raving* fool who'd be better off clipping horses or dogs or something. At least, not *her* curls. Not the soft, sweeping hair that had taken so long to grow and then so much longer to learn how to manage. It fell to her shoulders with such grace—yes, that was it—such grace! Even though it was a bother to put all of it up at night, and then to wash it so often, she didn't care. It was worth it. Everyone said she had such lovely hair.

But *really*! She had heard all of this talk too often, all this business about the short hair-do, the cute bob. It was *so* chic, so smart, so definitely new! All of the cute models wore their hair short, the fashion magazines showed nothing else. All the really up-to-date women were wearing it. Just look at any magazine. Look at any paper. Well, she'd show them! She'd let them see that Susan wasn't behind the times. Not Susan. Long hair, indeed!

But then again, it couldn't be done by the local hairdresser. Of all people, not by him. No, this was a major operation. This involved talent and ability and an artistic sense, and these can be had—at a price, and oh! that price—but these can be found only in the City. The whole thing really involved a well thought out plan, and a carefully executed trip to the City. Yes, this was something Big!

And as she flipped through the advertisements in her magazine she felt that the City, that big, gorgeous, brilliant, artistic City, held out her arms to her: Come, Susan, and have your hair cut.

She picked a beautiful day. That was really luck, she had to admit it, but nevertheless it was a sign. One of *the* signs. The thing had been *terribly* hard to decide, but the signs were with her. She was happy to come up out of the station, to stand on the busy sidewalk, beside the rumbling traffic, and to take a good, big, deep breath and to realize that the world was behind her. If this thing had to be done, then it was best that everyone was with her. And on such a gorgeous day, could they be anything else *but* with her?

She had settled on a hairdresser a long way from the station. And she had to walk. No taxi, no buses, not even the subway. No, that was part of the well thought out plan. There will be no luxuries, and even the diet must be changed—the money was going for something really quite necessary. She was convinced of that now, now that the decision had been made. Yes, it was really *quite* necessary. But it meant giving up a lot, especially rearranging the budget. Well, a taxi fee would be a terrible expense. Not so much as a bus or the subway, no. But that was as good a place to start as any.

So she held her head high, and she walked.

The hairdresser was on the *best* of the Avenues, surrounded by the very best stores, and tucked in between two of the smartest shops in the City. Susan admired the sign which advertised the place, the really very different way his name was swished across the sign, and at such an angle, and with such a flourish! She had picked well. She knew it. Even the windows were decorated with a decor impossible to find anywhere else—such taste, and beauty, and—and—refinement. Oh, this was it, and *so* right!

She was early for the appointment. But she was a little breathless and a little tired from her walk. And she was happy to sit in one of the overstuffed chairs and to rest herself. Any-

way, she luxuriated—simply luxuriated—in that heavenly atmosphere. Things were done so well, so nicely. She must make some comment of the fact to that sweet little thing at the reception desk. She had a short hair-do, of course.

But here—! And he seems like a rather nice sort of man. Long, sensitive fingers. Definitely the artistic type. It's rather too bad he's not *the* man, but then everyone in the place must know precisely how the work should be done.

And there'll be no reading during this hour. No magazines. No papers. This is much too important. This deserves all the attention.

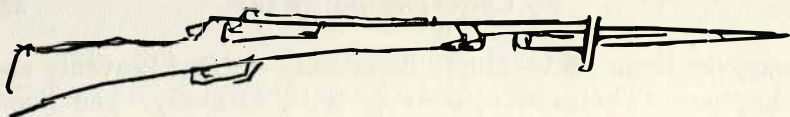
Susan left the shop exhilarated, thrilled, proud, and happy. It *was* a shock. Yes, there was no getting away from it. It *really* was a shock. She hadn't quite believed it when they first gave her a mirror. It had—well—it had *done* something to her. Her cheek bones looked a bit high, and her neck *was* rather thin. But it felt so light, so spring-like, so really free! And it was, she had to admit, a wonderful job. So like the models and the beautiful women. Oh, perfect! Perfect!

She held her head high, even higher, and she walked. She was quite sure that the smiles were slightly broader, and the glances came more often as she walked back to the station. She was sure of it when she bought the evening paper at the newsstand. The man had looked at her *most* kindly, and his eyes might have twinkled.

She settled herself on the train. And for a long while she was lost in the beauty of what she saw from her window, of what she ordinarily thought was ugly in the scenes that were speeding by. And she was pleased to catch her own reflection in the window occasionally.

At last she flipped open the pages of the paper. Her hands suddenly and automatically went to the back of her head, and she gazed a little "Oh!"

For she had read: "Because of the new spring styles, the short hair-do is definitely on the way out. The shingle and the cute bob are giving place again to long and glamorous curls. Women, probably because of their men, are no longer enthusiastic about"



THE WAY OUT

A One-Act Play

By GEORGE H. LYMBURN

The curtain rises.

Slowly dim background lights fade in to reveal the silhouette of a boxcar. The side nearest the audience has been taken away to show the dark, oppressive interior. Some German shouts are heard in the background. The boxcar door slides open and the light spills into the car. A German guard enters and investigates the cars' contents. Satisfied it is empty and secure, he shouts to the outside. Soon, some American Prisoners of War start climbing into the car.

They are weary men, beaten men. They remind you of a defeated boxer on his way back to his dressing room after a long fight and a humiliating defeat. Two of the prisoners helped a third, who has a foot wound, into the car. Accompanied by the German guard's gestures and shouts of direction, they quietly settle in one end of the car. Another German, an officer, enters the car.

Guard: Achtung!

The men lift themselves into a tired position of attention. The wounded man does not move. The guard crosses over to him.

Guard (at the wounded man): Achtung!

Corporal: What's the matter, can't you see he's wounded!

The answer to the Corporal is a backhand slap across the eyes. He falls back, stunned. The guard drags and lifts the wounded man into a position of attention. He then steps back, counts the men, does an about face and reports . . .

Guard: 8 Mann sind hier, Herr Leutnant.

Lt. (Returns the salute and makes a notation in his book):
Wir gehen zu Wagen 32 und dann werden sie hier Rapport estatten.

Guard: Zu befehlt, Herr Leutnant

The Germans leave, sliding the door closed behind them. The men slump back to their sitting positions. As they become accustomed to the darkness and their new environment they begin talking.

1st PVT.: What's that smell in here?

2nd PVT.: I dunno.

TENNESSEE: That's cowflops! Where you boys been brought up?

FOOTSIE (the wounded man): You'd think they'd clean these cars out before they put us on.

3rd PXT.: I guess it doesn't make any difference to them what they do with us.

SERGEANT: I don't give a damn what they do with us either, just as long as we get good and far from the lines.

SLIM: Had enough, Sarge? (The Sergeant doesn't answer but crosses to the other side of the boxcar. The men look at him curiously.)

CORPORAL: Well, I don't plan to spend the rest of this war just gaazin' at some barbed wire.

SLIM: Tough luck, what can you do about it? As far as we're concerned, the war is over.

FOOTSIE (After a pause): I'll be glad when we get rolling.

SLIM: Yeah!

3rd PVT.: I wonder where we're going?

TENNESSEE: I wish they'd take us where they took the last load. I can't think of a better way of spending the war than grazin' out on some nice green field with some cattle.

SLIM: You got the teeth for it.

TENNESSEE: I guess you think you're a funny one, huh?

SERGEANT: Knock it off. Don't you guys ever get sick of fightin'?

SLIM: Habit, Sarge. I guess we can all think of a better way to finish out the war. I'm sorta glad I'm out of it for awhile. At least I know I won't be gettin' my can shot off.

CORPORAL: What makes your can so precious to you?

SLIM: I got the little woman waitin' for me back home, Corporal, and when I get there I want to be in one piece.

SLIM (Changing the subject, to Footsie): How's your foot?

FOOTSIE: O. K. I guess.

3rd PVT.: Shrapnel?

FOOTSIE: Yeah. . . . I wish we'd get started.

1st PVT.: They're still loading.

SERGEANT: They sure got a bunch of us . . . after the lines, it seems so quiet here, doesn't it?

TENNESSEE: Too quiet, as far as I'm concerned.

SERGEANT: You mean you liked the fighting?

TENNESSEE: Compared to bein' here, I was havin' a swell time.

CORPORAL: Like to get back in the scrap?

TENNESSEE: Sure. (The Corporal starts pacing up and down intent on forming his thoughts.)

SERGEANT: Better sit down, Corporal, those guards will be back in a minute.

CORPORAL: Suppose I sit down when they get here!

SLIM: Yeah! Why don't you sit down Corporal? You make me nervous . . . it's bad enough . . .

CORPORAL: Shut up!

SLIM: Who you tellin' . . .

CORPORAL: You . . . Shut up! (No one speaks, or moves, so powerful is the Corporal's intensity. He looks slowly and directly at every man in the group.) I think we can get out of here. (They all look alert, interested, but each with his own reaction about the possibility or desirability of escaping.)

TENNESSEE: You think we can make it?

CORPORAL: Yeah, I noticed how they were loading when we came down here. The cars ahead have about twenty guys and four guards. We're at the tail end of the line. There's nothin' in back of us but a caboose. Facin' this door is the yard but the lights ain't too bright back here 'cause we're at the tail end of the line. On this other side is nothin' but woods. We can grab these guards and roll under the car and take off through the woods.

SLIM: Well, I don't know.

CORPORAL: Well I do!

SARGE: Suppose some of us don't want to go, Corporal?

CORPORAL: Who, for instance?

SERGEANT: Listen, Corporal, we're out of it now. Maybe it's not the best deal in the world, but at least we'll be getting back home when this war is over. Escaping to our lines just means more action . . . more killing.

CORPORAL: If goin' back means killin' guys like this guard who yanked him up (points to Footsie) and belted me, then I'm for getting out . . . anybody else? (No one moves.)

TENNESSEE (Suddenly): I'm with you. You just tickle the hell out of me, Corporal.

CORPORAL: O. K., Kentucky.

TENNESSEE: Tennessee.

CORPORAL (Grinning): Tennessee, then . . . well?

FOOTSIE: I'd go with you but I got this foot and . . .

CORPORAL: You walked down here, didn't you?

FOOTSIE: Yeah, but—

CORPORAL: Then you can hike it back to our lines. . . .

(The door slices open and two German guards are seen outside.) Listen, I ain't goin' to argue with you . . .

1st PVT.: Nix! Nix!

CORPORAL (Speaking lower): I ain't going to argue with you bastards. . . . I'm gettin' out.

1st PVT.: Nix! (German conversation goes on outside the door for awhile. During the conversation the following discussion takes place among the men.)

3rd PVT.: Do you think he heard what we said?

FOOTSIE: Naw, he can't understand English.

CORPORAL: How do you know?

TENNESSEE: Yeah, that's right!

CORPORAL: We've got to find out.

3rd PVT.: How?

TENNESSEE: Yeah, yeah, great! (Finally, one German guard leaves. The other one enters the car, sits down on a box by the door and places his bayoneted rifle across his lap.)

SLIM (After the guard is settled): Sprekin sie *English*? (The guard looks at Slim but makes no sign of understanding.)

SLIM (Whispering): We've got to find out if he heard us makin' plans 'cause if he did he'll just sit there until we try somethin' then cut us down.

1st PVT.: We'd better not take the chance of trying anything.

2nd PVT.: No, 'cause all these guards must speak English.

CORPORAL: If they were that smart they'd be doin' somthin' else. He didn't understand us.

SLIM: How do you know? (The Corporal, challenged, stares at Slim. He then turns to the guard and smiles at him. In a very pleasant tone as if he were complimenting the guard he says:)

CORPORAL: How I'd like to drive my fist right into your ugly face.

GUARD (Grinning back): Yah, yah!

SLIM: My God, Corporal, what a chance!

2nd PVT.: He doesn't know our plans, we're sure of that.
(Corporal lights cigarette. Guard indicates he wants one. Corporal shows only three left and puts them away. Guard threatens. Corporal goes over to give him pack then quickly knocks the rifle away and gets a strangle hold on the guard. They struggle to the floor of the car. After a moment, the guard ceases to struggle.)

SERGEANT: O. K. He's out. . . . I said he's out. (The Corporal keeps the hold on the inert figure.)

FOOTSIE: Jesus Christ!

2nd PVT.: He's really out!

CORPORAL (Releases his grip and rises): I ain't goin' to have this little bastard come to and make a mess of our plans. Fine chance we'd have if he recovered before the train pulled out.

SERGEANT: But the other guard's coming back. He'll find us gone and set the alarm.

CORPORAL: How do you know he's coming back?

SERGEANT (After a moment's hesitation): My folks were German. I know just a bit of it. He said he was going for coffee and would return in ten minutes.

TENNESSEE: We won't get a hundred yards from here if they find this mess.

FOOTSIE: And they'll string us up when they find us. Our only hope was to have the train pull out without them knowing about us.

3rd PVT.: What now, Corporal?

CORPORAL: We'll take care of that other Kraut-head too. Help me get this coat off him. (The 3rd Pvt. helps the Corporal remove the guard's coat. The other men's attention goes to the Sergeant.)

TENNESSEE: German, huh?

SERGEANT: Yes.

SLIM: How does it feel to be fighting here?

SERGEANT (Speaking very simply): It doesn't make sense. None of it makes sense. You and I are fighting guys who, in a few years might have been . . . well, our neighbors. I moved to America when I was three. If I hadn't, I might have met and killed some of you, or you me. My third day in combat I found my cousin, dead, in a field. We used to trade stamps, American for German

before the war. . . . He always wanted to come to America. I looked at him and got sick, sick to my stomach. All I wanted to do was have the war end and forget about everything. (The group remains silent.)

CORPORAL (Finishing the removal of the guard's coat): Now ain't that one sad story. (He throws the coat at the Sergeant.) You get in this outfit, Sergeant, just in case there's a little German chatter before he gets in the car.

SERGEANT: Sort of giving orders, aren't you, Corporal?

1st PVT: He's coming back! The guard with the coffee is coming back!

CORPORAL: O.K. Sergeant, you give the orders. (The Sergeant remains motionless—then hastily puts on the coat. He puts the German cap on, sits down on the box by the door, and places the rifle across his legs. The Corporal hides behind the door, while the rest of the men sit on the other side of the boxcar and try to appear casual. The second guard returns and puts coffee on the floor, and, while talking, climbs into the car. He realizes the man is not the guard, and is about to shout warning when Corporal grabs him. The guard is powerful and threatens to shake loose.)

CORPORAL (To Sergeant who has bayoneted rifle): Stick him . . . *STICK HIM!* (The Sergeant raises his rifle but cannot thrust. The guard digs his elbows into the Corporal's stomach and frees himself. He turns on the Corporal and starts to draw his pistol. Then, as the Sergeant still does not move, Tennessee realizes the situation and grabs the rifle out of the Sergeant's hands and slams the guard on the back of the head with the rifle butt—then bayonets him, twice, as he falls. The Corporal now stares at the Sergeant, who has proved powerless to kill even when all their lives were at stake. He speaks quietly, intensely, as if unloading his complete fury to the entire German race.)

CORPORAL: Well you yellow bastard . . . you gutless yellow German bastard. (The Sergeant grabs the gun back from Tennessee and holds it, threateningly, at the Corporal. The Corporal walks up till the tip of the bayonet is pressing into him.) I've seen you guys wearing stripes or bars, fightin' with us or against us, and you're all the same. No guts, no God-damn guts at all. (He stays against the bayonet a moment before he stops speak-

ing then, as the Sergeant does not move, he slaps the rifle away, it clatters to the floor.)

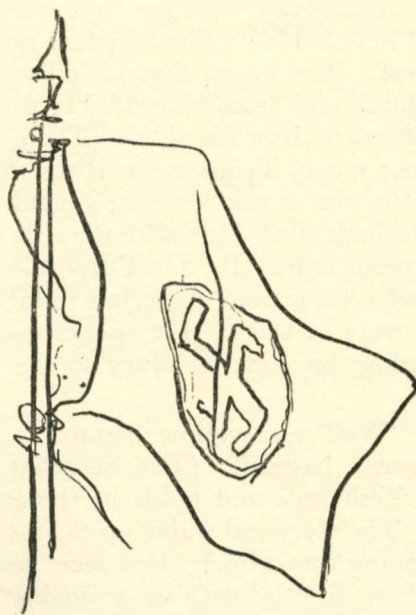
FOOTSIE: They're gettin' ready to shove off.

SLIM: It's all clear.

CORPORAL: O. K. Quiet now . . . Let's go.

One by one they start out. The Sergeant slowly removes the guard's uniform and puts on his own. His eyes catch the stripes on his sleeve and he stares at them. His body stiffens and with his face filled with self-reproach and fury, he rips the stripes off. Then his arms fall loosely to his sides, a moment later the stripes slip from his fingers to the floor of the car. He starts out. Instead of moving like a man who has been liberated, he moves with the deliberate slowness of a man going to his execution—through the door of freedom.

The lights fade.





THE ARTISTIC TOUCH

DAVID ESTES

I WENT to the Flemming Galleries that day to see Philip England's one-man show. I didn't know him personally but a number of my friends did, and the show had been recommended to me. The critics had given it, in general, good reviews, but none of them had neglected to remark on the vast difference between England's earlier paintings and those he'd done recently. It was pretty well agreed between them that his work had fallen off, but in deference to the artist it was suggested that his war experience had caused a change in technique and style, and it was hoped that he'd find his way back to that originality which had marked him, in his early years, as a promising young artist. I wanted to judge for myself.

I knew Victor Flemming fairly well. He had secured an original Monet for me and also a small portrait by Sargent that was one of my prize possessions. I also knew he was one of the few agents who was willing to encourage unknown talent. When he gave me my program I asked him about the show. He shrugged his shoulder slightly and signified neither dissatisfaction nor enthusiasm, but showed me into the gallery.

The pictures were hung without regard to the order in which they'd been painted, but it didn't take me long to discover the critics' point. The paintings which England had done before the war showed a vast perception and a brilliant use of color. His design was good, balanced nicely, and I couldn't help but admire his boldness. He could draw well. And it was this that saved his recent pictures from being mediocre. They were drab in comparison, strangely out of balance, and it seemed to me that they'd been done without any interest at all, certainly without the enthusiasm and approach of his early paintings. It was a difference which even an untutored eye couldn't miss. Fortunately, not many of the recent ones had been included in the show.

I was standing in front of a still life, one of the later pictures, trying to figure out just what it was that had caused so great a change, when a voice behind me asked, "Don't you like it?"

I turned and faced a middle aged man. He was tall, rather thin, and I noticed quickly how deep his eyes were set in their sockets. It gave him an odd appearance of intense concentration. He was holding a program.

"No," I answered, "not as well as some of the others."

"Don't you think," he asked, "that his earlier paintings were better?"

I had to admit that I did.

"Then you agree with the critics," he said. "They weren't at all pleased with his recent work."

There was a note of pomposity in his voice that somehow I didn't like, but he seemed to want to discuss the paintings, so I offered, "Apparently he suffered quite a bit during the war."

"No," he said quickly, "that's a point that the critics missed completely. They couldn't know, of course, and I can't blame them for surmising as much. But they were quite wrong."

"Oh?" I said.

"Yes," he went on unconcerned. "As a matter of fact, Philip England was considerably strengthened by the war. He's a young man of courage and daring, with a healthy appetite for knowledge and excitement. And being a soldier helped him grow." And then he paused. "No," he finally said, "no, it wasn't the war."

I didn't like the arrogance in the man's voice and in his

manner. However, I was curious about what he'd said. I didn't reply, so he continued.

"Just after his discharge," he told me. "Philip England made the mistake of falling in love. And because of his temperament he fell wholly and very deeply in love. He painted little then, but instead gave himself over completely to being in love. He was married after a whirlwind courtship and settled happily in a small studio apartment." The man was silent for a moment and then continued. "Not long after they were married it became apparent to him that his wife had been in love before. She told him about it, and at first they laughed and joked about it together. She, for one, was happy to talk about her first romance, and he was glad to listen—to know his wife better. They made light of it, and it was a joke between them. But she continued to talk about it. She made one reference after another to it. When first he was irritated with her it was only because the subject had become something of a bore to him. He wasn't jealous. He was simply tired of her reference and occasional comparison. But that didn't stop her. And in time he came to believe that nothing could." The man glanced down at his program as if he were suddenly embarrassed by the thought of being too personal on such short acquaintance. But soon he looked up at me again. "He got the idea that the love she had known was greater than any they could have together, and that no amount of patience or understanding or love of his own could possibly bring her the happiness she had told him about. He became obsessed with the thought of his own inadequacies, and it didn't take her long to realize the cause of that obsession. Which gave her almost complete domination over him. She could throw him into a fit of introspection with the simple mention of her first love." The man stopped talking, and then he threw up his hands in a gesture of impatience. "His painting shows the result. He couldn't concentrate on his work. In fact, he had no interest in it. He was concerned with nothing but the apparently insoluble enigma of an affair with which he had nothing to do."

And then just as abruptly as he'd started the conversation, the man changed it. "I do like his design," he said, moving from me to look at one of the early paintings, "and the man can certainly draw well."

I agreed with him, and soon we fell into a technical discussion of Philip England's art. And although I was still

slightly annoyed by the fellow's lofty air, I was frankly impressed by his knowledge of painting. We went over a number of the early pictures in detail, and he pointed out what he considered errors of omission; but at the same time he was hearty in his approval of England's style. I enjoyed the conversation, and was sorry when he looked at his watch and told me he had to go.

"Oh, here's my card," he said in parting. And then, "I've enjoyed meeting you very much." With that we shook hands, and he was gone.

I glanced at the name on the card. It meant nothing to me and I slipped it into my coat pocket.

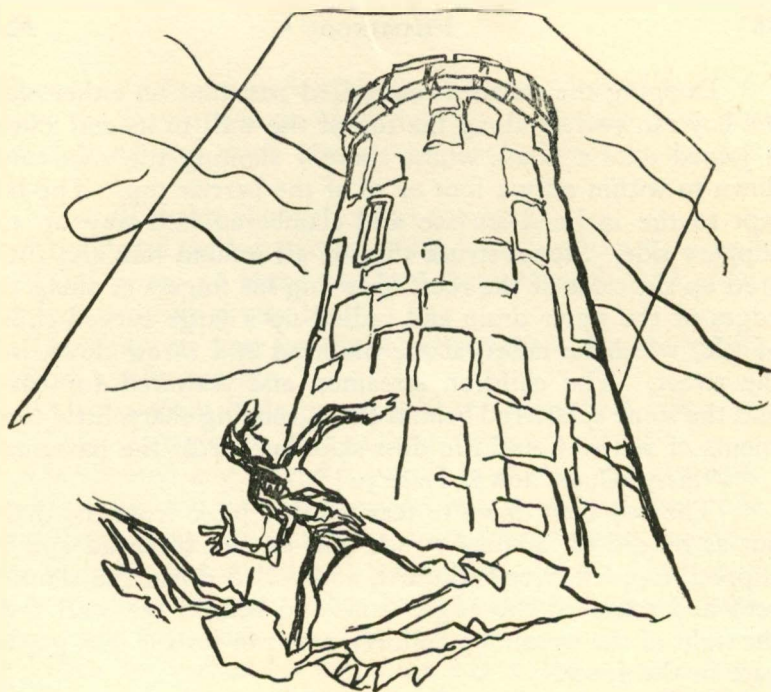
Later that evening I told one of my friends that I'd seen the England show and that I was pleased with it. And also, that I agreed with the critics. I hadn't thought of my acquaintance of the afternoon until that moment, but I found his card in my pocket.

"I met an interesting fellow there," I told my friend. "He had a different slant on the change in Philip England. His name," and I read from the card, "was Stanley W. Porter."

"Oh, surely," my knowing friend smiled, "Stan Porter. He's the fellow who had such a tragic affair with Vicki Benson."

"And who," I had to ask, "is Vicki Benson?"

"Why, don't you know?" my friend asked with surprise. "She married Philip England."



THE TOWER

THOMAS MONROE

THE boy was lying flat on his back atop the high garden wall watching sea gulls which flew in across the city from the ocean in the bright sky above his perch. The smooth sun-warmed tile beneath him felt wonderfully like warm flesh against his back skin and he was lying there quite absorbed in pleasant contemplation, when the first rock struck. It hit the wall with a hard sound, right below the spot where he was lying, and then, spent, it fell to the sidewalk like a dead thing. The boy was immediately on his feet, standing easily and confidently on the narrow footing. A second rock flew past him and dropped in an arc to the garden beyond.

Moving toward him in the street below were a group of children who threw rocks and shouted as they came.

"Get him! Get him!" they screamed.

"Come on down and fight, yellow-belly."

"Whattsamatter, you scared of something?"

"Get him Get him! . . . Kill him!"

Dodging the missiles that sailed past him on either side, the boy ran swiftly along the top of the wall to its end where it joined onto a house whose sharply slanting tile roof came down to within only a foot or so of the barrier top. The boy leapt to the inclined surface and clambered half-way up the slippery side. Stones struck the tile all around him and slithered up the sides of the roof. He dug his fingers in along the edges of the water drain and pulled up a large curved chunk of tile, which he raised above his head and threw down into the street. The children screamed and scattered for cover and the stone splattered behind them, sending sharp little fragments of red rock and tile dust skidding across the pavement.

"Sissy! Come down! Dare'ya!"

The boy bent down to tear another piece from the drain, but as he did so, a stone struck him on the forehead and he slipped, toppled over backward, and rolled down the slanting roof and went off the edge, vanishing behind the wall from the sight of the screaming children who ran for the iron garden gate in the fence.

Falling sidewise, the boy struck the branch of a tree which hit him with a bright burst of pain but served to twist him in mid-air and drop him feet first to the grass below. As he hit, the garden gate flew open and the others rushed at him. The boy got to his feet and for a brief instant stood half crouched, looking about the garden. He saw there was a chance to run, but instead of running he charged headlong at his tormentors.

The boy caught the first attacker by the neck and threw him savagely against the wall, whirled and battered another with his fists as the whole pack swarmed over him. He struggled through the surge of bodies to the gate, swinging wildly and fiercely at anyone he could reach, trying to inflict as much damage as possible before they dragged him down. He fell with all of them piling on top and the knot of struggling figures spilled out through the gate onto the sidewalk. The boy felt himself being ground against the harsh concrete, the skin being scraped from his face and arms. With a desperate helpless cry he tried to strike back but the weight of the pressing bodies kept him spread-eagled on the ground while blows were rained on him, their force impaired only by the fact that his attackers were getting in each other's way. Then from somewhere he heard a voice yelling,

"Hey, get off him there."

There was a sudden scrambling and the boy was free,

lying on the sunlit sidewalk in the fresh air, looking up wonderingly at the person who stood above him. This man wore battered clothing and there was a conspicuous bulge in his coat pocket.

"You all right, Sonny?" asked the man.

"Yes," said the boy getting to his feet, "and thanks a lot."

"You better go home and get them hurts looked after. Your face is cut up pretty bad."

The children were up the street shouting obscene insults . . . from a safe distance.

"A-a-a-a them little pups", said the man, "all piling on one. They ain't got no guts. G'wan, g'wan, beat it!"

He shouted and waved his arms in the air and the children hurriedly ran on and vanished into a wooded lot. The man walked on up to the lot, sat down under a tree, pulled a bottle from his pocket and took a long deep drink. He looked back down the street, but the boy he had helped was gone, probably slipping away into one of the yards.

When he reached his home the boy scaled a green ivied wall, jumped catlike to the branch of a tree on the other side and scrambled down the mossy trunk to a vast shaded yard. He made his way to the garden water spigot, peeled off his shirt, filled a pail with water, and began to wash the blood from his face.

"Corrin, you're hurt!"

The boy looked up sharply at the sound of the voice, trailing blood-darkened water down his chest and back. A slight girl stood there in the garden, a girl with enormous brown eyes and soft brown hair that hung half way down her back.

"You were fighting again, weren't you?" she asked, but she did not say it as if fighting were the greatest sin in the world, the way some people might.

"Yes," said Corrin, "I had a chance to run, but I didn't. I'd rather fight them." He threw the water out of the pail savagely so that it sloshed over a wide area of grass and as he started off through the yard, said, "Come on and help me with the animals." The girl followed him happily through tunnels formed by masses of flowering shrubs, past places where butterflies skipped in graceful arcs above fountains that tinkled in the shade, to the far end of the garden, where a row of cages were set out in a neat row. The cages contained animals of various sorts — frogs, snakes, and turtles, and there was an opossum which Corrin had caught one night in the yard. The

one lone cage high on the wall held a great white owl which flew out and alighted on Corrin's shoulder when the boy opened the door.

Corrin knelt down beside one of the pens and the girl crouched behind him watching him take a little emerald colored garden snake from the enclosure and letting it slide playfully through his fingers.

"Here, hold him while I clean the cage," Corrin said, and then glanced quickly at the girl, "you aren't afraid of him, are you?"

"I'm not afraid of snakes," said the girl and she took it from him holding it gently but firmly in her hand while Corrin cleaned out the cage and changed the dish of water that sat in the bottom of it.

"I was watching the tower," said the girl.

Corrin glanced quickly at her again. "What did you see?" he asked eagerly.

The word "tower" had reminded him of something that had been troubling him with vague insistence all that day.

He had had a nightmare the night before, a strange thing in which he had been walking up a twisting staircase inside a tower. The staircase ended above him in complete darkness and it seemed that there was something up there stirring the black as if it were water. He had been afraid to go on up the stairs and discover what lay beyond when he suddenly became afraid and turned and fled down the staircase. But the place had been poured full of an invisible fluid like mercury, in which he could not move his limbs with any speed. In desperation he threw himself against the wall of the tower, smashed through the rotten wood and out into space. Below, ground and trees and street came rushing up to meet him.

The reality of this nightmare was such, that despite the fact that this same dream had been haunting him for weeks, he now awakened with a sweat that was actually cold pouring off him.

"There were lots of dragonflies around the tower," said the girl.

"Any birds?" he asked.

"No, no birds. There's never any birds up there, Corrin."

The boy did not say anything.

"Corrin, what do you watch that old tower for all the time?"

"I really don't know."

"Corrin, you know you can be awfully queer at times."

"I suppose I can," he snapped.

"I'm sorry, it's just that I don't see why you like to spend so much time watching a tower."

"Maybe I like towers."

"Well, you don't have to get mad about it. If you're going to be so sticky you can take your snake back and I'll go home."

"No, wait!" Corrin was laughing.

"Are you making fun of me?" the girl demanded angrily.

"Yes." Corrin laughed and mimicked, "you can take your snake back and I'll go home." Before the girl had time to make a return, Corrin had the snake and was letting it slip away through the grass. He lay back on the ground and watched the owl making short circling flights in the trees above his head. He had found that owl after a particularly vicious storm, half grown and injured and he had raised it himself.

The girl eyed Corrin coldly, finally said with the air of one picking faults, "You didn't do a very good job washing yourself. You're still covered with blood."

Corrin didn't answer. Instead he pulled a small leather covered book from his pocket and became very absorbed in it. On the cover, four words were stamped in gold . . . "Fleurs du Mal. Beaudelaire." The girl looked over his shoulder at it.

"What's that?" she asked.

"Poetry."

"I can't read it."

"Naturally. It's in French."

"Can you understand French?"

"I'd be pretty stupid to read this if I couldn't."

Corrin looked at her sideways. "I'd better not, I don't think you'd appreciate it."

"Thanks mister high and mighty. What do you want to read a book like that for, anyway? A book in French."

"This is a friend."

"A friend?"

"Sure. Every book in the house is a friend to me."

"Do you make friends out of books?"

"All the time."

"No wonder the kids around here think you're nuts."

"The hell with the kids around here. I'd rather make friends with books than make friends with them."

Afterwards, when the girl had gone and Corrin had re-

turned his pets to their enclosures, he went inside the house that was half hidden by the garden foliage. His step-father was waiting for him and, after one look at Corrin, his voice rocked the house.

"Good Lord! Look at you! Your face all cut up and your clothes torn. You've been fighting again, haven't you? Get upstairs and change. Dinner's on the table and it's getting cold. And for this, you don't get to go out tonight."

Corrin went up the stairs past the ugly stone god which sat in a niche on the first landing and past the great stained glass window that spread an aura of candy-colored light on the second landing. These were relics of his father, his real father, a man who loved to travel to far places, and who had built this house to contain the accumulated treasures of a decade's wanderings. Another memento of his father's was the great spice scented chest that sat under the window of Corrin's room. The boy went to it immediately, and after taking his air rifle off the top (the same weapon he used to shoot at the children when they came to steal his animals), he opened the lid and took out a pair of binoculars.

He rolled up the window which looked out over an expansive view; the hill terraced with gardens slanting sharply down to the grey jumble of the city below, and across the smoky valley another hill rising from the muck of tenements and factories. Corrin trained his glasses on this hill, on a particular tower that stood near the top and reared its dark silhouette against the sky.

The girl was right. There were no birds about this tower. About all the other spires on the hill, and on the steeples and high buildings everywhere throughout the city, there were flocks of pigeons and squabbling starlings, smearing the dark wood and masonry with their excrements. Around this particular tower there were no birds. There was no life at all except dragonflies that danced and flitted about in the air and looked like sparkling gems when the sunlight glistened on their wings. Aside from this, the place seemed to be imbedded in liquid stillness.

At night, when the other steeples of the city poured forth hordes of bats, there was no life by this structure, save perhaps a pair of lunar moths that drifted past the tower like patches of light.

Once long ago his father had pointed this tower out to Corrin. He had been intrigued by the place, which from its

vantage point on the hill seemed to hold dominion over the entire city. When his father left, Corrin became absorbed in studying the tower. He watched it carefully at all times of day and he came to know its features as well as he knew the physical appearance of his own body; as he did so, he became aware of its peculiarities; the uncanny stillness, evident even from the range Corrin surveyed it from, and the lack of familiar life. The tower became an important factor in Corrin's life.

From downstairs his step-father's voice thundered.

"Get the hell down here to dinner!"

Corrin slowly rolled down the window and left the room.

That night, when Corrin went to bed, a mist was slipping in from the ocean spreading its gurgling tentacles through the city streets and submerging everything in a sea of pale murk. As he lay in bed Corrin could hear the far-off bellowing of ships in the fog and closer in, the chimes of the city towers striking the quarter hours. After a while he fell to sleep with the sounds in his ears of an occasional auto sizzling on the wet pavement and muted musical notes formed by moisture dripping from leaf to leaf in the garden below.

He awoke suddenly and for no apparent reason. He lay for a while looking puzzled up at the dark ceiling, then rolled over on his side. For a brief moment he could not comprehend what he saw but when he did, he went absolutely cold. He was looking at the window and there close by in the fog, as he had often seen it in his telescope, was the tower, so close that he could discern globules of moisture formed by the mist dappling the dark wood. While he watched, wide-eyed, the tower slowly began to diminish in the fog and as it slipped away Corrin heard a hissing sound much the same as a sea wave makes as it races back along the beach to the ocean.

It faded away in the fog and was gone.

Corrin, trembling, got out of bed as quickly as his shaky limbs would let him. His one impulse was to flee, flee anywhere, escape and be safe. He stumbled down the stairs into the dark maw of the house. At the bottom landing he looked up and for the second time within the space of a moment he went weak with fear.

Staring at him from the darkness, was a luminously pale face whose dark rimmed eyes and black lips were pulled back in a leering grimace. The boring eyes froze Corrin. Then the boy sagged against the bannister in relief and laughed. The face was the stone god set in the landing niche, illuminated

by light from the street lamp outside, pouring in through a window.

Corrin walked across the dark living room and turned to look at the face that had frightened him. As he did so he fell headlong over a coffee table with a resounding crash. A door opened on the second floor and a beam of light slanted down the stairs.

"What the hell goes on down there?" yelled his stepfather.

"It's just me," Corrin replied from the floor.

"Corrin! For Christ's sake, what are you doing up at this time of night? Get back to bed!"

Corrin slowly righted the coffee table and went back up the stairs. Once in bed, it was a long time before he fell into a troubled sleep.

The next day Corrin lagged around the house. He took no interest in his usual activities, reading, taking care of his animals; even the insults of the taunting children failed to arouse the usual anger. He stayed out in the garden staring off into space as if trying to find an answer to some weighty problem. At twilight it seemed that he had come to a decision.

The sky deepened to a purple color and the first stars in it seemed like Christmas balls hung high up in its depths; the street lights came on all the city and under these ovals of light congregated the children, laughing and shouting and coming together in eager groups ready to begin the night's activities. Corrin left the garden and crossed the street to where they were assembled.

"Can I have a game?" asked Corrin.

"You can have a kick right in the ass if you don't get the hell out of here." Some of the children laughed. "We don't want you playing with us."

"Nobody's going to kick me," growled Corrin.

"Are you asking for a fight?" howled the other getting to his feet and being quickly reinforced by three more.

Corrin turned his back and walked away.

"What's the matter, smart boy, lose your nerve?" somebody jeered at him.

Corrin open the garden gate and slammed it shut, savagely kicked a stone which lay on the path and sent it flying off into the darkness. But he visibly brightened at a familiar whistle.

The girl came walking up through the garden holding in one hand a shiny orange ice stick.

"Take a bite," she offered.

Corrin took a tentative nibble.

"What's wrong with you," asked the girl, "you generally wolf half the pop."

"I don't feel like eating," said Corrin.

"You're sick," said the girl, "or feeling sorry for yourself again."

Corrin glared at her and sat down on the ground looking about at the garden, which in the light of dusk was developing a luminosity of its own. Everywhere in the semi-darkness fireflies were flashing in big silent bursts of light. Corrin was oblivious to them and the rest of the garden. He looked at it without seeing it. He was aware only of the lovely girl sitting beside him.

"Isn't the garden beautiful," she said.

Corrin did not answer. He reached over and brought her unresistingly against him, laid his face softly against her hair. For a moment he wanted to cry, unashamedly and without passion. But then the feeling passed and he felt nothing but the girl's breathing, her body slowly rising and falling against his chest.

Corrin reached over and fumbled at the buttons of her dress.

"No!" The girl's hand struck him sharply across the face and she gave him a push which sent him sprawling. When he got to his feet she had gone, running off into the soft darkness. Corrin stood stunned, unbelieving.

In his room he threw himself despondently on his bed. Outside the night was warm and alive like the breath of a giant animal but it was filled with the joyous cries of the children which seemed to bite into Corrin's stomach. He buried his head in his arms trying to shut out the sounds.

After a while he fell to sleep. He found himself in a strange twilit world within a spiral staircase which he was walking up slowly into the darkness above.

And quite suddenly it was not a dream. He was awake, actually awake. His eyelids had snapped open with no little sticky particles of sleep gluing them together. For a moment he stared ahead dumbly, surprised that he was not looking at his familiar bedroom window with the street lights etching a brocade of leaves on the glass.

He was standing on a staircase that wound crookedly upward from a wall of darkness below to a similar blackness above.

A badly boarded window let in a beam of moonlight which illuminated with blue flame each tiny strand of spider web, in the soft choking mass that clogged the stairway.

Corrin, fascinated, moved upward, slowly pushing his way through the silvery mesh. The staircase ended in a large room on one side of which was an unobstructed window through which poured a stream of moonlight. Looking out Corrin could see the city spreading out everywhere and in the quiet light looking like an enchanted fair land risen from the sea. He was struck by the beauty of the scene, the peace, and the quiet.

He turned back and studied the great silent hall he was in. Immense tapestries, some being reduced to rat-eaten tatters, hung rotting on the stone walls. The floors were padded with thick molding carpets that muffled his footsteps.

Corrin breathed heavily, as if attempting to draw into his lungs more than air, as if attempting to draw in the very essence of the place, as if sight and smell were not sensation enough with which to enjoy it all.

Excitedly he ran to the end of the hall and threw open two huge ornately carved doors, revealing a great staircase which led up and down to unexplored vistas of decaying magnificence. He started up the steps, his feet making quick padding sounds on the thick carpeting. Corrin stopped abruptly. He peered up into the darkness above, listening. There was no sound in the place.

Yet, had there not been a sound?

Corrin slowly backed down the stairs, deliberately putting one foot behind the other. Suddenly he turned and plunged screaming into the darkness. He reached the bottom of the stairs and ran out into an echoing vaultlike place where the air was cool and filled with the odor of moist rot. Overhead huge stone arches reached up out of sight into the blackness and cobwebs swung from arch to arch in great serpentine strands.

Abruptly the floor fell away from him and he plunged headlong down a flight of creaky wooden steps into a stone passageway studded with fungus and slimy with water which seeped in through cracks in the wall. He picked himself up and ran desperately to the end of the corridor where there was a ghoulish looking little room littered with dusty boxes and crates. Up on one wall was a single window with the glass smashed in. He pushed a barrel over under it and climbed up, gripped the window sill with his fingers and hauled him-

self out into a grassy weed-grown yard, and into the sweet night air. He stumbled across the yard and jumped from a low stone wall onto the sidewalk. Only then did he manage a look back and up.

Looming up behind him was a great black bulk whose single massive spire stretched up into the bright night blotting out the stars. High up on the tower a window whose protecting boards had long since been torn away by the wind, caught a glacing image of the moon and reflected it glaring down like a baleful eye.

Corrin started off down the hill, through a surrealistic pattern of cobbled streets, dirty alleys, leaning, decayed, dilapidated houses, and at length across a bridge which spanned a wide river. Only when he reached the brightly lighted neon center of town did he stop running.

The next day Corrin loaded his pockets with some cookies from the kitchen; as he did so, he thought that it would have been pleasant to live here in this house of his father's, the house which, up until the night before had contained his entire living world. Now it was empty and devoid of fascination.

He slipped quietly into the garden and opened the cages, setting loose the animals that he had raised. They hurried off gratefully to freedom. That done, Corrin left the garden and started down the hill to the main part of the city. The tower lay in that direction.

He walked swiftly, leaving behind the people he knew, the places he lived in, the world he never learned to live with. He went happily toward that which lay beyond.

