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# THE LANTERN

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IN DECEMBER, 1956

VOL. XXV No. 1

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In the joy of the Christmas Season  
we pause to remember . . .

*Daniel McKeegan*

and

*Kenneth Walker*

. . . and dedicate this issue to them

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# THE LANTERN



## Talk of the Gown

### In Gratitude

The limp and nearly lifeless *Lantern* was resurrected this year by kind words from our friends and bold promises of financial success from our editor. We are very much indebted to Dr. Donald Helfferich and Mr. Geoffrey Dolman, whose encouragement and reassurance gave us the fortitude to start again. We sincerely hope that we have proved their confidence well placed.

### Oranges

Science has recently found that certain citrus fruits, when ingested on a rather cool day, produce rather amazing effects on both mental and physical aspects of the personality. Such a fruit is the Cassaban orange, which has the same appearance as the navel orange, but instead of the navel there is, on the surface, a conspicuous red blotch. As of now the genus has not been named because of its peculiar properties. J. P. Ascott, noted orange specialist, happened to find one of these beauties growing in the woods behind Mitchie Stadium at West Point. He reported that he drank the juice (scientists and teachers cannot afford to buy food), but he cannot remember the events which followed. His only remarks were, "You'll never get the map from me, you greedy pigs!"

### To Beth

Last week our elephant died, and mother made us move him out of the parlor onto the living room table. It wasn't so much the space he took up, for we rarely do anything but bowl in the parlor, but the Hilliards, who always come on Sunday, tripped over his tail and pulled over the lamp with them. Fortunately, the tail was unhurt. Meanwhile, all the candles on the windowsill have been lighted in mourning, and the wagon wheel has been wrapped in black crepe, but there seems to be little we can do, except keep the flies away, until final burial is arranged for. So we sit, passing out balloons, while the onlookers file through the kitchen counting the silver.

Aunt Harriet phoned the other night to tell father that Uncle George was in jail again. But father had locked himself in the hammock and couldn't get down to court until nearly eleven.

By that time Uncle George had won more than four hundred from the sheriff at cribbage and was more than happy to stay where he was. Aunt Harriet, meanwhile, took a job as a waitress in Tulsa and was quite content to let the chickens drown.

Anyway, I've decided to come East for the holidays and would like very much for you to plaster the crow's nest before I arrive; it's much too cold for him otherwise, since he lost his feathers. My sled will arrive early in the day, and I hope to see you then.

Love,

S.

### Cry in the Night

It seems that only a few nights ago we were roused from our bed by the shouting of "It's too long; it's much too long; it's way too long!"

So we shortened it and went back to sleep.

### A Winter's Tale

Moog crept from the darkness of the cave's recesses to the warmth of the fire without. He huddled, almost furtively, over the smouldering logs and rubbed his hands together furiously trying, almost in vain, to warm his huddled frame. The group seated around the fire huddled together to preserve the little warmth they had remaining within them and stretched their animal skins taut around themselves to keep out the bite of the bitter cold. Moog opened a large pouch he was carrying and withdrew from it a length of pelts, sewn together end to end, from a half dozen different animals. He examined it carefully and then wrapped it slowly around his neck and over his shoulders. And do you know what—not one person laughed.

### Speaking Seriously

In this issue, and in those to follow, the editors will select that piece which, in their opinion, is the most outstanding contribution to the issue, and for which the *Lantern* is offering a token cash prize. The Editors' Choice for December is "Diamonds and Mushrooms," by Barrie Ciliberti, a chilling short story which we guarantee will keep you engrossed to its ironic finish. For a tale of college education misapplied, don't miss "Diamonds and Mushrooms."



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# EDITORS' CHOICE

## DIAMONDS AND MUSHROOMS

*"Nothing beside remains; round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The grim and level sands stretch far away."*

SHELLEY

An atom, as infinitesimal as it is, and as insignificant as it may seem, relegated me once again into the realm of poverty and dependency. Because of the atom, my every inspiration, my very world was shattered into oblivion: in one excruciating moment my world became integrated with 100 million other particles which together illuminated the night.

The actual beginning of my story occurred during the last semester of my senior year in college. It was during this time that I was engaged, along with my hyper-nervous but extremely brilliant roommate, Mitch, in a course called Criminology. It proved quite interesting as we delved more deeply into the subject. When we were almost three-quarters of the way through the course, I began to notice that Mitch was behaving in a rather eccentric manner. At that time I was uncertain concerning the motivating force behind the change in Mitch, but I am positive that I know now. It appeared that, because of our recent association with Criminology, Mitch was becoming so engrossed, so completely captivated, that crime to him was becoming an obsession. As far as I was concerned, it was nothing more than a social malignancy that had to be accepted.

As the days passed and the course progressed, Mitch and I learned much about one another. Then, after many long days of studying one another's capabilities and after many revealing discussions, we arrived at this conclusion: Mitch was the type that possessed the astuteness needed to conceive a crime, but because of hypersensitivity, he lacked the stability necessary to execute one; with me, it was the exact opposite, for I had the stability and the fortitude required to perpetrate a crime, but lacked the ingenuity to conceive one.

It was the day after graduation; I was packing for my return East. Mitch never discussed home in any respect; he never once mentioned where he was going, his plans, or even his associates. That segment of our lives we never broached. We each respected the other's silence. My bags were packed; I was prepared to depart for the terminal. I bade Mitch good-bye. As I did, he said in a light vein,

"Maybe you and I can put our heads together some day and pull off a perfect crime."

"Perhaps we can, Mitch. Someday maybe we'll steal the dome from the Senate Building," I said laughingly, and with that departed.

Approximately two months later I received my first letter from Mitch. It came one evening as I was relaxing in my apartment; it was a special delivery letter. I noticed the postmark: Hermosilla, Mexico. This aroused my curiosity even more as I hurriedly ripped open the envelope. It was from Mitch. From the letter I knew he was in a great deal of trouble and needed my help immediately. Mitch implored me to come down to Hermosilla as quickly as possible. Realizing something was radically wrong, I packed and flew to Hermosilla.

Within a few hours the DC-7 arrived at the airport which was located only a short distance from my destination. Once off the plane, I hailed a cab, and, as the letter directed, started toward the Hotel Paise. The cab rolled to a stop beside one of the most dilapidated structures I have ever seen. For a moment I thought it might be the wrong place, but after double checking, I proceeded toward the door.

As I entered through the swinging doors, the first thing that caught my eye was the long, dirty, glass-stained bar. The bar dominated the room. Greasy, smeared circles of cheap mirror hung on the wall behind it. There, straddling one of the stools, nervously palming a glass of that cheap Mexican whiskey, was Mitch. He greeted me in a relieved manner. Without further ado he ushered me up to the second story.

As we entered the dingy room, I seated myself in a battered, cracked leather lounge chair and watched Mitch intensely. His appearance was that of a tired, strained person. Slowly, but resolutely, almost as one hypnotized, he drove himself to a desk on the opposite side of the room. He knelt down, opened the bottom drawer, and withdrew a small, battered box. Clutching it firmly, he turned and brought it to me. During this space of time I evaluated the situation, attempting to





figure out exactly what had happened; failing in this, I returned my attention to Mitch. By this time he had reached the chair and handed me the bundle murmuring, "Here! Here, Tim, look!"

I cautiously received the package and proceeded to open it. For a brief moment I was speechless. I sat bewildered, amazed at the crystalline forms before me. Before I could utter a single word, Mitch, in a trembling voice, spoke. "Well, pal, there it is, over half a million in diamonds. It's your move. You know, as a good citizen, you should turn me in, but I didn't drag you down here because I thought you'd do that. Remember that nerve, that ability to remain calm under pressure you talked about? Think you'd have what it takes to get this stuff back across the border? I tell you, I'd crack if it were up to me alone."

"Can I get them across the border? Do I have what it takes? Look, since you have them, I'll get them where they will do us the most good." I paused for a brief moment, then continued. "Mitch, my God, where did you ever . . ."

"Never mind," interrupted Mitch. "The stuff is real and it's not mine. That's all you have to know. You hold up your end and get them across the border. Then we split up."

I agreed, but, try as I did, I could not pry any more information from Mitch concerning his newly acquired fortune.

The next morning found us prepared and anxious for our long tedious trek toward the border. Finally we were underway. As we trudged on I detected a great deal of mounting tension in Mitch, but I dismissed it. The diamonds, our future, were "safely" hidden in my pockets.

After about an hour of walking in that godless, strength-sapping sun, we were within sight of the border and the footbridge. Our only obstacle now was to pass through customs and the customs agents. Since most of these men were either half-drunk or half asleep, I anticipated little trouble. When we reached the footbridge, we were stopped; a complete interrogation followed!

"You guys American?"

"Yes."

"Bringing anything across?"

"Yes," I answered, "a bottle of Kuhalua."

The agent gave me an odd glance and then handed me my customs receipt. This was nothing

more than wasted time, since all the receipt consisted of was the date, August 15, 1941, and a few rules.

Once across, we paused for a badly needed rest. As we rested, we considered our final move. This was relatively simple, since our only remaining task was to hike to the El Paso airport and from there take a plane to Albuquerque. However, once we were in the air, the distance from El Paso to Albuquerque would be consumed rapidly. So with our course plotted, we commenced our long march under the grueling sun.

As we approached El Paso, I became even more aware of the growing irritability of Mitch while I, to the contrary, remained quite impervious to what had been and what might be. When we reached the city, realizing the physical as well as the mental condition of Mitch, I suggested that we retire for the day in some comfortable, inexpensive hotel.

The next day we arose very late but quite rested and refreshed. We dressed quietly and then proceeded down to the dining room. All the while I, as deftly and as inconspicuously as possible, observed Mitch's every move. His every action was that of a condemned man impatiently awaiting the agonizing last walk. By his actions, his mounting terseness, he revealed to me his obsession for crime; his whole mind was dominated by it. Nothing could be done; no panacea had been discovered that could help Mitch now. My only fear was that he would crack before we were able to leave this place; the repercussions from such a development would be disastrous. I cringed at the mere thought of it and fought to drive it from my mind. With the tasteless meal consumed, we returned to the room for the final preparations.

During the remainder of the time up in the room all of my attempts at conversing with Mitch were futile. The most I could pry from him was a curt "yes" or "no"; occasionally he managed a meaningless grin. With all attempts at conversation gone, I concentrated on the task at hand. Carefully we removed all identification from our clothing and baggage. This was done to assure that we could not be traced if anything unforeseen should happen. After this was double checked, we departed for the airport.

At the airport we made the necessary arrangements for renting a small two-seater plane capable of getting us to our destination. With the plane groomed for flight, weather conditions checked, and the diamonds stashed away in my pockets





everything was ready. With Mitch at the controls the plane taxied down the runway and into the air. It was only a matter of hours.

After about the first hour in the air I noticed that we were approaching White Sands. It was an ugly, God-forsaken spot, as treacherous as it was vast. To me, it resembled a guillotine, only a thousand times more torturous, the sun comparable to that of a dull, jagged blade.

"Brother! What a spot," I muttered between clenched teeth.

No sooner had I said that when Mitch, like a madman, erupted in a siege of laughter. He pushed violently on the stick, laughing more demonically than ever, and swept the plane to within ten feet of the desert floor. For a fleeting moment I thought he was going to land, but before I could say or do anything, our plane skidded insanely above the sandy floor and crashed.

I regained consciousness; how much later, I did not know. The initial thought that exploded in my mind was that of the diamonds. I reached slowly, quiveringly into my pockets; they were still there. I then realized the possibility of my having been hurt. Upon examination I found nothing broken or sprained; I was a bit shaken up, but other than that, fine. Then I remembered Mitch. I picked myself up, bruised and shaken, and walked unsteadily toward the wrecked plane. Close by the smouldering heap of twisted metal I found Mitch. He, like myself, had been thrown clear of the plane, but was not as fortunate as I. His head was bashed to a bloody pulp where he had been flung against some protruding rocks.

As my faculties slowly returned, I became startlingly aware of the precariousness of my position. Here I was in the middle of White Sands, according to my calculations, with a half-million in diamonds bulging from my jacket. I pondered my various possibilities. For one, I could report the accident, but then I would have to rid myself of the diamonds. Then, there was also the possibility that I might be detected by the highway patrol; I would still have to get rid of the diamonds. Also, there was the chance that under the influence of the grueling, sapping heat, I might pass out. If that happened and I were found, I would either be robbed or turned over to the authorities. No matter what the possibilities, every one necessitated my disposing of the diamonds, but where or how, I did not know. Again "lady luck" smiled. For off in the distance, slightly distorted by the

intensity of the heat waves, was, unmistakably, a structure, probably an old adobe ruin. This was my objective—I had to reach it.

As I progressed I realized just how intense the heat was. The blast furnace high in the sky belched forth its rays in unabated fury as it bombarded the already scorched earth beneath me. However, I attempted to dismiss the damnable heat and concentrated on my goal. I could not fail . . . I convinced myself of that. No heat was so intense that I could not endure it! Finally, after what seemed like hours, I reached the adobe.

After carefully surveying the ruins, I decided that the best place to hide the diamonds was in one of the corners. I knelt down and commenced to dig with nothing but my bare hands. I dug until, with my hands raw and bleeding, my cache was completed. It was there that I placed a king's ransom, and proceeded to cover it. With my wealth securely hidden, I started on my journey to Alamogorda.

My trek was jeopardized greatly by the intensity of the sun and by my unquenchable thirst. Consequently, my travel was slow. However, as I went, I began to notice something wrong in my walking—I could not step in a straight line. I tried, I forced myself, but to no avail. Cactus erupted from nowhere from everywhere! They sprang up in front of me; they exploded behind me; they completely engulfed me. The needles reached out for me, tearing and gashing my clothes and skin. Then I became aware of another phenomenon: the desert floor would rise up to meet me, causing me to stumble backward; on the next step, it would lurch forward, throwing me with it. Time and again I would lose my balance and be hurled onto the hot sand. I would drag myself to my feet, only to lose my footing and pitch myself to the ground once more.

I made a last ditch effort to stabilize myself and to calculate just how I was heading. With every one step I took the mountains would recede two. At times they became so small that it appeared they would swallow themselves. This continued until I could not tell where the horizon began and the mountains ended.

Then slowly everything around me was enshrouded in a haze. Sometimes I tried to penetrate the haze; sometimes it tried to penetrate me. Somehow, by my supreme effort of will I was able at last to pierce that persistent, all-enveloping haze. Then, in a whirlwind of cool air, it dissolved itself.





When the mist disappeared, I found myself in a room far removed from the desert. After collecting my faculties, I recognized the place as a hospital. I was aware of a doctor and a nurse standing at my bedside. It was the doctor who asked in a soft voice how I was feeling. By his tone and actions I surmised that something quite serious had happened.

After a brief exchange of words he told me to meet him in the office. On the way I groped for details; the only thing I could remember were the diamonds and that damnable unpenetrable blur.

In the office the doctor afforded me all the necessary details. The essence of the information was that I had been an amnesia case for four years and had simply stayed around the hospital. The doctor continued on, but I had ceased to listen. The only thoughts that dominated my mind were of the diamonds and the old adobe ruins. I had to return—somehow, someway—even if I had to escape from the place. Later, I found that I would not have to take such drastic measures, for the doctor consented to my leaving whenever I pleased.

Several days later I left the hospital that had been my home for four long years. With one image pounding through my head, I made my way to the nearest terminal. With the money that had been found on me I was able to purchase a ticket to Alamogorda; within an hour I was on my way toward my treasure mountain.

My monotonous trip would have been unbearable had I not occupied myself with the task of ironing out some problems. They were not at all difficult to solve. As a matter of fact, the whole thing was relatively simple. After I repossessed the diamonds, I would travel throughout the country dispensing them in little second-rate jewelry shops. In doing this I would neither attract much attention nor would I flood the precious diamond market. At that point everything seemed wonderful: nothing—absolutely nothing—could go wrong!

From the train station in Alamogorda I proceeded to the nearest hotel. With the little money I had left I was able to rent a room and purchase a hat and some canteens. Since the afternoon had just begun, I decided to leave immediately for White Sands.

No sooner had I reached the highway than I was picked up by a man driving a jeep.

“Headed toward White Sands?” I inquired.

“Where else? The road only goes to one place.”

As I made myself as comfortable as I could in that bone-rattling, springless product of American ingenuity, the driver continued to talk.

“Yes, they certainly have security around here.”  
“Sure they do,” I answered mentally, “if you call blistering, burning sun security.”

“I’d certainly pity the fool that would attempt to enter White Sands.”

“Attempt to enter it,” I mused. “Mister, you’re riding with somebody that cracked it wide open.”

“You know,” he continued, “it’s amazing how they have been able to handle a gigantic project like this and still maintain the level of security that they have. Don’t you agree?”

With that he completely lost me; I had no idea what he was talking about, but to satisfy him, I agreed. From that point on there was complete silence.

Suddenly the jeep came to a screeching halt before a high, heavy wire fence that extended as far as the eye could see both to the left and the right.

“What’s this?” I thought.

Then a tall, well-built soldier jumped out of his hut and approached the jeep.

“Let’s see the passes,” he commanded, and then proceeded to examine the paper given him by the driver.

“Okay,” he said, as he started toward my side.

“Okay, fella, let’s have the pass.”

“What pass?” I inquired, completely baffled.

“The pass you need to get into these testing grounds,” he answered impatiently. The blaring of a radio within the hut told of a baseball game being played in a distant city.

“Testing grounds? What testing grounds? Say, just what is this . . .”

“Say, look, buster; I got no time or patience to be playing your stupid games. Where you been keeping yourself the last few years, anyway—in a closet? This is White Sands Atomic Testing Grounds. Get it?”

“Soldier,” I said frantically, “look, I haven’t any pass, but I have to get in—I have to!”

“Well now, you just go right on in there and look around; if you see anything you want, why you just go ahead and take it,” the sergeant drawled sarcastically. Then in a bitter, adamant voice he said as he glared at me, “Good grief, man, what do I have to do—write you a letter? Don’t you read newspapers? We’re gonna explode an A-bomb and blow this place off the face of the earth in about ten hours!”

I retreated to my hotel in Alamogorda, vanquished, totally helpless. In the room I tried to resolve my thoughts; it was impossible. The news-



papers I bought at a stand cleared my confusion somewhat.

"There must be some way—there must be," I moaned. But after racking my brains I finally resigned myself to reality. My world was about to explode before me; the sergeant's final words acted as the detonator. After all those years of quiet darkness—to come back from that silent void to this confused horror. I began to comprehend Mitch's feelings in his last days.

That night—the most devastating night in my life—I sat forlorn, utterly dejected, drinking, in my room. Engulfed in a feeling of helplessness and lassitude, I walked onto the patio as the final hour approached. I gazed toward the desert into a dry, still, moonless night. There was an ominous, lethal silence hovering over the whole area. The streets were deserted. But on verandas and on other patios, as an occasional match was struck, I could see silent groups of people staring into the desert.

True to the words of the sergeant, I saw, in the sky, a burst of orange flame which for a split second seemed to hesitate, then explode with such brilliance that night surrendered to day. The very earth trembled beneath me. I watched a whole portion of the earth disintegrate before my unbelieving eyes . . . my secret cache, the contents of which were to be enjoyed by none, shot into the air like a skyrocket. In one fleeting second my half-million dollars in diamonds illuminated the night!

BARRIE CILIBERTI

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Excerpts from

## THE VALUES AND FUNCTIONS OF HISTORY

"We live in our own little Main Street, and here is the center of the world; all which exists or happens elsewhere is inconsequential.

"This attitude is beautifully illustrated in a military joke concerning a towering, tough-mantled sergeant and a small, newly drafted college recruit. To humiliate the little private, the sergeant roared at him, 'What's the first thing you would do when you clean your rifle?'

"'Look at the serial number,' replied the private calmly.

"'What? Look at your serial number? Why the hell would you do that?'

"'To make sure it's mine.'

"'Too many of us are merely concerned with those things which contain our serial number. Anything which does not have this divine number falls outside our realm of interest.'"

\* \* \*

"We cannot explain the rise of Hitler unless we first know the Germans' patriarchal nature as developed through the centuries, the economic catastrophe in Germany after World War I, the clandestine support by England and France of a strong Germany as a buffer against advancing communism. As little could we judge a problem in our local politics unless we first knew the background. Nearness does not mean understanding. If we think it does then we are viewing the events of the world today in a vacuum."

\* \* \*

"History provides the unifying element in our studies. History is the broad foundation upon which literature, science, and mathematics develop. Two thousand years hence, when one studies the history of our own day, certainly the role of science will be as important an element in his analysis as any. Our literature is expressive of the thought which contemporary history holds. Realism, free verse, pessimism are literary characteristics determined by the age. Can anyone indeed comprehend the brilliance and optimism of Elizabethan literature without a knowledge of the bright political picture, the ascendancy in world affairs, the arrival of the Renaissance on English shores? In other words, each subject is immersed in an historical foundation, and these various foundations combine to give us a single epic world history of man. Again if one studies his subject outside the foundation it loses much of its plausibility. *History is the chess board upon which the knights of literature, the castles of science, the bishops of religion have played, upon which they have meaning. Remove the chess board and the individual pieces become unreal and insignificant.*"

ISMAR SCHORSCH



*from our files*

## NOR BARS A PRISON MAKE

"This is the last composition I'll assign before the final examination and I expect you to incorporate in it dramatic personal conflict. You may use some event from your own or another's experience. It may be imaginary or perhaps something suggested by a newspaper account. Remember, the emphasis here is on the dramatic conflict. It would be wise not to burden your work with excessive detail but lead quickly up to your main scene. Now I want to read you some selections from . . ."

I watched him read. He wasn't too old, maybe about my age, late twenties, wrapped up in his work, his life stretching out before him, all neatly tied together, chartered, secure. Year after year the young faces in his comp classes would come and go, some interested, some indifferent, and perhaps once every long while, the teacher's reward, a chance to nourish the spark of genius.

And here he was not even started yet, not even sure of what he wanted. Trying to catch up with these young faces, tryin' to swim upstream against the flow of time, against a current growing perceptibly swifter, already pulling him back faster than he could flail forward. The torchy voice of Ann Sheridan had caught its pathos once: "Time waits for no one, it passes you by, it's just like a river flowing out to the sea . . ."

Maybe that's for me, teaching. Young kids, wide-open minds, mold 'em, steer 'em in the right direction, pass on a little of your philosophy, a little of the essence garnered from the knocks and bruises of your own life experiences.

Yeah, sure, I'm the one; you stupid bastard, you're so mixed up yourself you don't know whether you're coming or goin' and you're gonna teach!

Naw, naw, he had to find himself first, get a groove for himself and stick to it. That was the trouble with him, he had this damn worm eatin' him, never satisfied, and how the hell could he be satisfied when he didn't know what he wanted. What'd the old man used to say—"Your eyes are too big for your stomach." Yeah, gotta find out what this life's all about. Maybe the answer's in these books, in this history an' philosophy he was talkin' . . .

"Well, you have the assignment. It's due next week and please use ink. That's all."

Outside, walking back to the dorm, one of the kids in the comp class caught up with him.

"Boy, you vets ought to be able to hit that

assignment but how the heck are the rest of us going to write about dramatic conflict?"

"Well, we didn't all storm Iwo Jima or fly a hundred missions over Berlin, ya know. You might have had something more exciting happen to you than thousands of vets in rear echelon bases. And besides, if we did have something dramatic to write about, we'd have a harder time writing it. We'd have to be a Norman Mailer, a Jones, or an Irwin Shaw to do it right. How many guys saw action in the first World War and how many good stories came out of it? Two or three, same as this time."

"Yeah, but this is just for a comp; he doesn't expect a classic."

"I guess you're right there, all right."

Trouble with him was, everytime he sat down to write, he acted like an author. Time he wised up and knocked something out in an hour like the rest of the kids. Six, seven hours on a comp. He must be nuts. But that was part of the nagging—do it right, not just another assignment that had to be done. It was the need to meet the challenge, the fear of failing that subconsciously resulted in his constant procrastinating.

Back in the room, I dropped my books on the desk and stretched out on the sack to think about what to write.

So he wants character conflict, dramatic conflict, heh? How about the battle between him and his old man, when they'd actually starting slugging! Christ, the old man gave him a bloody nose and he'd chickened out, somehow couldn't hit the old bastard. That was always good—blood against blood. Or how about that deal on the ship, on the way overseas? That shook him up so much that even now about seven years or so later, he still tasted bile whenever he thought of it. That S.O.B. MP colonel . . .

Late June, 1944, the ship was four weeks out into the Pacific, alone, in the middle of nowhere, under a burning sun. Three days out of the Canal she'd burned out some bearings and with them the air-conditioning and water-cooling systems. Below decks, in stifling compartments and holds stacked with tiered bunks six to eight deep, with barely a foot of clearance between, some five thousand troops sweated in their undershorts, got sock, played cards, read or bitched the monotony away. They were allowed on deck one hour in the morning, one in the afternoon. The decks of the holds, sporadically mopped, were patterns in mud, as, not infrequently, someone spewed his



guts in a nauseous cough and splatter, thickening the already sour stench of sweating bodies no salt-water shower could relieve.

And behind him were sixteen months of stupid commands, orders, directives, regulations. The Army way, the channels, the hurry-up-and-wait, the sign in and sign out, the foul-up that had sent him on his way overseas without ever having a furlough. But never had the gap between EM and Officer been more distant or more flagrantly rubbed in. Day after day for twenty-eight days now, he had trudged up for chow, past the portholes of the officer's dining room and tables set with silver and linen, down to the EM Mess, where he ate standing, the food slopped indiscriminately together on a tray. Day after day he'd gone topside after the PA had squawked, "the order of the day while above will be complete fatigues." Complete fatigues on a ship near the equator, in the middle of the Pacific ocean, in the heat of summer. No T-shirt, no stripping to the waist for them. Someone said the Red Cross girls had objected. But up in "officer's heaven," sitting in deck chairs, the officers wore shorts and chatted to the Red Cross girls, also in shorts. Nice summer cruise for them, through the graciousness of Uncle Sam. Day after day these things had rankled more and more because he passionately believed in democracy and America and "the huddled masses yearning to be free." In high school the Bill of Rights, the Rights of Man, the words of Jefferson. Crèvecoeur, Lincoln, had thundered in his ears and brought tears to his eyes.

The climax came in the afternoon of the twenty-eighth day out. He had gone to the "out-of-order" water cooler next to the stairway to the hatch.

The water was warm and oily, he rinsed his mouth and spat it out. A slight breeze came through the hatchway, so he waited until the lieutenant, the compartment OD, would tell him to keep clear of the stairs. But the MP colonel came through the hatch first and stopped on the stairs a few steps above his head.

He was officer-in-charge of all the troops aboard. By his orders, they'd spent the first four days out entirely below decks until the ship's captain had warned him of the danger of a mutiny. Everyone, including the officers, hated his guts.

Then loud enough for him to overhear, the colonel said, "God, what a stench, how do you stand it, Lieutenant?"

The disgust in the voice, the stupid arrogance of the remark, triggered the nervous system of a sensitive personality long irritated and lately aggravated to the breaking point by the physical discomforts of the voyage.

The blood rushing to his ears drowned out the lieutenant's reply. His breath tore at his throat through gritted teeth. His fists clenched and unclenched. If only he could get his hands on him,

he'd tear the bastard apart. His throat—if only he could jump at his throat! He took a step toward the stairs.

The lieutenant, hand on his hip, near the holster, snarled, "Where do you think you're goin', soldier?"

Blood pounding in his ears and vertigo saved him. He got sick and vomited over the bottom steps of the stairway. Coughing and crying in rage, he held on to the side of the steps, suddenly so weak and shivering from a chill that he could barely stand.

"Just let me get my hands on him," he groaned through rigid jaws.

"Get your hands on whom, soldier? You better wise up and forget about that stuff. Anybody as stupid as that S.O.B. is bound to run into a bullet some dark night. Get back in your bunk and sleep it off; I'll check on you tomorrow," the lieutenant advised.

The chapel bells ringing for dinner snapped him out of it. His palms were wet with sweat again. Yeah, that's what he'd write about; that ought to be dramatic enough.

He picked up his towel and went to the head to wash up for supper.

## **SUPERIOR TUBE COMPANY**

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## A Parable

Once upon a time, there was a very shrewd farmer who owned a very beautiful and very intelligent roan stallion. The farmer soon trained it to perform a rather nefarious trick. Every night after dark, the roan would sneak quietly into a nearby town and steal a few bedsheets from the clotheslines of the sleeping townspeople. The merry animal would then gallop back to the farm and present them to his master.

It is barely possible that you are wondering what the farmer did with this linen. The answer is quite simple. He made dental floss from it.

To make a long story longer, the roan continued to enrich the farmer for many months, until one day the town ran out of bedsheets. After that, the roan took anything he could find. Morning after morning, the men would wake up to find their underwear gone, while the women often missed filmy little things that wouldn't clean anybody's teeth.

The townspeople concluded that they had best take their wash in before sundown. As a result, one cold night in December, the roan came back empty-mouthed. The farmer, not to be denied, trained the roan to pillage another town.

Returning from a raid, the roan took a short cut across another man's land, was spotted with his loot, and trailed home by the astonished and irate farmer. Discovering the nature of the scheme, the farmer hid for a while, and when the roan's owner had gone, he stole the horse.

For a week he retrained the roan to return the loot to him, then sent him out for his first expedition under the new management. But the roan came back empty-mouthed. For several weeks the horse was bribed with richer and richer diets, but this increased prosperity improved nothing—which was exactly what the roan kept bringing back.

Until the day he died, the roan gathered nary another stitch of potential dentifrice.

Moral: "A stolen roan gathers no floss."

IRA LEDERMAN

### To the Editor:

(ON ELVIS)

He's a perfect slob  
And the worst kind of boor.  
I keep my virtue  
Being honest but poor.

\* \* \*

It's nice to be shy  
And keen to be meek,  
But I bet you'd wiggle  
For five G's a week—Ed.

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## PSYCHOLOGY AND POETRY

### Poetry

You, Psychology,  
put down your honed dialectic  
and fight with your bare fists.  
I will smash you with an atavism.

### Psychology

Let us be friends,  
and I your instructor.  
Your desperation is futile.  
I will not handle you like a specimen.

### Poetry

Where is my freedom?  
You toady to politics,  
I will yet see the individual  
enshrined above your frozen formulas.

### Psychology

I pity your mysteries;  
therefore you have learned confusion.  
Let me appeal to your reason:  
you are a part of your own mythology.

### Poetry

So much the better.  
There is strength in belonging.  
My association is voluntary  
and does not need your exhausted realities.

### Psychology

I await certainties  
that can even admit this much:  
my scientific semblances include  
many exceptions to your own rules.

### Poetry

I have seen your snide sneer.  
Your smugness, like a heel,  
has been ground into my face.  
You have made me a catch-phrase, a by-word.

### Psychology

You accuse me of setting  
a trap of your own devising.  
From time immemorial  
have poet and fool been synonymous.

### Poetry

I will not respect you  
until you learn truth, not statistics.  
You have a long path to tread.  
May I suggest that you begin at once?

### Psychology

Walk awhile with me.  
It will do you no harm  
to learn a longer stride. Besides,  
I know the pathway a little better than you do.

ART KING

### ICELAND: GNOMICS BELOW KEFLAVIK

We stand on a crest of boulders near  
the journey's-end of the lavafield  
and know a primordial fear.

We examine our element: rocks  
from the fires of the netherworld; soil  
built from the sacred war of rain  
and cyclone, breeding new pain  
for flowers yet to be.

A shepherdess flock of sheep  
roams freely, searching for turf,  
while afar

as vast as the sky inverted, and  
with only a ship for star,  
mother ocean, her surface waves throbbing  
like the heart and pulse of man  
(and breaking at last in the surf)  
affirms the passionate unity  
of life and the restless tides.

This landscape, rugged, unpolished  
by centuries of erosion,  
guesses that nothing abides  
and hints in subtle fashion  
of the price of mortality.

Nothing here is rational  
or tortured by complex emotions.  
Here is only the uncloyed hunger  
and destitute, unashamed passion  
of life that asks no reward,  
gives no quarter, offers no love.

—And we are not "strangely at peace."

ART KING



## EBB

Clouds drift by;  
Fog rolls in;  
But life goes on.

The tide comes in;  
The tide goes out;  
But time is eternal.

We watch the clouds;  
We go out in the fog;  
We swim in the tide.

We live with these  
To leave the fold;  
To go with the ebb;  
To be immortal.

PETER BOOKE

---

## STATISTIC

We are disturbed by your magnitude, O Statistic.  
We do not like the conciseness with which you preach  
the law of averages, nor are your conclusions  
agreeable to our sense of the fitness of things.  
We are spread-eagled by a verbal taxidermy.  
For you have shown us  
the hitherto measureless man  
no longer like to the mysterious tides,  
but a stick-figure whose curses are prayers.  
You have reduced the magic of chance  
to a gross arithmetic.  
You have so misshapen our merit  
that we must take refuge in Soul.  
Oh, sear yourself into our consciousness,  
you essence of the shadow of God.

ART KING

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## QUO VADIS?

Fish—  
Salamanders with lost tails  
To be regained  
As immortality.

You and I—  
Souls with lost hope  
Perhaps to be regained  
As immortality.

We see a winged man;  
A winged lion; a winged ox;  
An eagle soaring in the sky;  
And we pass them by.

Where is the Samaritan  
Who will stop to see;  
Where is the shepherd  
Who will look for his lamb?

PETER BOOKE

## HYMN

The soul in flight takes no delight  
in solitude and death and gloom  
no more than passion in the night  
embraces four walls of a room,

but its desire is unity  
and order out of chaos grown.  
No microcosm of the sea  
could it be 'ware it were alone

but would beseech an ion's grace.  
Describe it as you can or will,  
the breath of God in time and space  
doth hosts of universes fill

with ultimate Mystery, even light—  
which physics' laws and Einstein's brain  
could know, not fully, but aright  
lest the last blessing prove a bane.

The soul **is**. Never mind the bounds  
our cynic reason might annul.  
What man has weighed heat, measured sounds,  
and probed the nucleons of the skull?

The soul's rejoicings stem at last  
so subtly, we could not foretell  
never a wreath of flowers cast  
on Evil's grave would bloom in Hell.

ART KING

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## THE DEVIL'S DUES

There is such little relevance within  
that fear may well precipitate a lotion  
to neutralize our cares. No shrewd commotion  
could otherwise offset the nightmare, Sin,  
or intimate what folly might have been  
had truth been grafted to some favored notion.  
There is no cause for doubt in our devotion,  
though angels never stood on any pin.

Then if we cannot swallow gnats and camels,  
let us at least devise sound dialectic  
whereby to circumscribe the ways of evil  
and learn old truths beyond the highest mammals.  
Since knowledge teaches us to be eclectic,  
there still are ways to hold dues from the Devil.

ART KING



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