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kay boyd

RAPPORT

Cathy began to run. The man walking up the hill toward her saw the whirl of blue gingham topped by a flying sheaf of gold, and prepared himself for the light onslaught. She hit his thin legs and the man and child spun around together.

"Are we going, Daddy?" she gasped.

"I reckon we are; it's Sunday." He smiled down at her from his great height. "We'll just walk by the house and tell the folks. What shall it be today--the confectioner's or a streetcar ride?"

Cathy's narrow face was drawn by indecision.

The streetcar was exciting; there were strange people to wonder about; last time the woman had nursed her baby in the seat right behind them. Daddy's face got so pink when she tugged his sleeve and made him look ... They might ride out the river road to the bend in the river, or down to the levy where the ferryboat came in. They were going to take a ride on the ferryboat some day when Mother felt like going along. That would be a streetcar ride and a ferryboat ride all in one day. Today ...

"You decide, Daddy. I like them both."

"Well, why don't we stroll down to the confectioner's and see if Mr. Schmidt has any new flavors in ice cream? I've got a sweet tooth today."

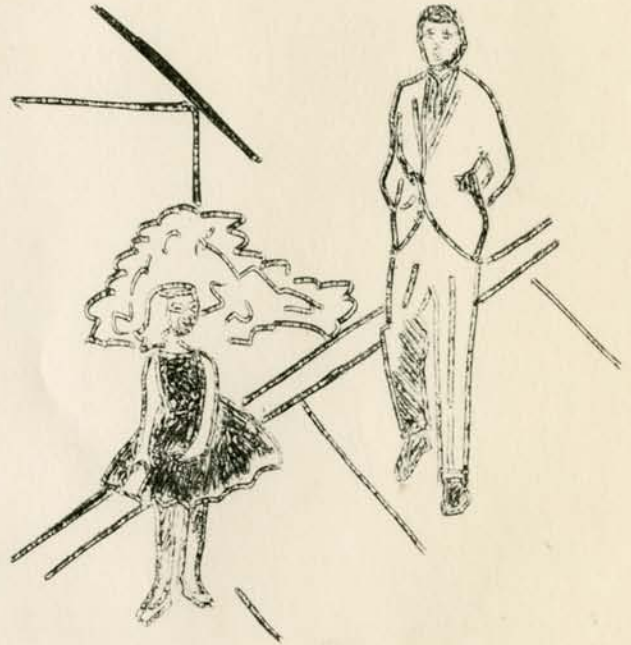
"Goody! I'm feeling that way myself, but I was afraid we might miss something on the streetcar. Do you think we will?"

"Nothing that won't be there next Sunday, Kiddiekins."

Cathy glowed. She loved the funny names her daddy called her. How could he think of so many? Sugarplum, Honeybun, Lollypop, Goldilocks. It made her feel warm all over every time he called her something new. She liked the old names too, though.

As they went by home, he called to Mother and Uncle Lee seated on the cool, front gallery that they would be back before supper, but probably without very big appetites. Mother cautioned them, "Be sure to be home before dark. I get uneasy since that horrible affair last month."

The two walked hand-in-hand along the shade speckled sidewalk. The excited child hopped from one big blob of sunshine to another causing her father's hand to jerk crazily up and down. This outing was a Sunday ritual that both cherished. They never discussed



these jaunts much at home. They were theirs alone--something even the mother did not share, preferring that day to chat with the family or friends who called.

It was their only moment alone together. At home there was always Grandma, Uncle Lee, the great aunts next door, and Uncle Bobba forever demanding Cathy's attention. They were fun too, but it was more like being with Mother when she was with them. They had mother kind of ways.

The confectionery was a paradise to the little girls: sitting beside Daddy at the shaky round table and sucking on her straw until it gurgled; whether Daddy talked or not, didn't matter. It was never easy to decide which she preferred. On the streetcar rides, she loved seeing the shiny, silver river curling through the green wall of trees and all the different people. But then she couldn't eat on the streetcar because it made her sick.

She broke their comfortable silence to say, "I guess I like to do better whatever I'm doing, when I'm doing it."

The father displayed a puzzled smile, "Why, Babykins, what brought on that astute remark?"

"Oh, just thinking, Daddy, just thinking."

They bade the jovial Mr. Schmidt goodbye, and left his fly speckled window behind them. Just after they had crossed Jefferson Street, a group of Negro men strode rapidly up the street toward them, and Daddy picked Cathy up to walk past them. The men were huddled together in a tight little ball, and it made Cathy feel queer to look at them.

Daddy said, "What's the trouble, boys?" They did not say one word to him, nor did they move over to let him pass. Daddy watched as they marched purposefully up the street, their black faces glistening, their odor lingering behind them. Daddy put Cathy down abruptly, pushed his hat back off his forehead, and stood still in the middle of the sidewalk, hands on hips, looking after them. There was the strangest expression on his face; it made Cathy feel cold there in the sunshine. Then he turned around, picked up Cathy's hand, and they resumed their walk.

They were about a block from home, and they saw Uncle Lee sort of running-walking up the street. When they met, he said, "I've been looking for you two. Wanted you to get off the street. Eileen is terribly upset. There's been a jail break."

Cathy could see the great, gray, stone building with the black bars on the windows and the iron picket fence around it. It had been a familiar sight to her all of her short life; it was only a few blocks from the two houses that were home to her. In fact there were times when she became a little confused as to just which one was home: the one where she and her mother and father lived with Grandma and Uncle Lee, or the one next door where the great aunts lived with Uncle Bobba. There was such great demand for her in both the old houses. Before she grew up and started to school, she spent most of her time playing under the covered walk that ran from the kitchen of one house to the kitchen of the other. Fanny, Grandma's cook, kept an eye on her from the kitchen where she was queen of the big stove. Stella, the best housemaid in the South according to Aunt Bridgie, watched her from the other house looking out the window in front of her ironing board.

They said the house had been divided when Grandma got married. They had turned the back wing around and made Grandma's house out of it. Cathy thought it would have been better if they had not done that since they all lived together anyway. But how could

the jail break? Uncle Bobba had told her many weird tales about the part in the back where the high iron fence was. "The 'bogie man' puts bad little girls in there," he had said. Cathy was never allowed far from home alone, but one time she had wandered that far. Fanny and Stella had been busy in another part of the houses at the same time, which "Had better never happen again," Grandma had said. Cathy had gone as far as the high, black wall and run quickly back home. Uncle Lee had told her Bobba was full of "poppycock," and not to believe in "bogie men." No such thing. But she had run anyway. After that she had asked Uncle Lee about the ancestors. When she went to the cemetery with Uncle Bobba and Aunt Bridgie, Uncle Bobba had told her that all her ancestors got out of their graves every night at midnight, sat on their gravestones and ate spaghetti. Uncle Lee had thrown back his head and laughed very loud. He had said, "They would be more likely to eat Irish stew."

"They are organizing a posse, but you know what that means if they catch any of them or just any handy darkie who looks guilty. We had best get off the streets before dark, Hamilton," Uncle Lee said.

"You're right, Lee. I'd better go ahead and try to calm Eileen. You bring Cathy. The escapees passed us about five minutes ago so there is nothing to fear from them."

Cathy loved Uncle Lee too, but she did not want Daddy to leave her so abruptly.

"Wait for me, Daddy. I can walk fast as you."

"No, Chicken, you come along with Uncle Lee. It is nearly time for supper anyway." He rapidly strode away and left them.

"Why is Mother upset--need calming down, Uncle Lee? She isn't afraid of the colored men, is she?"

"No, Cathy, she just wants you and your daddy at home with her where you belong."

"Well, I'm not afraid of those men either. They wouldn't hurt us; they are just like Sam, aren't they?"

"You don't have to be afraid of anything. It's the colored man who needs to be afraid this night, child. Now let's not dawdle. We'll keep Fanny from prayer meeting."

At supper they all sat around the big damask covered table with the beautiful green, glass shade, like the church windows, over it. Mother had only tea and toast. Cathy wasn't very hungry either, but she never was on the confectionery Sundays. Uncle Bobba talked to Grandma about something in the newspaper today: it seems that Blackie should have been in the death house since he was to be hanged for something terrible, but instead he was out with the rest of them running the street to do more harm to women and children. Aunt Bridgie and Aunt Cora sat on each side of Cathy and tried to coax her to eat.

"Come, Sugar, try a bit of this peach conserve. I'll declare if Fanny doesn't stop feeding us so well, I'll never be able to wear my best black silk this winter," Aunt Bridgie said.

"You don't have to try everything she serves twice, Bridget. I don't like to see people indulge themselves so freely. It just isn't ladylike. Try to be a little less of a glutton, and you won't need to worry about buying a new silk. I can still wear dresses I had when I was a girl. Haven't put on an ounce of excess flesh. Cathy, sweetie, do eat a bite of this delicious fried chicken," Aunt Cora said.

"Hamilton, you aren't eating as much as Cathy here," Aunt Bridgie said. "May I pass you a biscuit? You just sit there brooding. You must not let this thing bother you. We have lived through times much worse than this; remember, Bobba, the night you and Father sat up all night with guns across your knees; but you still ate your usual supper and breakfast."

"Hamilton and Lee always let things upset their appetite. I've never missed a meal in my life, and I've never had one, I didn't enjoy. This younger generation! You shouldn't let anything interfere with your diet. Most important thing in a man's life. Makes him what he is. Read an article the other day, "You Are What You Eat." The things science is doing nowadays. Since the war. If we ever have another influenza epidemic like '18 though, it will be the end of us here in the South. Good thing you two boys weren't here. The way you eat, you'd be under the ground with the rest of 'em. Talk about yellow fever; give me the 'fever' anytime."

"Oh, Bobba, let's not discuss that awful time at the dinner table," Grandma said. "Eileen dear, you are pale. Do you think you will have another of your headaches? I do hope not. They drain you so."

"No, Mother. I just keep hearing that mob of men . . . so . . . so unbridled. How can you all sit here so calmly?" her voice was shrill. "Don't you even hear the rumble of their voices?" She rose abruptly. "I'm sorry. Mother, if you'll see that Cathy gets to bed, I'll go up now, and take a sedative."

Cathy had heard the queer roar, but she had thought it thunder, not men's voices.

Cathy did not sleep well that night. It wasn't that she didn't sleep; there just seemed to be some vague uneasiness on the edge of consciousness. Mother hadn't come to tuck her goodnight because of the sedative; she hadn't expected Daddy either tonight. In the dark hall before she had been taken up by Grandma, she had heard Uncle Lee and Daddy talking. "Well, I'm not going to stay here and miss all the excitement. Those damn darkies nearly ran Cathy and me down today. I'm going out to see if I can help get them back in line," Daddy said. "After all a man can take so much . . ."

"Do you think that wise, Ham? I feel it better not to expose myself to such circumstances. You aren't apt to get dirty if you stay away from filth."

"O. K., Socrates, stay up here on the hill. You . . . you old woman." With that Daddy had slammed out the big, glass, front door. It had rattled so hard Cathy had been afraid it was broken.

Cathy sat at the big table by herself eating breakfast. Aunt Bridgie was busy in the kitchen. Cathy could hear her move her heavy bulk between the stove and serving table. She grumbled to herself about good-for-nothing darkies. Or was it good-for-nothing men she had said? Today wasn't the day for Sam who trimmed the yard and things. Anyway Fanny wasn't here this morning, and there was nobody to get breakfast. Grandma wouldn't cook; Mother had a headache; Aunt Cora never got hungry; that left Aunt Bridgie to get breakfast for Cathy and Aunt Bridgie. Guess if you get hungry, you learn to cook if there is no darkie around to cook for you. I'll learn to cook so I won't have to depend on somebody else when I'm hungry. As soon as I'm a little taller, I'll get Fanny to let me help her. That way I can learn from her. Uncle Lee says to remember I can learn anything I want to learn; all I need is to want something bad enough and I'll get it. Anyway that's the way it is at Christmas. If I want it bad enough, there it is under the tree. Those things I didn't get, I guess I just didn't want bad enough. I heard Daddy say when he was arguing with Uncle Lee that it's better not to want anything;

then you don't get disappointed, but I don't think he meant that. He was just funning. I like wanting things; that makes it interesting.

Aunt Bridgie came through the swinging door from the kitchen. "Aren't you finished yet, child? Just like your father--always dreaming. You'll be late for school. Run along now and wash yourself. Don't forget your book sack." Aunt Bridgie hustled Cathy toward the door.

"Isn't Stell going to walk with me today, Aunt Bridgie?"

"That good-for-nothing darkie isn't here yet either. Guess you'll have to go by yourself today. I'm too old and heavy to walk back up that hill once I get down, and I don't know anybody else in this house this morning able to see you get to school. You'll be better off there though."

"Oh, I'll be fine. I've gone by myself before, you know. Three times. Tell Mother I hope she feels better. Goodbye, Aunt Bridgie, and thank you for a good breakfast."

"All right child. Run along now or you'll be late." She gave Cathy a perfunctory peck on the cheek, and turned to go upstairs with a tray. Cathy slipped out the big, glass, front door, and closed it gently behind her so that it wouldn't disturb Mother or the others if they were still asleep.

Cathy always felt good about walking to school by herself. It gave her a grown-up look; the other girls didn't have to have a darkie help them cross Clay Street. As Grandma said when they discussed whether she should walk the four blocks, "That is the only main thoroughfare that she has to cross." Daddy thought she could do it fine, but Uncle Lee walked with her sometimes when he hadn't already gone to his office before she left. He was a lawyer, and didn't have to go to work until he wanted to. Anyway Stell had been walking with her mostly because it made Mother nervous to think about the child walking all by herself.

The street was deserted except for a friendly collie dog and the pigeons from the jail. Cathy knew she had a decision to make. She could walk through the "Hollow" as she usually did when she was by herself; or she could walk by the jail as she did when someone was with her. If there was nothing in there but men like she and Daddy had seen yesterday, she could walk that way today. It was nicers there was a sidewalk all the way; in the next block there were red, brick houses with flowers. She would stay on the high road today and not be afraid. She turned down the street and hurried along like Aunt Bridgie had said.

She was wearing her lavender check gingham with the ruffled skirt and the bloomers to match. Aunt Cora had made it for her, and they all thought she looked an old-fashioned picture in it. She had told Mother, but Mother had not remembered.

Cathy reached down with her free hand and pushed up the offending bloomer leg. She was afraid it would show, but she was hurrying so to pass the jail, it kept falling down. When she was all the way by the jail, she would slow down, push it up and walk so that it would stay up. She had passed the tall iron fence now, which was the worst place, and walking past the iron picket fence. She looked up at the barred windows and saw nothing but the blank glare of the glass. It was just another gray, stone building like the courthouse, and she guessed it was empty now unless they had caught the men they were looking for last night. The jail was almost behind her.

Cathy decided that she would walk home this way too. It was better because she didn't get her shoes dusty. The sun felt good on her bare head; it was a good day. She

looked at the poplar trees and thought how tall and thin they were. Not round and fat like most of the other trees. The poplar trees always reminded Cathy of soldiers on guard on each side of the street.

She crossed the street to the houses. Two big girls in pigtailed came out of the first red, brick house with their books under their arms, and walked along in back of Cathy. Cathy became aware of their loud whispers.

"There she is. Look how one of her bloomer legs is hanging down. Poor thing, I wouldn't . . ." Cathy couldn't hear the rest though she tried.

"She prisses like she thinks she's really something 'cause she lives up there on the hill, but, look! now both of 'em are hangin' down below her dress--almost to her knees."

Cathy slowed down and pushed up one bloomer leg. Then she shifted her book sack to the other hand to push up the other leg. She wanted to walk fast now to get away from the girls, but she couldn't or the bloomers would fall down again.

"I heard them talking in the kitchen. Her father was there. He helped to hang him up. They said they built a fire under him after they put him up on the tree limb with a rope around his neck. A fire right there in the street."

"My mama said even if he was black, they should have given him a fair trial. Papa said he got what he deserved, but he would hate to be the man who gave it to him. And her paw . . ." the voice faded for a moment. "There she prisses along with her bloomers hanging down. Thinks she's somebody, and her paw . . ."

Cathy began to run.

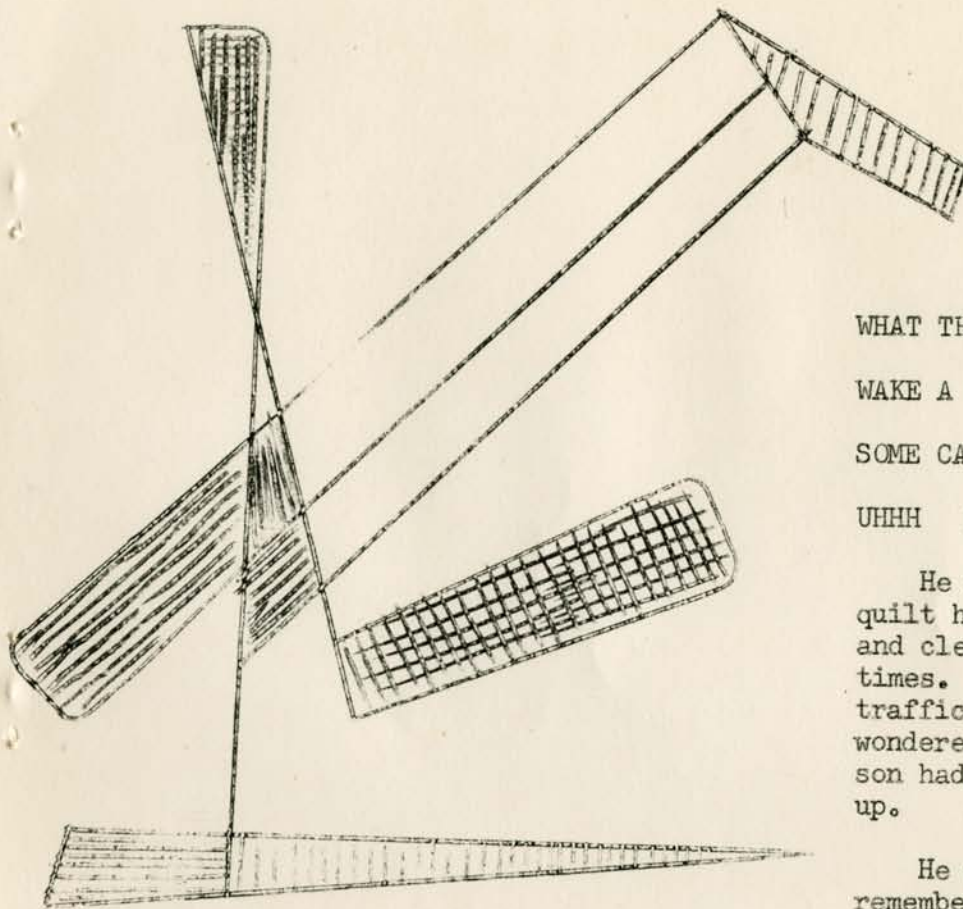
THE ANSWER

We sit upon this clod of earth together;
The mystic sky holds stars unseemly bright.
Her hand rests on my knee, heavy as a feather;
About these lights my answer must be right.
Sweet child of four, I cannot tell you
A thing which is unknown to me and all.
In answer I might say forever it is blue;
The stars will ever be as tall as tall,
Our world but one small dot in all our firmament.
The ant just has his earth on our front lawn.
She looks at me in solemn wonderment;
I'll bet an ant can't even see the dawn.
We sit upon this patch in space together,
The two of us and all of life together.

-- Kay Boyd

Lawrence Smith

LET'S GO, JOEY



WHAT THE HELL

WAKE A GUY UP HONKING THAT DAMNED HORN

SOME CABBY SMART GUY LIKE TO SHOOT HIM

UHHH FEEL ROUGH SLEEPY COLD

He rolled over and pulled the shabby quilt higher about his chest. He grimaced and clenched his hands slowly several times. As he lay there, he heard the traffic rumble and scream outside. He wondered angrily why one particular person had to honk loud enough to wake him up.

He was almost asleep again when he remembered.

NO WONDER I WOKE UP DIDN'T SLEEP GOOD ANYHOW NO WONDER

SHOULD HAVE KNOWN I COULDN'T SLEEP WHO COULD SLEEP STANLEY SLEPT THOUGH SLOB

ALWAYS SLEEPS WHEN HE WANTS TO DOES ANYTHING BIG MAN LIKE TO SLIT HIS GREASY THROAT

SLOB MIGHT AS WELL GET UP COFFEE FEEL BETTER

He pushed the quilt back and rolled slowly out of bed. He winced as his bare feet touched the gritty dust of the cold floor. He got a cigarette, lit it with a snake-skin covered lighter, and took a deep drag. He coughed and swore. He wandered sleepily and clumsily into the bathroom. He snapped the light on over the mirror. A pale bitter face looked at him. That face wanted shaving. His dank hair fell across his forehead. He poured water over his hands, and ran his hands through his hair. He parted and combed the dark mass with a red comb. He regarded that face. He liked it sometimes.

He shaved and dressed. He was sitting on the edge of the narrow bed, his head in his hands. He was dressed in a too-small blue suit, a white shirt with a frayed collar, and a many colored tie. He looked at his brown shoes and realized they needed shining. He clenched his hands slowly several times.

HELL WITH STANLEY CAN'T MAKE ME I'LL TELL HIM SO SLOB

HE'LL POKE THAT GREASY FACE IN HERE SICK SMILE "LET'S GO, JOEY" JUST LIKE THAT

GO TO HELL, STANLEY I GOT THE DOUGH GO TO SIS'S PLACE GOOD KID HELP ME

HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY FROM THIS ROOM FROM STANLEY WHOLE MESS
TOLD HIM SO LAST TIME WON'T LIKE IT TOO BAD TOUGH ALWAYS PUSHING, SHOVING
ALWAYS ME DIRTY WORK NOT NO MORE ALREADY TOLD HIM LAST TIME WHY NOT LEAVE BEFORE HE
GETS HERE I'M NOT SCARED NOT RUNNING OUT JUST GO ON
LEAVE WHY WAIT AND EXPLAIN HE'LL KNOW I'M GONE WON'T KNOW WHERE SLOB
I'M NOT RUNNING FROM HIM NOT AFRAID HE'LL BUST A GUT I'LL DO IT
GOODBYE, STANLEY GOODBYE, ROOM DAMN YOU ALL

He stood up and pulled a snub-nosed revolver from an inside coat pocket and checked it. It was a habit. The door opened. A broad greasy face appeared in the open door. A big smile disclosed yellowed teeth set in an irregular pattern.

"Come on, Joey, let's go."

Joey clenched his hands slowly.

"Yeah, let's go, Stan."

SKEPTICISM

I'll take a jar of midnight
And toss it at the moon.
I'll take my hand of pixie dust
And across the room I'll walk,
And fling it into the million corners of space;
And stop to listen
To the heart of the universe, beating
And the pulse of time.

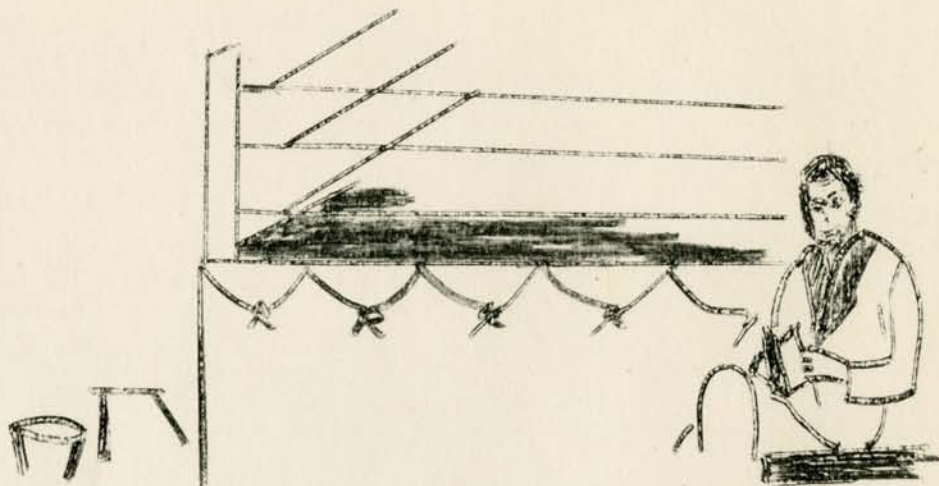
Then the heart beats slower,
The pulse slackens.
Time stands still.
And for an infinity I stand;
Stand as the midnight of life draws nigh.
I wait for the scythe, it comes,
And I fall for nine days
Into the bottomless forever of Hell.

Even Hell is welcomed by me.
I revel in Its peace.
All His angels come forth to greet me,
And my joy is approached only by that of the divine Italian
Who did, damn his soul, return to tell...of It.
I stand awed, afraid, glad, anxious
Waiting. Waiting for nothing,
For Here I will remain.

My soul is at peace.
The war is won.
The red flag is again white.
I can sleep,
In Hell.

-- Robert Southern

THE BOXER AND THE BARD



If there's one thing I don't wanna be, Fingers, it's an expert on any given subject. I just don't wanna be in the position they consider me an expert about anything. That's when you're really a stupe when you get to considering yerself an expert.

Lookit this morning's paper, Fingers. Here's Buster Belton's column in the Tribune. He's the rag's boxing expert and today he's burping up some of that garbage the commissioner drums up. Buster's an expert too, it says here. The commissioner says that boys like the Texas Tiger shouldn't be allowed in the ring with the Champeen. He'll kill 'im. Says the promotion is lax allowing last night's fight. Says if the Champeen gets any more patsies like the Tiger, he'll be up for manslaughter.

Lissen, Fingers, that Texas Tiger can chew up the Champeen and spit out the pieces. I know. I seen 'em all, and the Tiger didn't have no weakness...only just that one. Now it wasn't one o' them physical sicknesses that made or broke the Tiger; he was bothered with one of them kinda things that makes ya have to be sent to one of them brain-shrinkers or loony docs. Nothing serious, see, just that the kid got too much learning too quick. It takes lotsa time to get educated like he is.

Angles Slidell is lucky to find out about this Tiger's weakness, at that. Otherwise, he's just an unknown bum, instead of a well-known bum. Which he sure is now.

Angles is driving down to Houston, Texas, must of been four years ago now. He's coming to Houston where me and big Swede are already at for big Swede's expected early knockout of the next night.

Angles stops at this little sawmill town north of Houston and goes into a joint for a cuppa coffee. The joint's empty except for this big fella at the counter and a couple equally big sawmill hands, who is busy putting the needle into the young raw-bone kid about something.

The fella getting the 'ol razzamatazz from his side-kicks don't appear none too happy. In fact he begins to take a slow burn back of his big neck at something them sawmill hands says. By the time the spreading pink of his complexion wraps around to his kisser, it's just too late for them other poor slobs. Now Angles don't hear what is being said, he ain't close enough. But he sure sees what happens.

Fingers, in them days Angles has a string of ten punchies who cannot kayo a fly with a sack full of the DDT's. So he ain't used to violence and he figures by the look in the big kids eyes that blink angrily from behind his red face that there is gonna be plenty of same shortly.

The big fella spins around on his stool like a runaway comet and with the speed of a big jungle 'cat he springs to his feet. Now Angles has seen such agility very little during the past months while trying to teach his line of ring cronies to stand up straight. Naturally his interest is aroused.

This big fellow with the crimson-flushed face looks like a wild man with his hair ruffled and his shirt tail half in and half out. Angles is giving the situation the once over out of the side of his eye while stirring his coffee with the wrong end of his spoon.

This big fellow who is by now so riled up you couldn't have settled him with one of those pretty-priced pills them rich babes in the movies are always swallowing. Nonetheless, Angles takes a swig of the mud in his cup and begins thinking of the big kid as a Tiger, mostly because of his quick response to his tormentors' jibes and also because of the look on the kid's contorted countenance, like he's like to commit mass murder.

He don't have no longer than to find out the coffee is lousy before the Tiger lays a right into the first fellow's nose. That one falls down and seems ready to stay a goodly while. The second one picks up a handy beverage bottle and breaks it up somewhat on the Tiger's head. But that never phases the Tiger, see. He kind of shakes his head an' turns around. The feller stands there looking at the remains of the bottle and then at the Tiger's head. By the time he figures out the wrong one is broken, the Tiger is holding him up with one hand and saying, "I have tried to reason with you patiently. You just do not want to understand."

Now Angles ain't sure if the ensuing left to the jaw kayos the second party or if he just naturally faints dead away. Either way there's no question of the results. And that settles the dust of the argument, leaving only the Tiger on his feet.

Being less shy when he senses money than at other times, Angles ambles over to the Tiger. Not too near, of course, but about to where chances of making it to his car is good if the Tiger is still feeling unsociable.

"Uh...tha's a pretty good combination you throws at them citizens," Angles says and takes another estimate of the distance to the door.

But the Tiger was awful much tamed down by then.

"I apologize, sir, if I spoiled your coffee break," the Tiger says, adding some other words with which Angles isn't familiar.

Angles thinks about the coffee and shudders. "Not your fault son, it was spoiled before I seen you. Say, kid, you a pro?"

Now, Fingers, you know the Tiger wasn't no pro then. Turns out he's a collich boy in one a them Texas schools and is working in the sawmill town to get enough lettuce to buy his way back in when the collich opens up again. Angles tries to cultivate up a friendship with the idea of increasing his zoo by one. But the Tiger, he don't want no part of it. He says he's going back to collich and study literashoor, plays and books and like that.

Then he says that Angles will have to excuse him because he's got a couple days off and is gonna hit the highway and ride his thumb home to see his pigeon.

Angles is what you call panic-stricken at the thought of such a mealticket thumbing his way outta his life, and says for the Tiger not to run off yet. "Where does this doll hang out at?" he asks.

"Oh, she lives down in Houston, sir," the Tiger tells Angles and the pressure dissolves faster'n in some of that three-point-two Angles pushed back in the old days.

And that's how Angles meets Waydell McIlvane, the same Texas Tiger who coulda waxed Killer Murdock last night if he wasn't so juiced up on that literachoor.

Of course, Angles says he will be proud to drive this Tiger to Houston, and the Tiger accepts.

So there's me and the big Swede in this gym in Houston, see? I'm trying to figure out some way to keep from getting him kilt at the hands of a local hope in the stellar attraction the next night. But when I see Angles come through the door, I forgets the big Swede. The big Swede forgets the big bag he's punching. The bag rolls back and dumps big Swede on the floor. Big Swede has been at least breaking even with the bag in all previous workouts but his luck now runs out.

Anyway, the center of our attent'ion is this tomato draped on Angles' arm. She is, like the song says, a real Texas tomato. Her hair is real red, and her build makes some of them Broadway dolls look like Willie Pep. About two steps back of them comes Waydell McIlvane, although at this time I do not know who he is. Only he looks like a tiger, even standing there looking like he's gonna apologize for having to breathe.

Angles walks over to us. He takes a gander at the Swede, who is sitting on the floor with his mouth hanging open and gawking at the frill.

Angles shudders, "I thought the bout wasn't until tomorra night. Anyway, Maxie Wilkins," he says to me, "I want you should meet Waydell McIlvane here, who could be the next heavyweight champeen."

After a couple of seconds I realize he's referring to the Tiger. Not the tomato. "Maxie," he tells the Tiger, "is about the best damn trainer in the business, Waydell. I am extremely fortunate in having him to patch up...er I mean...to work with my fighters."

I try to blush to make a good impression, but I keep looking at the doll and wondering why I couldn't have been born some 30 years later.

"And the frill?" I asks, turning to the tomato. "I didn't catch your moniker, lady."

She blushes for real and Angles gives me the same look the commissioner gives me twenty years ago when he finds that hypo in my training bag by mistake. "This here is Miss Cindy Woods, betrothed to marry Waydell here. By the way, Waydell," he tells the Tiger, who by this time is looking at the Swede like he's trying to figure out how he got there, "I got some personal business to discuss over with Maxie here, so you and Miss Cindy just look over the gymnasium, why don't you?"

As soon as the Tiger and the tomato walks off Angles says, "How's the Swede look, Maxie?"

"Real encouraging," I tells hir. He dressed by hisself this morning and even ordered his own breakfast." I thought a minute. "Of course, the waitress says they

is fresh outta chili burgers, there having been a big run on 'em about 7:15 a. m. before we gets there."

"Don't you worry none no more, Maxie boy," Angles tells me. "This Tiger with me today is a natural. If we can sign him we can turn our other properties into Ringling Brothers and get our deposit back."

Angles then fills me in on what he sees the Tiger do to them sawmill hands north of Houston, Texas. He also says that after he gets to know the Tiger he can't figure him ever getting mad enough to clobber somebody. So he naturally sounds the Tiger out, but he ain't talking.

Angles figures the only thing to do is to cultivate the tomato. And, for onct, he figures right. He gets her off alone shortly after him and the Tiger lands in Houston, Texas. He tells her how the Tiger creams them yokels and how agitated he seems to get before he does anything.

"Oh, dear, Mr. Slidell," she says to Angles in a greatly perturbed voice, "I knew this would happen. It always does. Waydell told me about those ruffians he works with. You see, Mr. Slidell, Waydell is a student of English literature. He's chosen Shakespeare for his thesis and has been doing research while working at the mill."

Now, Fingers, it seems this Shakespeare stands accused of being a fence for plays and etcetera wrote by a guy named Sir Francis Bacon. And the Tiger's theme, he's gonna write, proves onct and for all that Shakespeare writes all that stuff his ownself. It looks like that this Bacon don't even rate a percentage off the top.

Anyway, these guys at the mill keep on lissening to the Tiger rave on about the injustice of it and etcetera and begin to start in ribbing the Tiger.

Finally at the restaurant one of 'em says Bacon really delivers the goods and not the other citizen. The other one says, yeah, he goes along with that. Well, the Tiger loses all reason with that and begins acting like the Second Marines.

"And," Angles says very, very happily, "it seems anytime the Tiger hears someone making with the Bacon bit, he goes off the rocker and belts 'im one. I figure if we can ever convince him to turn pro, we can tell 'im before every fight that his opponent goes for Bacon in a big way. Then we just sit back and cheat on the income tax."

There don't seem to be no pickles in this idea except how to get the Tiger to turn pro. Just then, big Swede finds out he is on the floor and jumps up yelling, "What a crummy decision, he hits me below the belt every round and uses the laces on me good eye."

Now, Fingers, you might of heard somewhere along the line that I ain't got no brains, is why I work for a vegetable like Angles. That ain't the case. Them character assassins around this town just haul off and make that up. What it is is this unfortunate situation between me and the commissioner and that hypo. He don't prove nothing on me, Fingers, but the big managers is all scared off and I have to tie in with Angles to make a buck.

What I'm getting at is that as soon as big Swede rejoins the living I crystallize a plan. I fill Angles in on the details and he calls the Tiger back from a couple light-weights he is gawking at.

"Gracious, Mr. Slidell," he observes, "that little fellow is certainly adept at using his fists."

"That crumb," Angles mumbles darkly, "cost me three c's in Omaha. Claims he thought he was supposed to win. Anyway, Waydell, I just wondered if you and Miss Cindy would like two ringside skins to the fights tomorra night?"

Of course, Fingers, the Tiger spends thirty minutes apologizing to Angles for causing him so much trouble and thanking him for the ride into Houston, Texas. He says he couldn't accept no more favors from such a swell individual. The tomato looks disappointed, like she would of enjoyed an evening away from the public library.

"You must be on dope, Waydell," Angles says heartily. "I want to help you. Us...uh...Sharkspair lovers got to stick together. But if you want to earn them skins you might go a couple rounds with big Swede here to set him up...er...sharpen him up for tomorra night. You could repay the favor of driving you here and also earn them skins. You see, big Swede's so tough none of the locals will spar with 'im. But I promise to make 'im go easy with you."

All the time, Angles is holding the Tiger's elbow and steering him for the dressing room. The Tiger would of liked to beg off but he can't get many words in sidewise and them he does get in is to apologize whenever Slidell steps on his feet.

Big Swede hears Angles telling how tough he is and is even more confused than ever, which is considerable.

Anyway we piles big Swede across the ropes, untangles his left leg from the bottom two ropes and waits for the Tiger. I look at big Swede and think about what Angles has said about the Tiger and wonder if there's a lousier way to make a buck.

The Tiger comes out getting dragged by Angles. He musta had muscles in his eye-balls, they stood out everywhere else. I says that man gotta be the next champeen or there's something dirty in Denmark.

Well, they go at it for about two-three minits. Big Swede swings too hard onct and connects with his own ribs on the way back, causing him a shortage of breath. Other than that they ain't no bloodshed. The Tiger has the quickest reflexes ever seen. You might expect even a bum like big Swede to come clost onct ina wile, specially with the Tiger not even throwing one punch, just dodging in an out an standing there with 'is arms kinda dangling at 'is sides.

Finely, big Swede begins in to turning blue and is wheezing so hard from the exertion that the roof begins in to shaking, so Angles calls time.

This is where my plan makes its coop-de-grax. Angles moseys over to the Tiger's corner and kinda nonchalantly says something to the Tiger.

What he says is: "That big Swede is a fine lad. He is a keen student of English liter-a-choor." Then he backs up a step or two out of the Tiger's range and adds, "He's working on a deal to prove Bacon wrote all them things this Sharkspair is taking credit for."

With that I gets the signal from Angles and hits the bell. Angles pushes the Tiger out into the middle of the ring. Big Swede, who is recovered considerable and still is thinking of the nice words Angles says about him, staggers out with a grin like he's just been remembered in Aunt Molly's will.

The Tiger rushes into him and yells like a crazy man, "Surely, Mr. Swede, you must agree that only the Bard of Avon could have composed all those masterpieces."

With that the big Swede's chain of thought, such as it is, is broken. He asks what is surely the most innocent question of his innocent life: "What you talking about, rube?"

Just as I had figured, the Tiger misinterprets the hell out of that question. I never seen the punch he threw and I guess nobody else did either, it was so fast. Anyway, big Swede hit his customary horizontal position and it is clearly evident that he is receiving a long distance call.

Angles rushes into the right trying to look extremely distressed but just looking like he is in on the ground floor in a big hoist.

"Oh, good heavens, Waydell," he wails, and wipes another smile off his kisser, "now what am I going to do. The big fight is only 24 hours away and from all appearances big Swede should be resting comfortable for another three-four days." Angles is now gently wiping Swede's brow and holding the latter's head in 'is lap.

Well, Fingers, the Tiger like to of busted out into crying. He says if there is anything in the whole world he can do to make it up to Mr. Slidell, he should just tell 'im what.

Angles immediately stands straight up and big Swede's head falls a couple feet to the canvas, thereby adding a few more hours to his nap. I personally thought 'is lack of timing was in pretty bad taste, but the Tiger and Miss Cindy is so shock up they don't take no notice.

Angles smiles real fatherly and says, "Well, Waydell, I hate to ask you to do this, but I gotta protect my good name and provide the natives with a battle. You just sign on to sub for the big Swede tomorra nite and we're all square. Speaking of big Swede, somebody should haul the remains into the locker room. Maxie, call the janitor, will ya?"

Then Angles has the further bad taste to pull a contract, all filled out and only lacking the Tiger's signature, outta his coat pocket. "Just sign this, Waydell," he says. "Just to make it legal." The Tiger is in a kinda coma by now and Angles hauls out a pen and considerately tells me to bend over. I do and he places the contract on my back and right there in the middle of the ring he signs the Tiger into his stable.

Well, two minits before the fight we tell the Tiger that the local boy is a big Bacon man. Three minits after that they is carrying the local boy back to the cotton fields and we is preparing to carry the Texas Tiger back to New York.

"But, Mr. Slidell," he whines when we tell 'im to get packed, "I have months of work ahead of me before my research is terminated. It's inconceivable that I leave."

Onct again, my brain goes into operation. "Lookit, Waydell," I tells him, "we got a lotta commitments. I don't suppose he has over two or three to fill, does he?"

"Lookit, Waydell," I says, "This here collich you go to, it's got a football team don't it? Yeah, that's what they for. You know they gotta book them games four-five years in advance, don't you?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Maxie." The Tiger was starting in to turn green.

"Well, Waydell, it's the same in all these sports rackets! We got him lined up for the next 52 months."

A tear flows down the Tiger's big jaw. "I'm a man of my word, Mr. Slidell," and he's talking in a whisper. "I shall fill the commitments."

You know, Fingers, at first we are worried he'll catch on. Read the sports pages, you know, and get wise about us arranging a new match for him. But he never catches on. Fingers, that crazy Tiger never reads the sports page. He never gets past the Times Book Section.

You know what happens then, Fingers. We bring the Texas Tiger back home. Inside two months he's a main-eventer. Year 'n a half, Ring Magazine rates, rates 'im only logical contender. That chicken champeen ducks out for another year till the commissioner puts the heat on 'im to fight or get offa the pot.

Finely, all of the arrangements is made for a heavyweight champeenship fight. The Tiger is knocking guys silly so fast up to then that some of the sporting writers is even suggesting he be barred from fighting. They say he is not human, with that cold hatred oozing outta 'is eyes when he looks atta opponent acrost the ring. Of course, Fingers, we are very careful to tell nobody, but nobody, that we are putting that hatred into the eyes of a very kind individual before each fight.

Well, there's where Angles makes one a 'is customary boo-booes. The odds go up to thirteen and five in favor of our Tiger and Angles is feelin' so good he tells the Tiger why not send home to Houston, Texas, for Miss Cindy. It would help him, meaning the Tiger's morale and all like that.

Miss Cindy shows at Stillman's couple days before the fight. Everybody gawks when she comes in and even big Swede comes to long enough to size her up.

"Man, that's some stack you got there, Waydell," I tells him outta the corner my mouth.

Waydell just stands there smiling and don't tell her nothin. Instead he says, "There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip; nay, her foot speaks." That's Shakespeare, Maxie."

I ain't looking at her feet but I get the message.

The Tiger and the tomato bill 'n coo around for awhile, then I have to run 'im back to work. Angles, instead a keeping his eye on the Tiger's piece of luggage, is off somewheres trying to lay a couple gees, borrowed, on 'is boy. That's mistake number two.

Now, Fingers, what happens after that we don't learn of until immediately after the fight. Otherwise, there wouldn't of been no fight.

This Chips Capozelli is hanging around Stillman's. In case something ain't tied down, he wants to be there. And there's the tomato, all unattended and all. So Chips heads for her.

"Miss Cindy," he smiles at 'er, "allow me to innerduce myself. I am Mr. Ginetti Capozelli, but me friends call me 'Chips.' I make book around town and I am here to show you and your Waydell how you can make a nice bundle of lettuce."

See, Fingers, with odds at thirteen and five Capozelli figures to clean up by working a tank job through the frill. Only she is so sheltered she don't get the pitch, would you believe it?

"Oh, Mr. Capozelli," she squeals, "how marvelous to meet a man in the book business. I've found there are so few persons in this field with any literary learnings. You must read Waydell's paper on Shakespeare. You might even want to buy it for your concern." And she goes on like that.

Capozelli musta figure he hitches onto a real nut, but he has to ride it out because she shows signs of talking onwell into the night.

Finely, the tomato is pouring her heart out to Capozelli about how the Tiger would like to get out of the business and back to 'is collich and one thing and another. And she tells him about how Waydell hates to bash all them tankers but it's not really his fault cause he wouldn't hurt a fly. Unless it says something about Shakespeare, that is.

And Capozelli says, "You mean he won't fight if he ain't mad at the guy?" He just cannot believe this but the tomato is so sheltered and all that he figures she has to be leveling.

Well, Fingers, this cheap rat Capozelli makes for the champ's training camp and sells out the info for a bundle. He then bets this bundle and I figure he musta collected about three sackfulls cee notes alone this morning.

Anyway, before the fight last night we start inta giving the Tiger the usual stuff about the Champeen being for Bacon and against Shakespeare.

Then we go out into the Garden. Man, them customers made a racket when they seen the Tiger. Guys yelling "Hey, there, new Champeen" and "Stiffen 'im in one like all the rest, Tiger" and like that.

The bell rings and the Tiger by now is hopping mad at the Champeen. He runs acrost the ring and throws one from the heels. The Champeen ducks and clinches Tiger into a neutral corner. Then he whispers something into the Tiger's ear. The Tiger looks positively demented. Finely he smiles and looks like he wouldn't hurt a rabies germ.

He says something back to the Champeen and makes like he's gonna throw 'is arms around him and kiss 'im. Then the Champeen brings a right in from about the fourth row out. It's the greatest punch he ever throws, but it don't hurt the Tiger.

However, the Tiger is a little off balance when it lands, him having his arms up in the air and all. He goes down on his side. He ain't hurt but he ain't getting up. Instead he's saying something to me and Angles. We cannot hear him with all the customers yelling and whistling and anyway, we are too busy yelling back at him to get up. Instead he crawls over to us so's we can hear 'im better. By now the referee is counting up to four.

"For shame, for shame, Mr. Slidell and Mr. Maxie," he yells at us above the noise. "You have not been truthful with me. The Champeen is a great admirer of the Bard. The first thing he said to me was, 'With all my love I do commend to you; And what so poor a man as Hamlet is may do t' express his love and friending to you, God willing, shall not lack.'"

"Jeez, willya please git up, ya iggernant farmer," Angles screams.

The referee counts ten and the Tiger keeps sitting there yelling at us. "When he said that, I cried, 'Hamlet! Act One, Scene Five, Lines 185 to 187' and he answered, 'Sure, Tiger, me and Shakespeare is real close.' I'm very disappointed in the fabrication you two men saw fit to concoct for me. Why, I might have injured a fellow believer in my wrath."

"Let's go get drunk," Angles says to me.

And that bandit manager of the Champeen is standing acrost the ring grinning at Angles and I. He is holding up a big book and is yelling at us, "It takes me a day'n a half to teach the Champeen them lines outta this book." He starts inta laughing at us.

That's about the way it really is, Fingers. Miss Cindy and the Tiger leaves for Texas this morning onna train; I just come from seein' 'em off. He's going back to collich on 'is earnings.

By the way, it seems the Tiger is fretting over nothing in regards this Shakespeare vs. Bacon situation. It is Shakespeare doing the writing alla time. All the Tiger needs to find this out is to lookit the cover the book the Champeen's manager is holding. Right there on the front of it it says by William Shakespeare.

Well, Fingers, thanks for the drink. I gotta get back by the gym. Angles picks up two goons from the garment district this a. m. and goes after Capozelli. I promist 'im I'd get down by the gym and work up a air-tight alibi for 'im.

FIRST LOVE

I ask, my friend, if you have seen
A boy in love at seventeen?
And if you have I know that you
Will grant that all I say is true.

He'll sit around with vacant eye
Not seeing those who pass him by,
And then mayhaps will gently smile
Still seeing nothing all the while.

Don't think that I regret to see
This boy so absent minded be,
For well I know life's sweetest hour
Is when we first have felt love's power.

-- Rick Pezdirtz

TO THOSE WHO LOVE

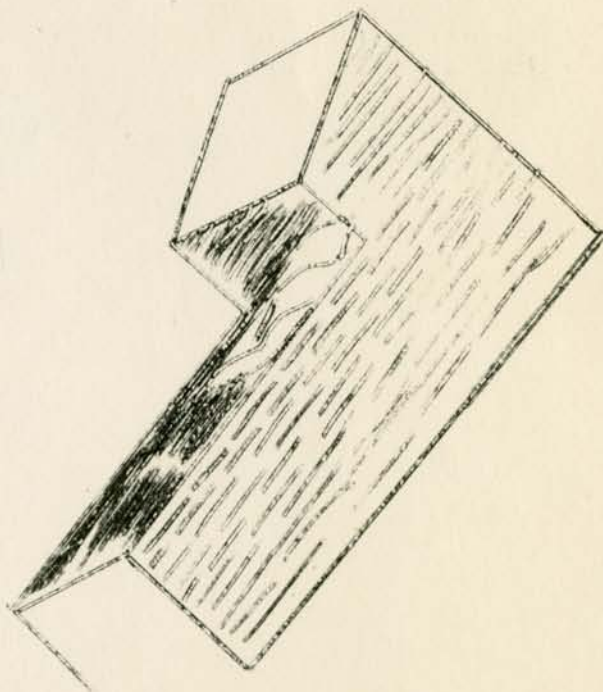
The check was made out to her. Fifteen dollars. It was all the money she had. Despite scrimping on the menus and buying the cheapest cuts of meat, Beth was down to this one check, the gift from her grandfather. She looked at it. The paper was getting crumpled and soiled. It was saved for the new dress she would need after the baby arrived. It was not long now, and Beth looked forward with wonder, awe, and even a little fear to the forthcoming event. She'd stayed inside the little apartment most of the last month. It would be wonderful to throw away these two ugly outfits she'd worn for so long. But the problem was how she could buy the bassinet for the baby.

Beth felt like crying. She often felt this way lately, even when she wasn't worried about paying the bills and such. Since there seemed no solution to her problem anyway, she fell across the bed and sobbed, sniffed, and then sobbed some more.

Outside on the apartment door, a card bore the names, Mr. & Mrs. Paul W. Stephens. Beth had not dreamed that it would be hard to find a place to live. When she met and fell in love with Paul, such matters as apartment hunting, grocery buying, and meal planning were trivial, far-away things that came to her mind only in a blurred sort of fashion. To be sure, Paul had talked and schemed over these subjects--while she was thinking how exciting life with Paul would be. He loved his work and told her many interesting and funny stories about the boys at the office. Beth had been christened Elizabeth and called "Liz" by the crowd at school; but Paul thought "Beth" suited her, and "Beth" she was. That didn't leave much choice for the baby's name--not of course, unless it be a boy!

Thinking again of the baby, Beth sniffed her last sniff. She wasn't supposed to indulge in such self-pity. It might not be good for the baby. But for months she had put off buying the bassinet and it could not be put off any longer. She had found a beautiful one, fully lined with clouds of soft pink. No other one would do after she saw it. There was a partial hood over one end to knock off the draft, and the bed was on legs with wheels, so that she could roll it from room to room as she worked. Every time Beth went to town, she looked at it. There was a blue one too, but Beth loved the pink one best. Paul had thought they might save out enough after the rent and monthly bills were cared for, but now they were down to Grandfather's birthday check.

Suddenly Beth whirled from the window. Her face was shining, her eyes brilliant. She ran a comb through her hair, carefully made up her face. Paul was proud of her for keeping herself



pretty. He'd always said that a woman should look her prettiest during this period of her life. Beth picked up her purse, left the Paul W. Stephens apartment, and headed for the bus stop on the corner.

She took the elevator to the fourth floor. The sign read, "Furniture".

"May I see the bassinets, please?" Beth asked the white-haired saleslady.

"Right this way, dear. We have these inexpensive ones that are unlined, and these which have legs that fold and can be carried in the car, and..."

"No, no, I want one of these better ones here," Beth interrupted hastily.

"We have these darling ones for only \$14.95. Do you wish to buy the pink or the blue? Pink is for girls, and blue for boys, you know."

"Yes, I know. The pink will do. Could you send it out this afternoon?"

"Oh, yes, the delivery boy leaves in just a few minutes for his last delivery. Just write your address here plainly, please."

"Here is my check."

There! It was done. Wouldn't Paul be surprised when he got home. Goodbye, check. Goodbye, new dress. Baby wouldn't recognize the old last-year things anyway.

The time flew by the rest of the afternoon. The delivery boy brought the cherished bed and Beth hid it. She wanted to pick her own time to show Paul. Supper was ready. Beth felt more excited than she could remember!

There was Paul's step coming down the hall. She was in his arms.

"Hi! You all right?...Are you sure?" Paul held her at arms length. He looked worried. Poor Paul. He felt bad about not buying the baby bassinet. But he was smiling.

"Got a real surprise for you! You know I told you about all the boys at the office putting a dollar "in the pot" on last week's game? Well, I, your old brow-beaten husband, won and that was really something. Do you know what that meant? It meant that I left the office \$15 richer than when I got there. Now, close your eyes. Tight! -- Now look."

"Oh, oh!" There stood the blue bassinet!

What strange wonderful happenings. Dear Paul! Beth was glad the pink bassinet was safely hidden in her closet. Blue is for boys; pink is for girls. -- What to do about the other bassinet? She could think about that tomorrow. Right now there was her family to think of and to feed! Anyway lots of times people did have twins!

ADVICE

"Live one day at a time," she said.
"Wait and work, be patient," she said.
But tell me how one waits and waits --
When the heart has gone ahead?

-- Katherine Nelson

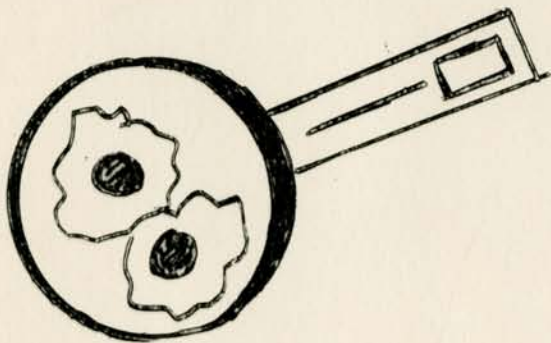
THE EGGS DID IT

All sorts of sounds were struggling to break through my subconscious. Once I thought I heard church bells, and then the voice of a child singing, "Here Comes the Bride." This caused my eyes to pop open. Why do I have to dream of wedding music on this of all days? Today is the day I file for divorce. I simply refuse to think about it now.

The icy floor against my warm feet slowed my intentions and caused me to crawl back between the covers. I ventured a foot over to Mark's side of the bed. It was as cold as the floor and seemed very spacious. Mark had never had cold feet. So what? Maybe I never would find another guy who could sleep with my cold feet stacked on his. Who wants another guy anyway? One had been one too many for me. Lipstick! Light pink lipstick! Men know so little. But you would think that they would know light pink lipstick is for blondes. And my hair coal black. Mark was so dumb about colors. Even when he made his earnest confession, he wanted to know how I could tell the color of the culprit's hair just by examining the lipstick on the front of his shirt. With such a generous serving as Mark brought home, there was not a doubt about the color.

It's funny how much space a man's shaving equipment can occupy in a small bathroom. Try as I may, I could not reach the toothpaste. It was on the top shelf. Mark always reached it for me...Not tears again. I had sworn not to allow another one.

How empty a closet is without five pairs of size ten shoes. All the empty bureau drawers. If only I could have had agreed to move to Austin when the promotion had been offered to Mark. Everything might have worked out.



Mark had begged me to believe that his taking a girl out while I was visiting Mother was something that never happened before, and gave a solemn vow that it would never happen again. I had not wanted to go to Mother's alone in the first place. Father had wired me to come for her emergency operation. After all, no one wanted a husband who could not be left alone in emergencies. One thing that Mark had kept saying just did not make sense to me. Over and over, he said, "Honey, can't I make you see that my taking this girl out was something that I did in weakness and that it has absolutely nothing to do with how I feel about you?"

The strangest part is that Mother could understand this statement and agree with Mark. I guess you have to know a man for a long time to be able to figure him out. Mother could talk though because Dad had not given her any trouble...Or had he?...I just wonder...

Before I noticed what I had done, I had broken two eggs into the skillet. In my whole life I never ate all of one. I wondered how long it would take me to get accustomed to this eternal oneness that was constantly being forced to my attention. I picked up the spoon to turn the eggs, and suddenly they weren't eggs at all. Those two eye-like things were no longer yellow; they were beautiful blue-green eyes like Mark's.

I shoved skillet, eggs and all into a sink full of water and dashed for the phone. I swallowed some salty liquid and dialed Mark's office. I was half crying, half laughing. "Mark, I can't reach the toothpaste, my feet are cold, and dinner will be at eight to-night."

"Dinner?" Mark shouted. "I haven't had an egg yet. Fry me two. I am on my way."

THE LITERATURE STUDENT'S LAMENT

To master my assignments I
Sincerely strive and strain;
I grapple with my literature
And wrack my weary brain.
I peer at all the poems between
The covers of my book,
And at the wealth of matter
Dare a second look.
Ralph Emerson stares back at me
From out the Oversoul;
I gather certain from his works
The universe is whole.
And Melville speaks of ships and sails
In highly inspired tone;
I cannot share his views for I
To seasickness am prone.
Thoreau is soothing, in a way,
When praising Walden Pond;
Though of fraternizing with the ants
I wouldn't be too fond.
The wraithlike Poe emerges next,
'Mid gruesome shrieks and groans,
And shatters my tranquility
With ghosts and rattling bones.
Freneau applauds the Indians,
A brave and noble race;
But I'm afraid that I have never
Met one face to face,
And so his sentiments have not
Impressed me very much,
For I am not attracted to
A burying-ground, as such.
So when I burn the midnight oil
Each night, till one or two,
I'm haunted by this formidable
Literary crew.

-- Sonja Fojtik

CRACK-UP

Sirens screamed as the big crash-trucks revved up, and the tires squealed as they rolled out of the hangar and then skidded off the apron and onto the runway. Emergency whistles pierced the air, red lights flashed in all the flightline buildings, and people were running--running everywhere.

Lieutenant Bill Barton had just pulled up to the runway when he heard and saw the action--a nightmare to every pilot. He braked to a stop and stood up in the seat of the open-topped jeep. He could see the jet circling low but a long way off. Jumping from the jeep, he raced for the control tower steps and took them four at a time. About half way to the top he passed a blurred uniform coming down and shouted, "Who is it?"

The uniform's voice replied, "Hanson! Fire in the canopy!"

"Oh, God!" Bill uttered, quickening his pace.

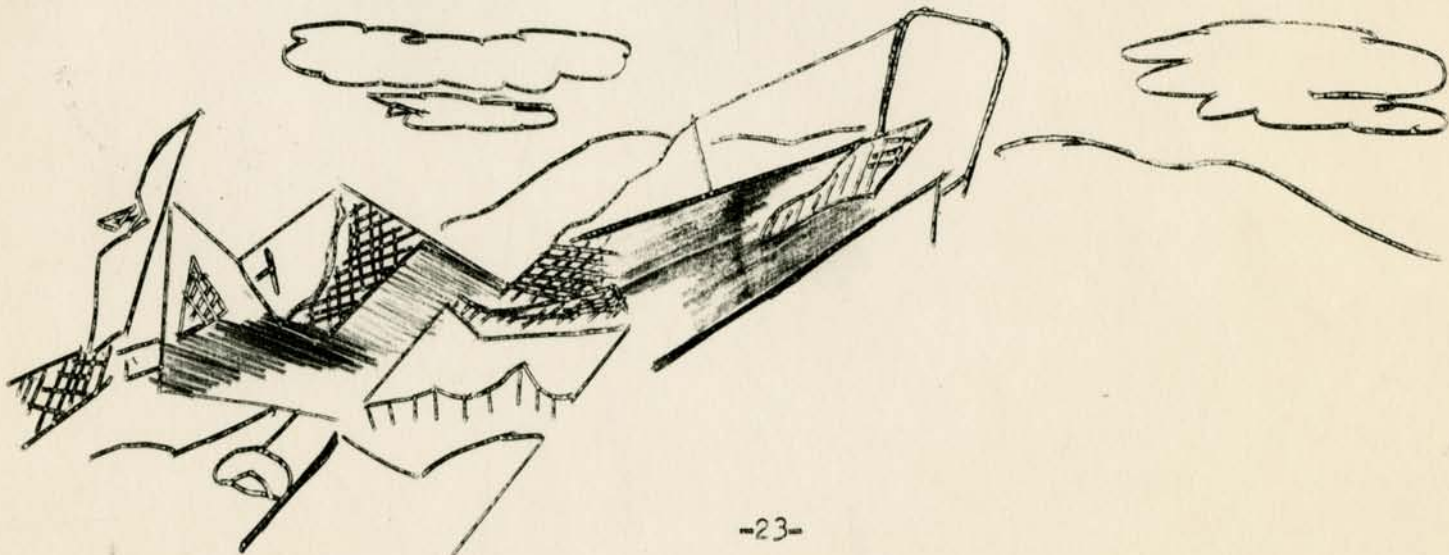
Hanson was Barton's best buddy, but they were on different shifts and Bill had just come on duty. As he burst into the tower door, he stopped in the middle of the floor and looked through the tinted glass walls for sight of the jet.

"Can he make it?"

The Colonel looked back from his binoculars, irritated by the noise, but when he saw it was Barton he turned back to the scene and said: "I don't know, Bill. It's bad."

Barton picked up a pair of idle binoculars and moved closer to the glass wall. One of the tower operators answered Bill's unspoken questions.

"We don't know how bad it is. We lost contact with him on all channels just after the May-day. He said he had fire in the cabin, but that he was go'na try an' bring her down. Then everything went dead. He's too low to jump."



Bill did not answer but stared into the glasses. Oh God. What happened? Help him!

The jet was coming in for the final approach now, and though it was down at the far end of the longest runway--still only a speck--Bill could see that there was much, too much smoke.

Hanson brought her in fine until he got within a few feet of the ground, then each wing began to dip, first to one side then to the other, like a crippled seagull trying to land on the water between waves.

Barton was watching so intently that his eyes began to water, but his throat was dry from holding his breath to keep the glasses from shaking.

The stricken plane dipped worse as it approached the section of the strip where the crash-trucks were lined up and waiting. Everyone was beginning to think he might make it until one wing dipped just a hair too low and hit the runway. Instantly the silver, swept-back, ship flipped over, and as its back came down on the concrete, it burst into a blinding, smoking, orange flame.

Barton jerked straight up in bed, shaking.

"Hey, Mom! Turn off that screaming tea kettle!"

His hand half crumpled the cigarettes he reached from the night table. God. I been out four years now. Will I ever forget?

ROSE GARDEN: AN ESSAY

Every woman should have a rose garden, be it ever so small. Especially is this true of the temperamental woman, for there is nothing in all the world quite as effective as fragrant roses to sweeten the disposition of a sensitive person. If she has a rose garden to patter around in and a few roses that smile at her each day, she unbends her cramped personality and permits her own inner beauty to unfold like the rose. It is an error to think there are some who have no inner beauty. Certainly some have more than others--just the same as in the Bible story of the talents of silver. Still, each person possesses some inner quality of worth. Whether that God-given quality is cultivated or hidden under inconsequential trifles remains for the individual herself to determine.

The woman who turns to rose gardening has made the first step in attaining the desirable cultivation of her own personality. The roses that bloom in the sun, the response of the earth to the planter-tender's work, the song of the birds that drop by--all have their influence.

Roses are like people--like life itself. They are the rich green leaves of early youth, the swelling buds of adolescence, the unfolding flower of young adulthood, and the full blown rose of maturity. If they are not plucked by the hand of Fate, they stay awhile and then send spent petals lightly to the soft earth just as an elderly person--his day spent--loses his hold on life and settles down to eternal repose.

Roses are like life in other ways too. Their gardens are not just "a bed of roses." Obstacles confront them. The roses have their thorns, just as life has its handicaps and faults. Sometimes insects and pests blight the rose just as gossip and bad habits injure persons. There are rain and sunshine for the roses, as there are happiness and sorrow for humanity. The roses have their own personality,--their fragrance. Birds, bees, and butterflies are their friends. Roses are the epitome of life.

Make a rose garden. Let it be where the sun shines and the rain falls lightly--sheltered from the winds. Have a path to the door. Walk among the roses and breathe deeply of their fragrance, assimilating and making them a part of you. Make a rose garden in your heart.

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