

DELAWARE LAWYER

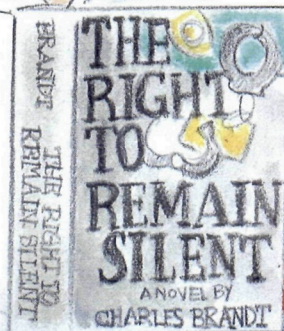
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Volume 14 Number 2

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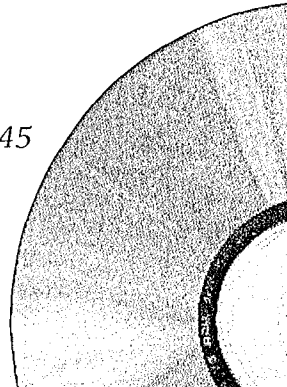
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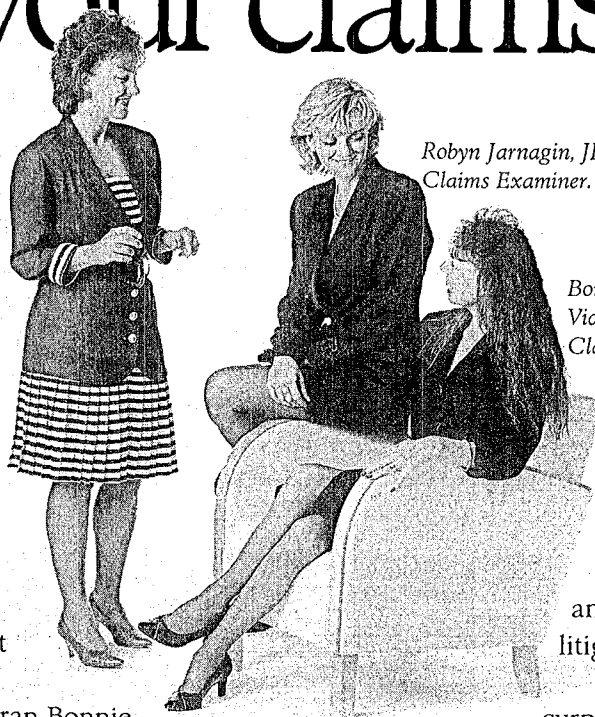
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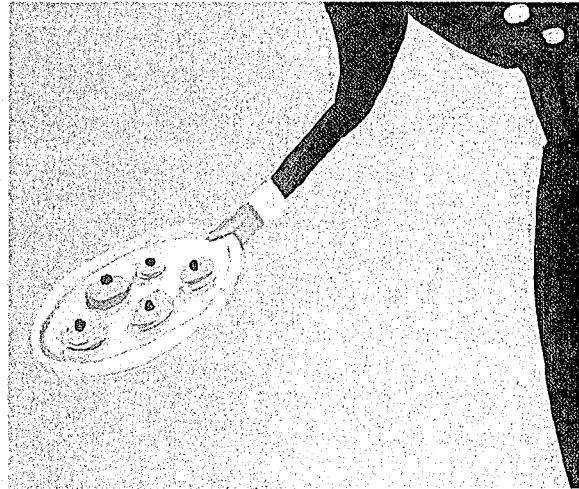
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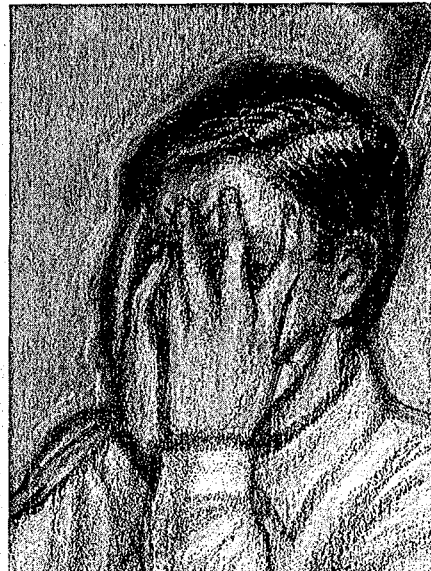
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The Red Ball

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SPLINTERS FROM THE CHAIR

by Vernon R. Proctor

For the first time in a long while, if not ever, *Delaware Lawyer* is pleased to present a selection of fiction written by Delaware attorneys. These stories prove that the best legal fiction is not always contained in briefs or in disappointing opinions. Nor is it found in the mind-numbing best sellers of Turow, Grisham and the like. *Au contraire*: here among us in the Delaware Bar are some truly fine writers.

The responses to our solicitation of contributions were few in number but high in quality. First to respond, as I might have expected, was Bill Prickett. Within a day after I faxed my "all-points bulletin" regarding this issue, Bill sent me a previously unpublished, 44-page article entitled "The Red Ball." The story was writ-

ten in 1974, but we are pleased to announce that it appears for the first time in 1996 in *Delaware Lawyer*.

"The Red Ball," broadly speaking, is about a parent's worst nightmare. Its tone is evocative of a bygone era — not the 1970s, but the 1920s, when the novels of Fitzgerald and Marquand were in full flower. The characters are well-developed, and the cocktail party conversations are authentic and richly presented. I cannot say that it is an uplifting piece, because it is not, but it is tautly written and spellbinding.

Helen Winslow has contributed "A Candle For Clara" and a short piece of haiku. Helen is a perfectionist: her story went through as many drafts as a good lawyer's brief. "A Candle For Clara" is a reflective, bittersweet story that reminded me of *Sophie's Choice*: a sensitive portrayal of a tormented soul, with a bit of a 90s twist.

"Yours truly" has prepared an updat-

ed version of a favorite fairy tale, with a bit of local flavor. I hope you enjoy it.

Rounding out our theme is Elaine Reilly's thought-provoking article concerning the often tenuous relationship of "legal fiction" to professional reality. Her analysis is persuasive and is seasoned by a dollop of wry wit.

We hope that more Delaware lawyers will see fit to contribute works of short fiction to this magazine from time to time. I was pleased to see that, in this instance at least, the authors wrote about subjects other than the law and lawyering. I don't know about you, but when I get home from a hard day at the office, the last thing I want to read about is lawyers.

Enjoy these works and, er, don't forget to write!

Vernon R. Proctor

Contributors



Elaine Reilly, a member of the *Delaware Lawyer* Board of Editors, is a 1990 graduate of Harvard Law School and currently practices commercial and corporate litigation with Morris, Nichols, Arsht & Tunnell. She enjoys reading Dr. Seuss and watching *Sesame Street* with her son Patrick and husband Michael.



Helen L. Winslow is a part-time associate at Richards, Layton & Finger and the chair of the Delaware Bar History Committee. When not busy with her professional activities, she enjoys spending as much time as possible with her three exuberant children.



William Prickett, a third generation lawyer of that name, is the senior partner of Prickett, Jones, Elliott, Kristol & Schneec. He is a corporate trial lawyer, and writes some, travels some, foxhunts some, and bicycles some when not practicing law.

William Prickett

THE RED BALL

John slowly closed the front door but stood there for a moment looking out at the last of the departing cars. It was raining and the November wind was blowing the soggy and unraked leaves around the front yard in the light from the porch. Toby, the family water spaniel, stood outside on the porch in the light with his head, as always, cocked on one side, wagging his stumpy tail and whining; he wanted to get in. On any other night, John would have let him in without hesitation. Then together they would have gone up to Little John's room where Toby slept with the child. However, John just couldn't do it. He turned out the porch light and walked slowly away from the door, leaving Toby puzzled and whining outside.

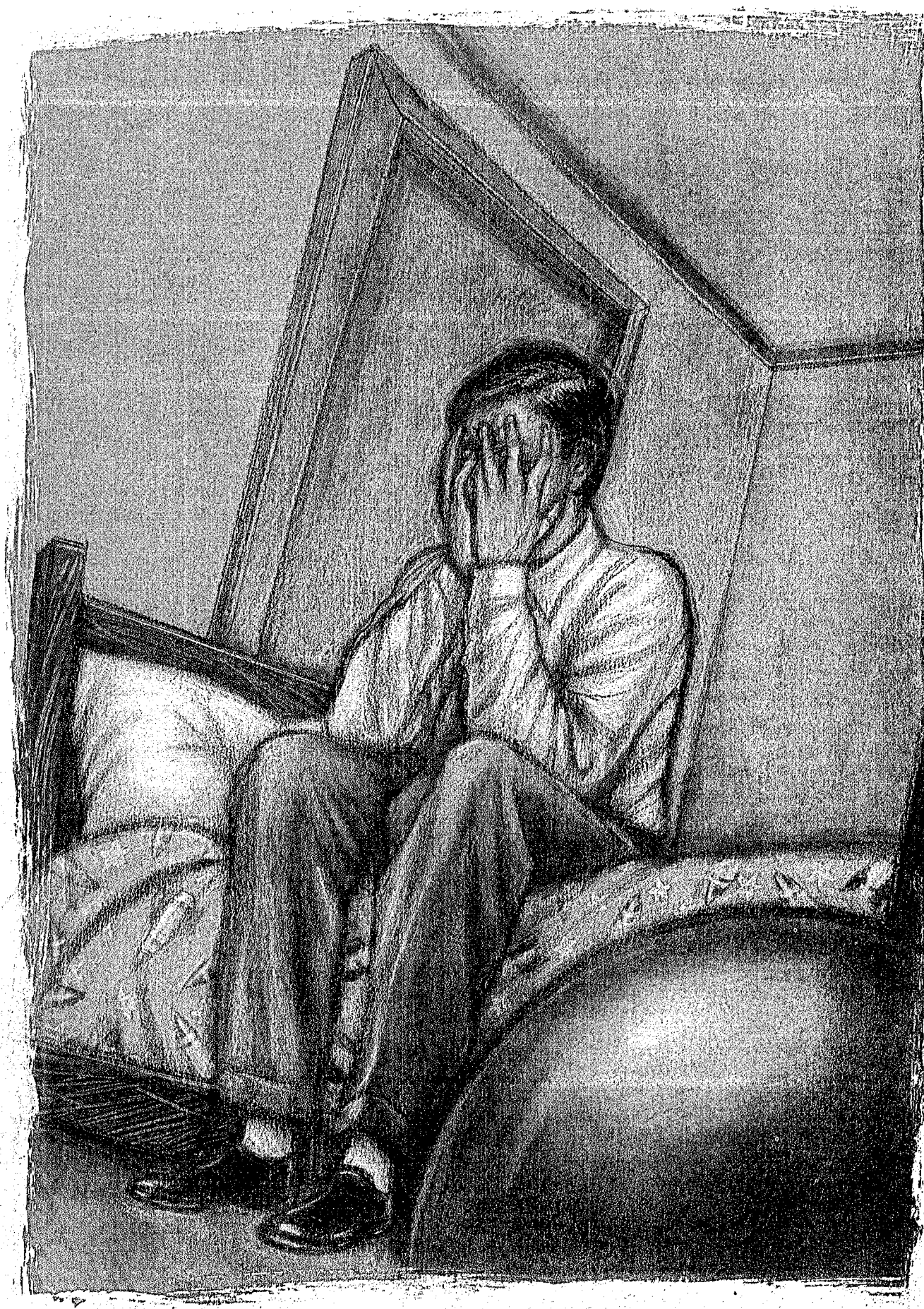
John went across the brick hallway and down the two steps into the living room. The living room was totally dark except for the light that came from the light on the telephone table in the hall he had just left, but John was thoroughly familiar with all of the furniture and the countless small objects that had found their way to cocktail trays and side tables — the lamp from his Great Aunt Sophie's house in Weatherly, scrimshaw from some unknown attic, a Chinese ashtray in bronze, a pair of George Jensen silver ashtrays that were a gift from Emma's roommate at the time of their wedding. He therefore threaded his way through the clusters of furniture almost instinctively and sank heavily into his chair by the fireplace. It had been the first moment that he had been alone since the awful events of that morning. It was the first chance he had had time to think it all over. The house was totally quiet — except for the ticking of the grandfather clock which had come from his Grandfather David's house in Connecticut. Emma was asleep upstairs: not the natural sleep after an exhausting day but sleep or rather blessed unconsciousness produced by the hypodermic which Dr. Tom had given her.

With a painful start, John realized that the house was quiet in another sense. Quiet in the sense that Little John's room was empty: there was no little form sleeping soundly curled up around Jo-Jo, his great teddy bear with red pants. Jo-Jo was

alone in the little bed. Normally, the last thing that John did on his way to bed, no matter how late it was, was to go quietly into the little room. Toby would be there in the corner wagging his tail. The room would be dimly lighted by the night light just showing the little bed and "Winnie the Pooh" pictures around the walls which Little John's godmother had given him on his third birthday, not a month before. Ostensibly, this visit was to check and make sure that the blankets were straight and that the little boy had not fallen out of bed. Actually, John knew that Emma always made the same ritual visit on her way up: Little John was a long-awaited only child for both of them. Tonight, there was no perfectly formed little body in the blue pajamas decorated with red chickens to straighten out and tuck in as there had been at this time last night. How had it all happened, and why? He sat there alone in the darkness and started to think back.

He was surprised that, at a time like this, he could recall everything with clarity and that he was not utterly flattened by shock and horror as Emma obviously was. He wondered how he could be so calm and dispassionate after what had happened that morning. As he puzzled over his own objectivity, he thought back to a time many years ago when, as a small boy, he taken a heavy two-headed timber axe from his Grandfather David's toolshed at the farm in Connecticut without permission. He had gone alone into the woods to cut down a birch tree to make an Indian canoe. After hacking away for awhile at the stout white sapling he had picked out, he had missed the tree. The axe had swung around in a semicircle and had somehow struck him in the right ankle, opening a great gaping red cut. He knew immediately that he had a bad, deep cut. However, he had not felt any pain at the time and the blood had not immediately gushed out as it later did. It was only after he somehow managed to get back up to the white farmhouse on the hill and into the kitchen and into the ample bosom of his grandmother that he had become scared at the sight of the blood across the clean linoleum floor. It was then that the leg began to hurt. Similarly, now his bandaged hands which he had not really felt all that day began to ache.

He also recalled the frosty night when he had been knocked



down by the explosion of a Chinese mortar at a crossroads near the Changin Reservoir as he was trying to get what was left of B Company back to the Third Battalion. He thought that he had not been hit, though his radio man, Corporal Kitt, standing behind him had caught it in the stomach and had had to be carried, groaning all night long, though he died before sun-up. He himself had felt no pain when he picked himself up. It was only in the morning when they were more or less safely back within the battalion perimeter that he had peeled off his combat jacket and realized that the dampness that he had felt all night had been blood oozing from his own shoulder from a mortar fragment which had cracked his collarbone after penetrating the muscle of the shoulder.

Now, in similar fashion, he was sitting, as it were, under the impending wave of his own grief and misery. He knew that this wave was about to break and would, in all probability, engulf him. But, as yet, he was strangely untouched and could still look at the whole ghastly episode as if he were a stranger to Emma, to Little John and even to himself.

Where did it begin? He thought about his first wife, Doris, and the long bitter course of their divorce, wondering briefly whether his own hardness in that tragic childish marriage was in some way related to what had now happened to him. He rejected the thought: the disastrous marriage to Doris, including the divorce, had long since been over and done with and could have no connection with the death today of Little John.

He then turned to more recent events. The week at the office had been frantic. He had had to dragoon all of the department heads into cutting their budgets and putting them into shape for the final meeting that was to come on Friday with the President, Garner Eustas — or "Cactus Jack" as he was referred to by those who knew and disliked him. The disastrous financial events of the past year had to be reviewed and the plans for the coming year had to be revised. When it actually came to the Friday round of conferences, "Cactus Jack" was at his best or, rather, his worst: wildly impatient with the detailed accounting figures and always demanding why operating results were not better.

Actually, even as John thought about it from the depth of his chair by the fireplace in the darkened living room, he knew that the conference had gone well.

Even the young "know-it-all" Treasurer, Tom Trappnell, recently graduated from Harvard Business School and full of modern ideas, had in the end looked to him, as all the others did, for the energy and drive to bring each point to a solid decision and then get "Cactus Jack" to acquiesce in what actually had to be done in the coming year. However, even during that busy Friday, at odd times when, for instance, John Gibson, the Controller, was endlessly quibbling with Larry Filsen, the CPA, and Isaac Rosener, the Tax Attorney, about what seemed to John to be esoteric accounting principles that had little to do with actual operations and, hence, results, John's thoughts had strayed to the coming weekend. He mentally made plans to rake the leaves in the front yard for a final time, prune the young apple trees which he had planted, straighten up the garage and fix Little John's swing. However, what he was actually looking forward to was having Little John all to himself on both Saturday and Sunday — he and the little boy would work and play and roughhouse together with Toby as a third participant in the fun. Though his attention had at times strayed, when the conference was finally at an end at 4:30, John knew that the reason the conference had gone well was due principally to his efforts. He was, however, bone tired.

But the day had not ended with the conference: "Cactus Jack," as shrewd with people as he was knowledgeable about heavy construction equipment, knew that the sharp differences of opinion and veiled personality clashes were best healed right away over a drink. He therefore invited, or rather summoned, all of them to join him, even the fussy CPA Filsen, whom "Cactus Jack" plainly disliked, to join him at the Country Club on the west side of town. Though John was tired and had no real desire to have a drink "with the boys," he knew that this "fence mending" was important all the way around so that there was nothing to do but to drive out and join all of them at the Club.

"Cactus Jack" was probably at his best as a host for the "boys" in the men's bar. His irascibility that had so plainly shown all through the day was entirely gone and he was downright genial with everyone, including Filsen. "Cactus Jack" set the tone by insisting on "doubles" for everyone and telling his favorite dirty jokes, which most of them had heard before. John, who had been recently elected to the Club,

remembered that William, the bar waiter, had brought him a double scotch on the rocks. John happened to sit next to "Cactus Jack" at the large round table. At one point, "Cactus Jack" leaned over and had laid his great brawny arm on John's arm and murmured quietly to John: "Good show, Johnnie Boy. Come and see me Monday, say at 10:00. I want to discuss some front office changes with you that we should make before the Board meeting after Thanksgiving." John's heart had leapt. He knew right away that this was "Cactus Jack's" way of telling John that "Cactus Jack" was going to make good his longstanding promise to make John Executive Vice President of the company. Sitting there around the table, exchanging wisecracks with the others, he was actually savoring what such a promotion would mean: a new house, new responsibility at the company — all sorts of things floated before his eyes.

It was 6:30 before John could gracefully extricate himself from the group which had now completely loosened up under the benign guidance of the now thoroughly friendly "Cactus Jack," who was regaling the group with stories of his early exploits as a heavy equipment operator during the building of the Burma Road. He decided on the way home to tell Emma what "Cactus Jack" had hinted at.

Emma was there at the front door in an evening dress, clearly waiting for him when he got to the house. As she gave him a swift peck on the cheek, she said briskly: "Hi, dear, what sort of a day did you have?" Without waiting for his answer, she said: "Hurry, we're due at dinner at the Watsons' at 7:30. I've laid out a change for you except for a tie which you can pick out yourself." That clearly had not been the time to tell Emma of the impending promotion. John said to himself, "Damn, I should have simply put my foot down and said that I was too damn tired to go out." However, even as he thought back, he recognized that there was no possibility that he would have refused to go out, even if Emma would have agreed, which she wouldn't. They had accepted the Watsons' dinner invitation fully two weeks ago. Besides, he was exhilarated by the way things had gone that day and especially by what "Cactus Jack" had hinted. Most important, he knew that he always had an especially good time at a dinner party at the Watsons'. There was therefore no real possibility that he could have avoided the fatal first step.

He had dropped his overcoat on a front hall chair and had gone through the swinging door into the brightly lighted kitchen, saying "Good evening, Josie," to Josephine, the housekeeper, babysitter and maid. Sitting at his small table finishing his dessert was Little John. His soft curly hair was freshly combed and, over his pajamas, he had on his blue terrycloth bathrobe. Little John had shouted with delight when he saw his father and, jumping up out of his little chair, ran around the table to his father, grabbed him around the legs, repeating, "Daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy." John had picked his little son up and raised him high above his head before taking him in his arms and giving him a hug and a big kiss. The child squealed with pleasure. The little boy had just been bathed and smelled of Ivory soap and baby powder, which Emma still sprinkled on Little John after his bath even though he was no longer a baby. John, as he sat in his chair on Sunday night, could still conjure up the smell of the child — not quite the sweet smell of a baby but nevertheless a childish smell that was completely different from any other smell.

When he had set Little John down on the floor again, the little boy took him by the hand and dragged him over to the little table, insisting that John sit down with him. On the way, John had stumbled over the red ball which had been left on the floor. John sat down with the little boy. Though he knew that Emma was already waiting and that they would probably be late, he could not resist sitting down and listening while Little John prattled on about all sorts of things. Toby, the spaniel, sat in the corner with Little John's red rubber ball now between his front paws, hoping that someone would throw it for him to retrieve. "That damned red ball!" thought John bitterly as he sat in the chair Saturday night. The pleasant moment of sitting with the child had been interrupted by Emma's irritated voice from the living room: "John, won't you please go up and get changed now. We are going to be late as it is."

As he went through the pantry on the way to the back stairs, he passed the corner that served as a bar. For some reason which he could not understand, since he ordinarily would not have had a drink, he had paused and pulled out an old fashion glass, reached in and got a cou-

ple of ice cubes from the automatic ice-maker and splashed the tumbler three-quarters full of scotch. "Perhaps," he thought, "I did it because I was tired from the day's business but probably it was the thought of going to the Watsons." In any case, he had grabbed the drink and, with his coat over his arm, gone up the back stairs two at a time and into their room. He found a fresh suit, shirt, underwear and socks neatly laid out on his bed. He took a shower, shaved and dressed with the speed of an old Marine. In ten minutes, he was back down again and ready to go. As he was getting ready to leave the house, Little John came running out from the kitchen saying, "Daddy, daddy, why are you and Mommy going out? You go out all the time and leave me alone." John bent down to kiss the little boy. As he took

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him again in his arms and hugged him, he assured him that they would have all the following day to play together.

"You mean" said Little John, "that Daddy doesn't go to the office tomorrow?"

"No, it's Saturday," replied John.

"All day long, even during my nap?" said Little John, his face full of doubt.

"Yes," John had replied, "all day long. Maybe you and I and Toby can go on a winter picnic to the park."

"Goody, goody, goody, goody," said the little boy excitedly. "Can I take my red rubber ball?"

"Yes, of course," John had replied. "You certainly can."

The little boy had turned around and scooted back into the kitchen, calling as he went to Josephine: "Josie, Josie — get a picnic ready. Daddy and I are going on winter picnic to the park."

John would have lingered, hoping to see the little figure once again but

Emma, who had already said her good-nights to the child, was out in the car and he knew that the horn would honk if he went back after the child since she could see him in the hallway. He therefore called "Goodnight, Josie, we won't be late" and "Goodnight, Little John, sleep tight." He had then gone out the front door into the cold November air.

As he started the car, Emma was grimly silent: she hated to be late. He said somewhat lamely to Emma, "I wish we didn't have to go out. I am dead beat. Actually, I would far prefer to be home and be with Little John."

Emma said nothing at first and they drove through the cold November darkness in silence. John had always been intrigued by Beth Watson. Indeed, over the years since he and Emma had gotten to know Beth and Bill Watson, he had carried on a cool romance with her that never had caught fire and in all probability never would, but both he and Beth rather enjoyed the vague unstated but fascinating possibility that some day it might. Finally, Emma broke the silence: "Little John, as you know very well, is about to go to bed."

"Besides," she added sarcastically, "since when would you miss a dinner party at Beth's, no matter how tired you claim to be?"

Without waiting for his answer to her rhetorical question, she said: "Let's leave right after dinner, okay? Let's not stay till all hours. You say you're so tired but once you get to a party, especially at the Watsons', we are always the last to leave. Do you remember last May —?"

John interrupted, "Okay, okay, I agree. You've made your point. As soon as it's polite, let's go."

Emma said, "Fine." She added, "You do remember that Beth's sister, Rachel, and her husband, Jack, are up from New York for the weekend?"

"Gosh, that's right, I'd forgotten that Rachel and Jack are coming up from New York this weekend. I haven't seen Rachel in a coon's age. I wonder if she's finally gotten over Tom Kermit."

"I'm sure that I don't know and, frankly, don't really care," Emma replied sulkily. Emma would always remain vaguely suspicious of those such as Rachel, whose acquaintance with John dated from the time of his first ill-fated marriage with Doris. They had said nothing further to one another during the long ride over to the Watsons' on the

west side of town near the Country Club.

Tom drove, thinking of the two sisters, Rachel and Beth. Whereas Beth was tall, slim and dark with black hair, Rachel was short and had been blond at one time and always tended towards weight. Rachel had neither Beth's sense of clothes nor looks and always looked faintly disheveled. But she was as outgoing and friendly as Toby. John had known Rachel long before he and

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Emma knew Beth. He had first met her at his roommate's place on Cape Cod where he had gone with Doris for a family Memorial Day weekend. Rachel had been his roommate's date though Tom Kermit was three years older than Rachel, who was only a junior at Ethel Walker's at the time. John had never really liked Tom Kermit and he had always felt sorry for Rachel and ashamed of the cynical and selfish way Tom Kermit had treated her. Rachel, nevertheless, for two whole years, thought that the sun rose and set on Tom Kermit. Tom Kermit, however, had succeeded in solving any problem that might have developed by killing himself on his way home from a coming-out party on Long Island just after they had graduated from Princeton as he had skidded his new MG he had been given as a graduation present into a tree at ninety miles an hour. Rachel had not been at the party and blamed herself, saying that she would have never let Tom drive that night if she had been there.

At the time, John thought privately that Rachel had been mercifully spared a hell of a life but she was inconsolable and had quit Ethel Walker's and gone abroad as a code clerk with the CIA. John now only saw Rachel when she and Jack came up to visit Beth and Bill. John

knew that, at some point in the evening, Rachel would corner him, as she always did, and relive those two glorious years when she had been young and in love with Tom Kermit, and indeed the whole Princeton scene. She would compare her present grim realities which included five children, one of whom was severely retarded, with impossible dreams of what might have been. Tom knew that Rachel's fantasies were harmless enough and such fun for her that he always humored her by going along, though he knew that there was no way her dreams would have turned out as she now liked to imagine they would have. John also knew that rehashing those two years would reopen old painful memories for him stemming from his disastrous marriage to Doris.

As they arrived at the Watsons', he was in full agreement with Emma's suggestion that they leave just as soon as it was politely possible after dinner. How did it happen that it was 3:00 o'clock when they got home?

John, as he sat in his darkened living room Saturday night, reaffirmed to himself that when he and Emma set out for the Watsons', he was not even mildly tight. But, the "double" that he had had at the Club, plus the drink that he had gulped down while dressing, had given him a certain edge. But, it was this edge combined with his fatigue, the exciting hint from "Cactus Jack," the sublimated excitement of Beth's presence and his own bitter-sweet memories, stirred up by Rachel's own longings for her lost youth that had resulted in his staying far later and drinking far more than he intended and with what dire consequences.

When they arrived at the Watsons' front door, they were indeed the last to arrive. Tom could see at a glance that except for Rachel and Jack, those present were all people whom he and Emma saw now and then at dinner parties, the Club or at cocktail parties. There was Al Joiner, a classmate of John's at Princeton who had somehow never recovered from his experience at Old Nassau, and his wife, Sally, who played bridge constantly; abandoning Al at times to play in weekend bridge tournaments. John was glad as he looked around that there were no other real bridge players that night: he would not be forced to make an unwilling fourth after dinner. Then there was fat, balding Tom Chesterson,

who had retired early to take care of his family's money. His very pretty second wife, Joan, was nervous since she was twelve years younger than Tom Chesterson and did not come quite from the same background. Besides Beth and Bill Watson there was, of course, Beth's younger sister, Rachel, and her husband, Jack. John, as he thought back, still could not remember Jack's last name though he had heard it dozens of times.

As John and Emma were taking off their coats and giving them to the Watsons' maid, Beth came out of the living room and said, "Hi, how are you, Emma, and you, John?"

Emma said: "We're fine, Beth, sorry to be late but John here was late getting home and insisted on sitting down with Little John."

Beth said: "That's okay. Nobody's catching any trains and dinner won't be for half an hour or so anyway." She turned to John and said, "So, you're the culprit."

John leaned over and gave her a friendly peck on the cheek. As he did so, Rachel, who must have heard them come in, came around the corner and said, "Hi, John, hi, Emma. Hey, sister, lay off John and leave some for me. After all, I knew him long before you appeared on the scene. Besides, you don't seem to know how. Let me show you." Whereupon, she threw her arms around John and gave him a great bear hug and a kiss on first one cheek and then the other. Everyone laughed. Sally Joiner said, "I'm also running for political office, let me kiss the baby. Hi, John," she said as she stepped forward and kissed him on the cheek. Tom Chesterson said to Joan, "Joanie, you're the only one who hasn't kissed John. Go ahead and show the rest of them how to do it." Joan looked embarrassed and said, "Oh, Tom." John shook her hand and said, "Hi, Joan, nice to see you. Hi, Tom, nice to see you so slim and sleek."

Beth said, "Where do you suppose all of the men except for nice Tom Chesterson are? Of course, they've gathered in the bar on the winter porch."

John said, "I think I'll slip out there and say hello to them."

Beth said to the rest of the people in the living room, "Well, that's good-bye to another man until dinner time."

John had gone out on the porch and it was as Beth had said—Bill was back of the bar and Jack, Rachel's husband, and Al Joiner were there in front of the bar talk-

ing. John said to Bill and the others, "Hi, Bill, hi, Al. Nice to see you again, Jack. Sorry to be late, Bill." The others said hello and Bill said, "You're not late — you're just two behind. What'll you have, John, and what can I carry in to Emma?"

John remembered that he had said, "Make mine a tall scotch and soda with lots of soda and you know what Emma likes. Gin and tonic or, rather, vodka and tonic if it's convenient without too much vodka in it. Here, I'll take it in to Emma."

When he got back, there was a drink for him on the bar. Bill had gone back into the living room to see if there were any other drink orders from the ladies. John, therefore, picked up the drink. It was not the scotch and soda that he had requested but, rather, scotch on the rocks. He was about to set it down and ask for a scotch and soda instead when Al Joiner had turned around as Jack made his way back towards the living room. Al said: "John, it sure is nice to see Rachel again. It brings back memories of Old Nassau, doesn't it? I hadn't thought about poor old Tom Kermit in a dog's age. He was your roommate, wasn't he? Say, I know you don't get back to Princeton much anymore but I was just there this last weekend for the Colgate game."

"When I was on the Board of Governors of the Colonial Club, I used to hold the meetings at the time of the football games or the Washington's Birthday Reunion so that all of the guys would have a double excuse for 'going back' so to speak. I, of course, am no longer a governor of the Colonial Club. We instituted rotating governorships so that the club wouldn't stagnate. Do you know whether Cottage Club has gone to rotating governorships? Most of Prospect Street has." Al talked on and on about who should be Goheen's replacement, whether having girls at the University was working or not and whether or not the Club system should go or perhaps not go. John could never quite keep his mind on what Al was talking about since he really wasn't interested in Princeton anymore, one way or the other. However, it didn't really make much difference because Al didn't really need John to keep the conversation going: he supplied both the questions and definitive answers after arguing both ways.

John had finished the scotch on the rocks when Bill came back to the bar and said, "Say, John, you asked for scotch and soda, didn't you? And I gave you scotch on the rocks. Do you want

another scotch on the rocks or do you want scotch and soda?" John should have asked for a scotch and soda or passed the next drink up but he said, "That one was pretty good, I'll take another like it." Just then, Jack came back in from the living room and started talking to John. John could not remember all of the conversation: it turned out that Jack worked for a bond house in New York, specializing in municipal bonds, and he tried to explain to John why it was that when the stock market went up, the bonds went down and vice versa. John had tried to concentrate on what Jack was saying since he told himself that he really should learn what municipal bonds were all about. But again, as Jack droned on and on, John found his mind wandering back to the hectic events of the week and the day, to "Cactus Jack's" private words and now and again to his hostess whom he could see in her red dinner dress passing hors d'oeuvres. He was still at the bar talking to Bill when Beth came in and said somewhat sarcastically, "Bill, you have effectively kept all of the men out here in the bar but now dinner has been announced so that it is time to release them. Incidentally, anyone who wants to can take a drink to the table."

As John picked up his glass and walked towards the dining room, he anticipated being seated on Beth's right or left and he looked forward to that after a fairly boring cocktail hour. It was his own fault: he had stayed at the bar instead of going back into the living room as he should have. However, he found that Beth had seated him with Sally on one side and Rachel on the other side at the other end of the table from her. As he and Sally started on their soup, she said, "At cocktails, we were talking about the drug problem. Al and I have two teen-age daughters and we were shocked last Labor Day to find that both of them had a supply of marijuana or 'pot' in their room and they were both smoking it. I knew that smoking pot was widespread but I never expected Alice and Sue to do it. I don't know why — they're both normal little girls and have done most of the things their contemporaries or 'peer-group' have done at about the same time. Still, it does come as a shock when it happens in one's own home. Of course, you don't have that problem yet, or has Little John's 'peer-group' taken to smoking pot?"

"No," said John. "Little John hasn't

taken it up. That is, not that I know about. Of course, I'm away a good part of the day and he may be doing it on the sly but I haven't smelled anything suspicious in his playroom and Toby, the water spaniel, is really a 'pig' in disguise who would certainly rat on Little John if he was using reefers. I examine the pockets of his playsuits and bathrobe and haven't seen any tell-tale signs. However, I know that it probably will be a problem for me, just as it is for all of you now, unless the fad has passed by that time."

The conversation at his end of the table had been throughout dinner mostly concerned with drugs of various kinds. It turned out that all of them except John and Emma had at one time tried marijuana once or twice, but none of them had found any real pleasure in it and no one had kept it up or tried anything else. He had also talked to Rachel about this and that. Both of them reserved their reminiscences for a later time, sort of by tacit mutual consent. Once, in the middle of dinner, he had looked down the table to where Beth was sitting talking to Chesterson. She was laughing at what Chesterson was saying and John felt a twinge of jealousy. He would have liked to have been talking to Beth rather than sitting next to Rachel and Sally. As he sat there the following night, he had no recollection of what had been served for dinner. This was not unusual since John had never really been interested in food. He did remember that there had been white wine and that his glass had been filled twice and that he had finally put his hand over the glass when the extra butler attempted to refill it a third time.

After dinner, Beth took the ladies upstairs and the men went back out to the sun porch for coffee, cigars and brandy. John had passed the cigars up but he had taken a brandy in snifter. Brandy never did agree with him and he would have well served to have followed Al Joiner's example who told Bill when offered a brandy, "No, thanks, old buddy, think I'll go directly to the tall drinks." Chesterson and Bill started arguing with one another about Lieutenant Calley. Chesterson insisted that Calley should have been acquitted: Bill thought that he should have been found guilty but that the whole establishment from the Commander-in-Chief on down should likewise have been convicted. Finally, Chesterson said, "What about it, John, you were an infantry officer during Korea. Don't you agree with me that

Calley should have been acquitted?"

John said, "Well, in the first place, I wasn't an infantry officer, I was a Marine officer and there has been and always will be a hell of a difference."

Chesterson, who had not had to do military service because of physical disability, said, "Okay, okay, now that you've played the gung-ho old Marine bit, what do you think about Calley?"

John was stung more than he should have been by Chesterson's snide remark and said somewhat testily: "No, seriously, there is a difference between the Army and the Marine Corps and Calley would have never gotten a Marine Commission. I'm not saying that the Marines don't commit atrocities. All troops, good and bad, do, especially in a situation where a foreign Army is faced by an indigenous fighting group that considers itself patriotic and has the support of the countryside. However, from what I can read of the My-Lai Massacre, there was nothing that justified a company grade officer in leading and encouraging his men simply to slaughter a whole village. No matter what is said now, I still think that Calley had premeditated the situation and that Medina knew about it. I don't think that it was an isolated incident by any means so that it is unfortunate for Calley that he got caught. However, life is just that way — it deals out blows at odd times and to odd people without much rhyme or reason. That still doesn't justify Calley and he should be held fully responsible for his actions." As John thought back on his little speech, he thought that it was curious that he had said that at that time since the implications and the philosophy had now come home to roost.

Chesterson had replied: "But if Calley is responsible, isn't the whole command in Vietnam responsible?" The others had joined in at this point and John had taken no further part in the argument but had sat there sipping his brandy. He found he was mildly irritated by all of those civilians arguing about something they knew nothing about — the problems which a company commander faces.

Bill brought the brandy bottle from behind the bar and refilled his glass and offered John another. John shook his head but Bill poured it anyway, saying: "You can't fly on one wing. Besides, this is really good brandy. My brother-in-law found it and brought it from France last year and this is my last bottle." John

allowed himself to be persuaded into having a second brandy.

When Beth led the ladies back down from upstairs, John could feel the effect of the cumulative amount of drinks that he had had. Emma met him as he came

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in from the winter porch and said quietly to him, "Well, Sport, are you ready to leave as we agreed to?"

John should have said yes at the time but, somehow, Emma's manner irritated him. Besides, he hadn't talked to Rachel yet and hadn't said two words to Beth. He said, "Well, we can't really eat and run. Let's have one drink and then push off."

Emma had said, "Well, you know best but we both know it's going to end up like many other evenings here."

"No, it isn't. Let's have one drink and then go," John had replied.

Just then, Beth swept by carrying the coffee tray from the winter porch and said, "Hey, I hope you two aren't talking of going just yet."

John replied, "No, of course not. Let me take that tray, it's kind of heavy." He had then carried the tray out to the kitchen and had come back into the living room. Emma, he saw, was talking to Jack on the winter porch.

Just then, Rachel came in, obviously looking for him as he knew she would for their sentimental remembrance of the old days back in Nantucket and Princeton. He had held on to his brandy glass as he sat down. His host came by a little while later and poured him another brandy. Tom had not refused since he didn't want to interrupt Rachel who had now started her familiar litany. Rachel, who had had nothing but hard times since those glorious days, remembered all of the good and none of the bad of those days —

the time that all of them swam around the point to the Commodore's formal cocktail party on the lawn, the Spring houseparty weekend, the Yale game in 1949, kite flying at Sankaty, the picnic on the Fourth of July when John and some girl whose name they could not remember had made a garbage can of Bloody Marys with scotch instead of vodka and the time they had all sailed back from the Edgartown regatta and had been lost for nine hours in the fog. Actually, John had never really been a part of the Nantucket group. Indeed, he had only been there one weekend during that summer as a guest of his roommate, but still for Rachel, it was somebody who could listen and understand as she relived those early days. For John, it was relaxing and pleasant and he did remember or half-remember the people and the stories out of which she re-wove her happy days.

John found he was dozing so that, though Rachel was in the middle of the story of the time they had rented a hearse and had driven to Providence for the Brown game, he had excused himself, gotten up and had gone looking for Emma. It was past 1:00 and John was dead with fatigue and was quite ready to go. He found Emma but she was deep in conversation with Al who was undoubtedly telling her about his good old days at Princeton and the chances of an Ivy League championship in the coming fall. Emma had looked interested so John followed the host into the bar and set his empty brandy glass down. Bill promptly gave him a scotch and soda. Beth appeared at the same time and he soon found himself on a sofa next to her on the winter porch.

Beth lit a cigarette and said, "Thanks for helping me with the tray earlier, John. You know, I like giving dinner parties but it is a hell of a lot of work. This is the first time I've been able to sit down and really relax without worrying about the details. Enough of that, we haven't seen you and Emma in a long time. What have you been up to? How's business? Are you selling thousands of bulldozers?"

John replied, "Lady, as you may have heard, we're going into a depression though people prefer to call it a recession and our glorious leader, Mr. Nixon, prefers not to refer to it at all. The first thing that is hurt when this sort of thing happens is heavy construction equipment. No, it's been a lousy year for us and the prospects are grim." Then, he

thought of the hint from "Cactus Jack" and he smiled. Beth caught the smile and said, "If things are so grim down at the shop, why do you smile?"

John had not intended to say anything to anyone about his impending promotion. However, he wanted to talk to someone and besides, the liquor had loosened his tongue. He ended up telling Beth all about the whole week culminating with the events of the day with "Cactus Jack" and his long delayed hint of the impending promotion. Beth, who was a good listener, said, "John, that's great, after all these years, you are finally coming into your own. Jack Eustas sounds like quite a character. I would like to meet him sometime."

John's thoughts had turned back to the nursery back home with the night light burning and a small figure lying in the center of the small spool bed which had come from his grandmother's house in Connecticut. In one corner, Toby would be lying scratching now and again at a non-existent flea. As the conversation swept around him and he looked distant, Beth had asked him what he was thinking about and he replied with a smile, "Little John." He remembered that he had talked to Beth quite a long time about Little John and not only his plan for the following day, but his long range plans. Beth, though she had four of her own, listened faithfully since she was the child's Godmother. He had become engrossed in talking and had not noticed the time. John talked on and on. It was only as the other members of the dinner party came in to say good night to the hostess that he realized that it was past 2:30 and getting on towards 3:00. Emma had looked out on the winter porch several times. John knew that she would be giving him a bad time about how late they were staying when they finally did go. It was only after the last guest had left and Emma appeared with her coat on that John pulled himself off of the sofa and went and got his coat. He was not drunk but he was tight and he knew it. Emma was apologizing to Beth when he got his coat and said his good night. Beth, as always, tendered her cheek for a kiss. John, instead of pecking her, gave her a great bear hug, half humorously but half earnestly as both knew.

On the way home, Emma was at first stonily silent and then asked him icily, "You certainly had yourself a fine time, didn't you? For someone who wanted not to come, you certainly stayed long enough."

John replied that he had wanted to go right after dinner. Then followed a long acrimonious argument which neither of them wanted. They had been through it so many times before that it almost had a ritual quality, yet neither of them was able to avoid it. By the time they reached home, there was grim silence between them, each of them thinking their own thoughts. John thought over the evening and cursed himself for not having made a bigger effort with Al, who, after all, meant no harm with his sophomoric attachment to Princeton. He was also sorry that he had left Rachel so abruptly in the middle of her memories of Nantucket and Princeton. He was sorry to have spent so much time with Beth but only because he knew that this was the basic cause of Emma's anger in this particular case. Emma went upstairs as he was putting the car in the garage and when he went up the familiar stairs, the door to the nursery was ajar: Emma had already checked on Little John. As he went into the nursery, it was as he knew it would be as he looked back at odd moments during the evening. As he kissed the sleeping child, there was little stir from the deep slumber. From the corner came the soft pat, pat of Toby's tail. Toby was lying on his side with one eye open and was too contented to get up but still wished to signify pleasure at this early morning visit.

When John got to the bedroom, Emma was already in bed with her light turned off. John was dead tired and had no stomach to renew the quarrel, knowing there would be no real victor. He therefore quietly took off his clothes, put on his pajamas and got into bed. Once in bed, he thought about getting back up and getting a couple of aspirins. While he was thinking about it, he dropped off to an uneasy sleep.

In a short time, or so it seemed, he was awakened by Little John in his pajamas, sitting on his chest and shouting, "Wake up, Daddy, wake up. It's Saturday and Daddy doesn't have to go to the office." He opened his eyes and saw the little boy sitting on his chest and pounding him with the large red rubber ball that was his favorite possession at that particular moment. Toby was also standing by the bed, his tail wagging. The red rubber ball was also Toby's favorite possession and clearly both Toby and Little John expected John to get out of bed and come out and play with them. John looked at his watch which he had not taken off. It was only 8:00 and he had been in bed barely four

and a half hours. He said sleepily to the little boy, "Let Daddy sleep some more. Go down and ask Josephine to get you your breakfast."

"But, Daddy, Toby and I have already had breakfast. We are ready to go play with you in the park," said Little John. "Remember you promised."

Emma from her side of the bed said acidly without turning over, "Yes, John, it's Josephine's day off and you can have the pleasure of taking care of Little John this morning while I get some of the sleep I would have gotten if you had been willing to come home at a reasonable hour last night instead of filling the sofa and making goo-goo eyes at your girlfriend, Beth."

For a moment, John was tempted to snap back at Emma, pointing out that he had been ready to come home at 1:00, but he really didn't have the energy so he said nothing to Emma but lay back in bed, trying to put off the time when he would have to get up. The little boy was still sitting on his chest and was now pounding him with the red rubber ball. Further sleep was totally impossible. He regretted having stayed out so late the night before, having mixed his drinks and not having taken the precaution of swallowing a couple of aspirins or a Bromo Seltzer before he had gone to bed. He recognized all the earmarks of a hangover that would be with him all day — the lousy taste in his mouth from liquor and cigarettes, a splitting headache and an upset stomach. He tried to roll over once more but, as he lay on his side, Toby assisted Little John's efforts to get him up by licking him on the face. Wearily, he sat up on the edge of the bed, up-setting Little John who screamed with delight. He went over and sat in the wicker chair next to his bureau and lackadaisically got dressed, still sitting down.

With a start, as John sat there in the chair late that night, he realized that he had on the same clothes that he had put on that morning so many hours before: the first thing that had come to hand — a pair of old Marine khaki pants, a white Brooks Brothers shirt that was frayed at the collar, a pair of worn-out sneakers and an old cashmere sweater. Once dressed, he had gone into the bathroom and shaved haphazardly as he stood waiting for the double Bromo Seltzer to take effect, his eyes aching. He brushed his teeth twice, trying to get rid of the bad taste, but it lingered in his mouth. As he came down the stairs with Little John and Toby at his heels, the thought of

breakfast almost turned his stomach.

In the kitchen, Josephine was sitting with her coat and hat on, obviously ready to leave. She stood up and put on her hat and picked up the heavy brown paper bag with string handles that was packed and sitting ready to go on the kitchen table. She looked around at him and slowly said, "Good morning. I didn't think you were ever going to get up. I guess it was kind of late when you came in. I heard you and the missus and it must have been pretty near sun-up. Sorry not to let you sleep but I promised to help my daughter with her curtains and it's going to be an all-day job. There's some bacon I cooked for Little John on the stove and there's some hot coffee on the stove. I made the picnic and it's in the 'fridge.' Oh, yeah, I also fed the dog. Unless there's something else you really want, I'll be leaving 'cause I don't want to miss my bus. There are only a precious few of them runnin' on Saturdays."

John felt so awful that he thought for a moment of asking Josephine to stay on for the morning, but her reference to her daughter's curtains made it obviously impossible. As he thought about it, Josephine marched firmly out the kitchen door, closing it behind her. Little John and Toby sat impatiently in the kitchen as John drank first one cup of coffee and then another. He looked at the strips of bacon lying on the brown paper, each surrounded by its own little grease spot, and again his stomach almost turned. While he swallowed the bitter black coffee, Little John prattled endlessly on. John lit one cigarette from another though he knew it would only make his hangover worse. Toby had possession of the red rubber ball at that point: he sat in the corner sprawled out with his back legs extended froglike behind him as spaniels do, with the ball between his front paws.

Finally, swallowing the last drop of the coffee, John took the little boy back up to his room and dressed him in blue overalls, a white turtle-neck shirt and a sweater that Emma's mother had knitted for him. He put on his little red sandals over his white socks. Then he slowly followed Little John and Toby who pounded down the kitchen stairs. The little boy and the dog were excited but John felt simply wretched. He carefully dressed Little John in his blue parka with white stripes. He grabbed his old duffle coat out of the hall closet and then the three of them went out the front door and

through the front yard together. Little John had begged him to take the picnic but John had refused, saying that they would come back for it later.

It was a bracing November morning with huge white fall clouds sailing overhead, making alternate periods of blinding sunlight and darkness. The last of the fall leaves came swirling down in circles to the ground. Little John wanted to go straight to Bryant Park, which was about a block from the house and on the way down towards Rider Creek. John insisted that they first walk down towards the station to the delicatessen so that he could buy the "Sunday Times." Once he had bought that, they all came back into the park and John sat down on the first park bench they came to at the upper end of the small park with the "Times" beside him. There were just a few people in the park at that hour — an old man exercising a Boston bull terrier on a leash, a man reading the paper and a couple down at the lower end of the park sitting on a bench saying nothing. As he sat there on the bench, he thought back on the week and the events of the night before. Little John and Toby were playing with the red ball around the bench. Little John tried to coax him to join in the game of throwing the ball to him, Little John, while Toby tried to intercept it. He was so discouraged by his fight with Emma and too hung over to play in the game, which ordinarily he would have enjoyed as much as the other two.

Discouraged, Little John began to play with Toby by himself. The child would throw the red ball as hard as he could and Toby would tear after it, eager to get the ball back in his possession. Often in his eagerness, the black dog would overrun the ball and he would then turn and run back again. When he had the ball, he would either drop it and lie there with the ball between his paws, waiting for Little John to come and throw it again, or else he would trot back to the child and drop it before the child, eager for him to throw it again.

John alternately glanced with very little interest at the different sections of the "Times" and then back to the small figure in corduroy pants and the blue quilted parka. When Little John threw the ball, it would roll a little farther down the park before the black dog would catch it, usually on the run, and the small boy would go over and take it once more from the dog's gentle, unprotesting mouth. Gradually, the little boy and the dog got

farther and farther away from the bench. In a quarter of an hour or so, they were all the way at the lower end of the park.

It all happened so suddenly: John looked up from the Book Review Section of the "Times" to see the little boy just throwing the red ball. A ten-speed bicyclist was just passing. John knew that he would always remember seeing the red ball rolling down towards the curb. It rolled very slowly to the edge of the grass, then over to the curb. It bounced over the curb itself and started rolling down the gutter. Toby raced after the ball but overran it and out into the street. Then the dog turned around and came back for it, but the ball had rolled down into the opening of a storm sewer which had a heavy old-fashioned iron plate over it. Toby stopped at the sewer, puzzled, and began to whine and bark. The small figure ran quickly over to Toby. The two of them were crouched side by side at the opening, looking down into it. Toby was now barking excitedly. John knew for an awful instant exactly what was going to happen, yet he was powerless to move and sat there for an additional fraction of a second. Then, the small blue figure leaned down, reaching with one hand for the ball, the other hand raised above his head.

Before John could cry out or even get to his feet, the small figure disappeared. John jumped up and ran down to the lower end of the park as fast as he could, screaming at the top of his lungs, "Little John, Little John, Little John!" When John got there, Toby was still barking. He threw himself down in the street, putting his head inside the opening. It was dark and black and there was a sickly bad smell. He could see nothing and hear nothing but the running of water far down. He reached his arm down as far as it would go and waved it frantically around, but all he did was scrape the slimy edge of the sides of the opening. He paused momentarily from his screaming but could hear no sound at all, except for the sound of running water. His dash and wild shrieks had already galvanized the few people in the previously peaceful park into action, and they were now assembled talking excitedly. The man with the bulldog on the leash was the first one there, with the dog straining to be away, and he said to John, "Is that your boy?"

"Yes," John replied, "it's Little John. For Christ's sake, help me get him out!" The man stood there stupidly.

John had gotten to his knees and put his hands on the heavy square cast iron plate and struggled with all his strength trying to pull the heavy cover up. It was bolted down to the concrete curbing and did not even budge.

The ten-speed bicyclist had turned around and come back and dropped his bike. He went down on his knees beside John without a word and started helping John in his efforts to pull the sewer cover up. The two of them struggled for half a minute but the sewer cover didn't budge. All that John did was tear his fingernails and scrape the skin from his hands and fingers. A larger group had gathered from all directions and were talking all at once and some even helped John and the bicyclist in their vain efforts to pull the sewer lid loose. Someone in the crowd said, "For Christ's sake, someone call the cops!"

As he sat there in the darkness that night, the next twenty minutes were like a nightmare. He found he could not recall the exact sequence of the events but all the same, it had the stark reality of a dream. In an amazingly short time, a large number of people were crowded around the sewer. Many of them didn't know what had happened and were asking one another and John what happened. John was still trying to tear the sewer apart. At the same time, over his shoulder, he was trying to tell the crowd that his son had fallen into the sewer.

"Christ almighty!" he heard one of the onlookers exclaim and several joined in the redoubled effort to physically uproot the sewer cover, though John knew even then that it was impossible to get the cover off without tools or equipment. Actually, someone must have turned in a police alarm because John remembered hearing the rising and falling wails of a new type police siren from a long way off. He then looked up when he saw the reflection of a flashing light of a police car which drew up and parked catty-corner to the curb about twenty feet away. A thin, elderly policeman broke through the crowd. Seeing John, he said, "What's up, mister?"

John said, "My child was playing with his red ball and fell down the sewer."

The policeman said, "Jesus, Mother of God," softly and then said harshly to the crowd, "Okay, folks, clear out — this ain't no sideshow." He then took John forcibly by the arm and made him stand up and led him to the patrol car where the radio was crackling and the lights were still flashing. He said to his partner, "Call the res-

cue squad, a kid has fallen down the interceptor sewer in Bryant Park."

The next thing John remembered was seeing that somebody had gotten a tire iron and the bicyclist was using it to try to pry up a manhole cover fifty yards down the street. John pulled forcibly away from the policeman who still had him by the arm and ran to the manhole to help pull the heavy cover up and flip it on its back. At this point, another squad car pulled up. A red-faced police lieutenant came over to the manhole and said curtly to everyone, "Forget it, that's the gas main. That interceptor sewer is gravity-fed and it runs the other way."

The lieutenant hurried back to the squad car and grabbed a big electric flashlight from the glove compartment and stooped down and flashed it down into the sewer opening, saying testily, as the crowd moved in, to the original policeman, "For Pete's sake, Lem, make yourself useful for once and keep this God damn crowd away."

John peered down the opening with the lieutenant. The light revealed a four-foot by three-foot square shaft, twelve to fourteen feet deep with gray sides. At the bottom, the light played on dirty gray water that was moving swiftly from right to left and disappearing out of an opening on the left side of the shaft. At about that time, the red police rescue truck pulled up. The helmeted crew, obviously aware of what happened, quickly unloaded a huge hydraulic jack and put it under the steel sewer cover that John had tried so ineffectually to rip open with his own hands. There was a wrenching sound as the crew put the jack in motion and the steel lid snapped off with a bang. Then a yellow utility truck also pulled up. The fat superintendent wearing a yellow hard hat in charge of the utility truck shook his head as he looked down at the now opened sewer as his crew piled off and took over from the rescue squad, saying, "Not a chance in a hundred. But, God damn it — let's move out. You guys, jump!" His crew took a narrow yellow ladder off the truck and put it down the sewer. One of them put a rope around his waist and quickly climbed down.

John said to the fat lieutenant, "Can't you do something — anything — my boy is down there."

The lieutenant said briskly, "Take it easy, Mac, we're doing what we can. We can't work miracles." Then he added more gently, "Hold on, the rescue squad

and the utility company is here and they will do it if anyone can."

It was at this point that someone brought Emma through the large crowd which had gathered but which was being held back by the police. When Emma saw John, she ran to him saying, "John, John, what's happened to Little John — where is my baby?"

John, though he knew the truth by this time, took her in his arms and said to her, "Now, Emma, don't get excited. It's going to be okay, dear — there's been a little accident and these guys are working to get Little John back for us." He then added for some reason, "He's down there." He instantly wished he hadn't said it. Emma looked slowly around at the opening and tried to disengage herself from John's firm grasp. However, he held her firmly so that she couldn't go over and look down. He knew as he was sitting there that night that he had been simply postponing the awful truth from Emma for an additional moment or two since if she looked down, she, like him, would know that it was hopeless. He

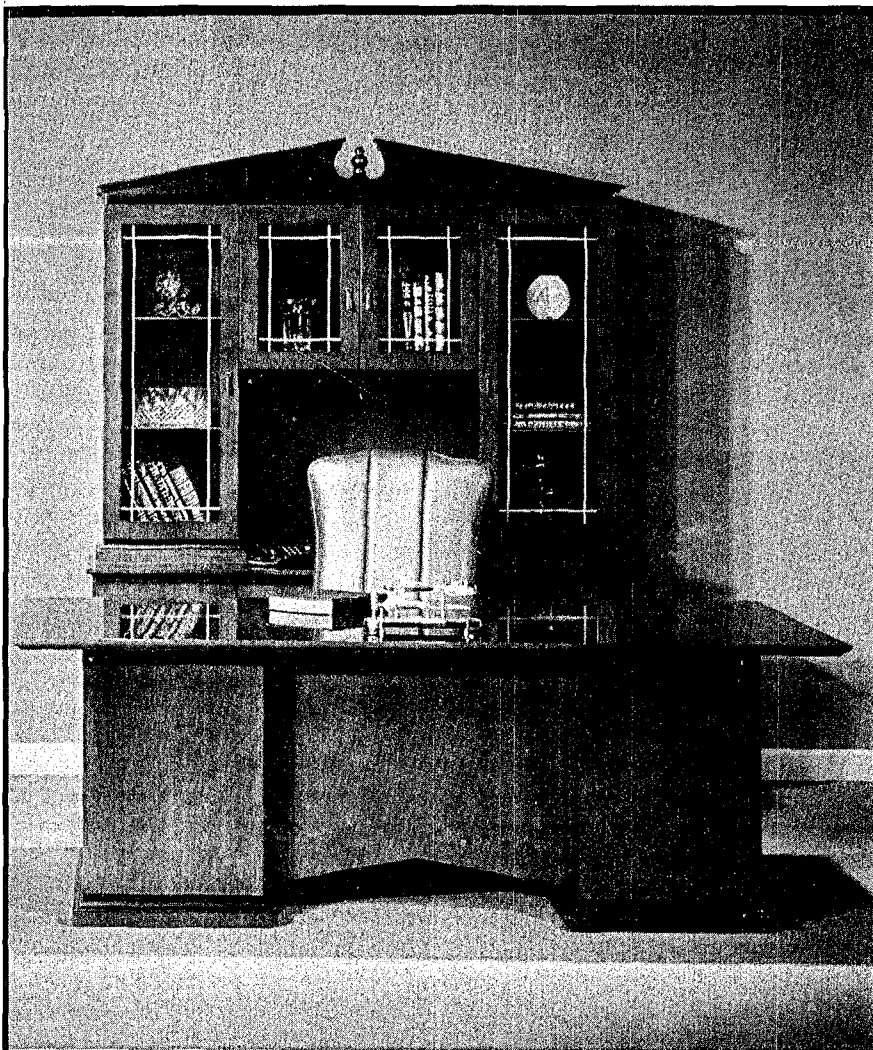
John knew for an awful instant exactly what was going to happen, yet he was powerless to move and sat there for an additional fraction of a second. Then, the small blue figure leaned down, reaching with one hand for the ball, the other hand raised above his head.

held her there for a minute or two and then she began to cry softly, "Give me my baby — give me my baby."

The lieutenant came over and said, "Sir, there's some smelling salts in our patrol car. It'll help."

John gently took Emma, who was now sobbing uncontrollably, over to the patrol car. An older lady in a raincoat whom John did not know said to Emma, taking her from John as she got in the patrol car, "Here, Emma, honey, I'll get in with you. Take it easy, honey, everything's going to be okay. Just you wait and see."

John left Emma in the back of the patrol car crumpled up in the arms of the lady in the raincoat. He went back over



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to the hole and looked down. In the bottom, two of the utility men were standing with rubber boots on up to their knees in the water. They had some tools and were shouting. John looked up and saw that another group of yellow-hatted utility men was working at another opening about a hundred yards away. John knew that it was hopeless.

The
small figure
covered with the
slicker was quickly
carried by the
utility men over
to an ambulance
which was
waiting.

At the end of twenty minutes, the lieutenant came over and led John to one side. He said, "I'm sorry, mister, to have to tell you but they've located the body. It's halfway between this opening and the one down there. You better let me have Lem take your missus home. It ain't going to be pleasant."

John shuddered as he thought back at what had happened in the twenty minutes or so later. One of the workmen appeared at the top of the ladder, his yellow hard hat coming up first. In his arms, he was carrying a small bundle over which he had draped his yellow parka. Under the gleaming wet yellow slicker, John could see a small red sandaled foot and the edge of the wet, soiled, red corduroys. John pushed forward but the lieutenant grabbed him by both arms as the crowd gasped and broke into excited chatters.

The lieutenant said firmly, "No, Mac, it's best not to look." The small figure covered with the slicker was quickly carried by the utility men over to an ambulance which was waiting. The door of the ambulance was slammed closed by the attendant and the ambulance sped away, its light flashing and siren screaming.

The officer laid his arm on John's shoulder and said, "The child is dead but they'll take him to the hospital anyway. They'll work on him with oxygen as they go. He must have drowned immediately and he didn't suffer at all. I'm sure of that."

The crowd dissipated quickly when the ambulance left. Soon, there were only twelve to fifteen people standing around.

The crew of the utility company was picking up the equipment which was littered about. They put ropes and flashing lights around the sewer opening which was now stripped of its cover. John stayed, unwilling to leave and unwilling to believe what had just happened.

Finally, there was no one left but a few on-lookers and some of the police, and the fat lieutenant said, "Come on, sir, there's nothing that you can do here. It's all over. You better let me drive you on home. Your missus is going to need you now."

As John was about to step into the back seat of the lieutenant's patrol car, Toby came whining up and jumped in beside him. The lieutenant said, "Is that your dog? He's a cute fella, isn't he?" Oddly enough, John had no recollection of the short ride home in the police patrol car.

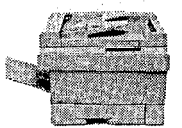
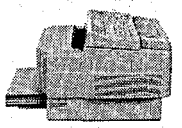


When he got home, he found that a large number of people were there. Bill came to him and said, "Beth is upstairs with Emma. We've called Dr. Tom because she's become hysterical."

The lady from the house next door was in the kitchen and somehow he found a mug of coffee in his hands. At that point, the telephone rang and Bill said, "It's someone from St. John's Hospital and they want to talk to you."

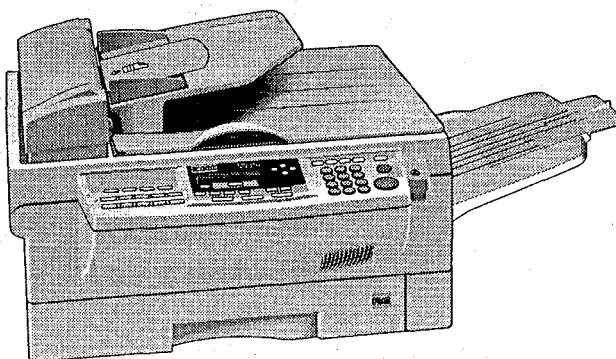
John picked up the phone and a cold voice said, "This is the emergency room nurse. Can you come over and identify the body? The child was dead on arrival and the resident has signed the death certificate."

John remembered saying that he would be right over. When John told Bill what he had to do, Bill said he would drive him over, and the two of them had gone to the hospital together. On the way over, he had tried to explain in detail to Bill just what had happened, hoping even as he was saying it that it would turn out not to have happened. When they got to the hospital, Bill persuaded him not to see Little John. Bill sat in the waiting room with the other Saturday afternoon emergency room patients, smoking one cigarette after another. After an eternity, Bill returned, shaking his head. A nice lady clerk brought endless forms for John to sign. He could not read what they were but just signed mechanically paper after paper, as Bill told him to do.

When they got back to the house, it
continued on page 32

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Helen L. Winslow

A CANDLE FOR CLARA

Clara was always the one. From the time I was the smallest of girls I remember how much I admired her striking beauty and her thick auburn hair, which she tossed about while laughing luxuriously, always with a drink in one hand and almost always with a new man on her arm. Once, when I was asked to serve cookies to the grown-ups, she joined me in the kitchen and showed me how to display them—just so—on the plate, making me feel as if the whole world consisted of just us and the elegant biscuits, forever, or at least for as long as I could contrive to make the moment last.

Clara inspired undying devotion: outgoing, warm-hearted and vibrant, she was full of fun, and everyone wanted to get close to her. She had more friends from more walks of life than anyone else I have ever known. Maybe it was her fluency with languages that enabled her to speak to so many people's hearts. In addition to English and her native Polish, she was fluent in French and Russian, while also knowing music and art as if they were her own children. And she understood the language of children, even the mute ones: they surrounded her and literally piled on top of her, when she would let them. They just couldn't get enough of her.

There was a glamour attached to Clara that the rest of the adults lacked. She dressed with such panache, making a flowing pants outfit look as if it had been designed just for her. Depending on how she arranged her lustrous, shoulder-length hair, she could look elegant or exotic or even mysterious. She was slight but not frail, standing about five foot three and remaining svelte all of her life. Her impish smile

was infectious, and her laughter -- her laughter was irresistible, even to the staid grown-ups. Mostly, though, it was her eyes that attracted people: they shone with happiness, and when she looked at us, she did so deeply, her eyes expressing the love that we knew she felt for us.

She was my mother's cousin, a generation older than I, but of all the myriad cousins on both sides of my family, it was she alone that I adored. I was among the entourage of children, related or not, who followed her around, each trying to be the one who would make her laugh and each wishing to be her most special child. There were packs of us around in those days, of all ages, but uniformly, regardless of age, the children were drawn to Clara over any of the other adults. She, too, seemed more genuinely interested in playing with us than in passing time among the adults.

No one was able to keep up with Clara, who always partied later than everyone else yet, in the morning, we would invariably find that she had been up and about hours before the rest of us. I remember visiting her house one summer and hearing happy clanging sounds coming from the kitchen all night long as I tried to sleep. The next day I learned that dinner for the whole family reunion of more than fifty had been prepared. Not only that, but she showed me with such pride and pleasure the zinnias and begonias that she had planted at dawn. Never during that weekend did I see the telltale signs of irritation or crankiness that I recognized in the other adults around me. Rather, she shone with brilliance, as usual, for the whole time we were there.

My parents drank very little as far as I could ever tell, but the one time that alcohol flowed in my house was when Clara



came to visit. She often brought a bottle or two as gifts, and while the spirits flowed, the spirits rose, with Clara always at the center. Never seeming particularly drunk, she was just gay, and the adults around her reflected her gaiety, shared in it and, in fact, partook of some of hers. It was okay: she had more than enough to spare.

As fairly religious Catholics, we were generally quite a prim bunch, and Clara alone, of the cousins, neither married for life nor became the chaste spinster. She had male "friends," one after the other, with notable repetitions, all of her adult life. Surprisingly, no one seemed to frown on her behavior or to try to censor it, as was so often done with others. So she brought her men to visit, and they also drank her in and worshiped her, only from a closer distance than the rest of us. Her men were, in fact, part of our attraction to her, because when we got Clara, we also got some dashing, fun-loving fellow who showered additional attention on us children, who were eager for any crumbs to be had from Clara's table.

There was also something, however, beneath the smiles that was hard to identify. Whatever it was, it must have scared me just enough to keep me focused on the delightful surface. Besides, Clara was so good at keeping our attention there, despite the cryptic clues. References were made that I didn't understand: I'm not even sure whether it was because she sometimes slipped into Polish or whether it was because I was just too young to catch on. During my teen years, I began to wonder whether I was supposed to know what she was referring to, or whether her references might be hints that she wanted me to understand more. I'll never know, because it never occurred to me to do the brave thing and simply ask. But I do know this: although I have come to know, at least partially, I will never understand.

I insisted on going to college near Clara, so I could visit her over the holidays. We had such adventures together. She took me to the city, where we fought over who would have the pleasure of paying for the other. I at least wanted to treat her to the Art Museum, which I could

Hiking Haiku

*Jewels, precious crystals,
Shattered by the traveller
Walking o'er the grass*

a poem by Helen Winslow

afford, but she tricked me, laughingly, out of even that, hopping off the bus and racing me to the ticket counter to pay for us both. And she would nourish me with meals that I could never cook myself, as well as with her delightful conversation while we cooked and ate. She lit up her own kitchen with gaiety as she did every other place she went, and I was the lucky one who got to be there to soak it all up.

During those visits, I began to realize that Clara never ate. Or at least not much. After fixing the most delectable meal for the two of us, she would sit down and eat one or two snippets of the food that she had served herself, filling the rest of the meal time with conversation and solicitousness toward me, getting up to bring me more rolls or a new condiment and refilling my teacup constantly. When I asked Clara how she survived on so little food, she said that she had found it was better not to eat. Perplexed by that answer, I didn't pursue the subject.

Those were perhaps the best days of our relationship: I was finally old enough to give something back, to do little things for her such as bring a candle to her bedside and keep her company in some important way that I didn't yet understand. But I was not yet old enough, or brave enough, to step forward and receive the only half-suggested hints.

It wasn't until much later, as my own children were growing, that I began to hear more than just the laughter. She visited me now, and we had such fun again, visiting museums, playing music, making tea, just being together. My heart ached, though, to realize that the light in her room was never extinguished and that there were sometimes tears at night. When I finally got the courage to knock on her door,

after many such visits, I found her sitting up in bed, trembling, with a remote look in her eyes. Such helplessness I felt! What could I do to console my Clara, who had never once let me down in the face of my many childhood fears and griefs? She allowed me to hold her, and I eventually drifted to sleep, realizing that she did not have the luxury of being able to do the same, and also wondering if this might be why, all those years, she had stayed out so late and arisen so

early. Clara left the next day, cutting short our plans and leaving me feeling still more helpless, and now scared.

Only then did I begin to make inquiries. I had always known that she had lived through the war as a child. My mother had even referred to her "terrible suffering" during the war, but I had always assumed that meant hunger and deprivation. Now I had to know exactly what it meant.

But my mother didn't know. She had just been told that Clara had been lost during the war and then, gratefully, recovered. "What do you mean, lost?" I demanded to know. One doesn't just "lose" a child, even in war. Had no one asked these questions? Had no one cared enough to know the truth?

"Only Clara should ask what happened, and then only if she chooses to," my mother insisted, but I was furious at her for preferring to ignore, or so it seemed to me, my beloved cousin's apparent suffering. I arranged a visit to Clara to confront her for her own good, or so I convinced myself.

"How did you become lost during the war?" I wanted to know.

"All I remember is walking with my oldest brother and then, suddenly, realizing that he wasn't there. I wound up in a shelter. They were very kind to me there: they took good care of me. I was safe there from the war. And then one day, my parents appeared. They had searched for me everywhere and finally found me."

"How long was it before they found you?"

"Almost a year."

"A year! That's unthinkable! How could it possibly have taken them so long to find you?"

"I have no idea. I know only that they loved me and that they eventual-

ly came for me."

"You must remember something from that year! Otherwise, why would you suffer so terribly at night?"

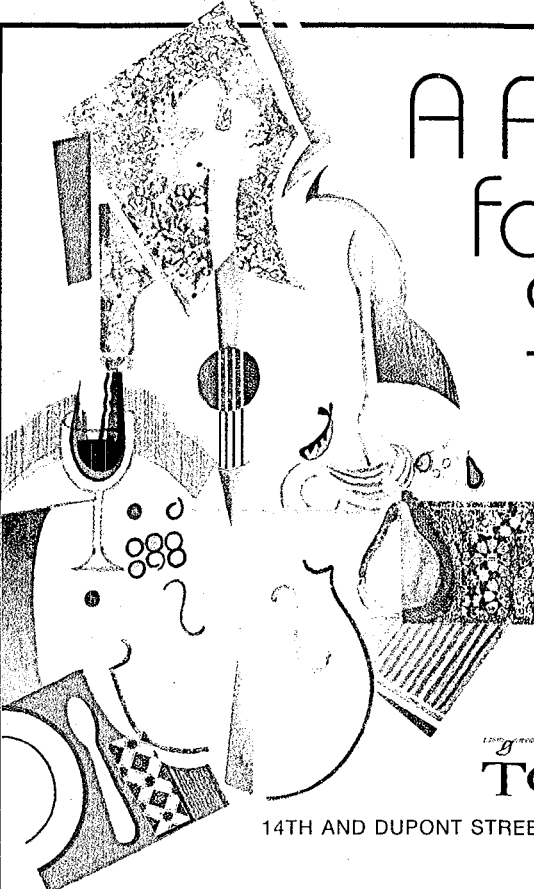
"There are certain things I remember, little glimpses. But no one would understand. It was a different world, a different time. It was war."

I held my Clara each night as she sat wakefully in bed, guarding against her fear. Sometimes she was able to sleep in my arms, but never for more than a few minutes. And always a light remained on. I just sat, holding her, and thinking. What did they do to her there? She was just a little girl, just five. What abuse must they have poured on her there? Was there anyone else still alive who had been there? One possibility came to mind. Clara had a devoted friend a few years older than she who had also come to the States from Poland after the war. "Clara, is that where you met Carl?"

"Yes, it is. Carl was at the shelter when I arrived, and I had to leave him behind when my parents came for me. He contacted me years later, after he had moved to New York, and I was so relieved to know that he was alive." My mind raced. How could we get Carl to come for a visit, immediately? I called him early the next morning and begged him to come as soon as possible, which he agreed to do. Clara would be surprised and delighted to see him.


This wouldn't be the first time that Carl had dropped everything to help Clara. A few years earlier, Carl had come to stay with Clara for several weeks while she recuperated from a serious illness, nursing her back to health. Now, after many years of marriage, he was divorced and lived with his grown son, who helped him manage his business. Carl was freer to travel now, and he always included a visit to Clara in his itineraries.

When he arrived on this occasion, I wasted no time. Immediately I told him that Clara's story about the shelter did not make sense and that I wanted to know what had really happened there. We stayed together for several days, none of us sleeping much and Clara not at all, while Carl and Clara echoed memories back and forth between them about their time in the shelter, some happy, many chokingly painful. As the events were recalled bit by bit to their conscious memories, they eventually faced the realization that what they each secretly suspected had happened to them and what they each hoped with all their hearts had happened



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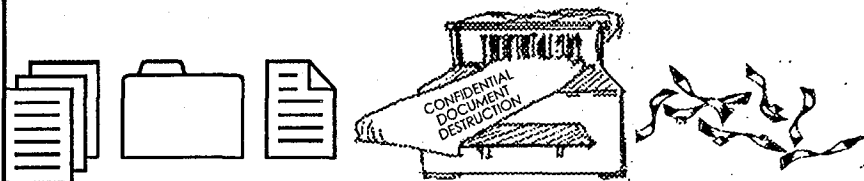
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only to them, had in fact happened to both of them. Repeatedly. Almost nightly. They had protected each other, as best as children could, and certainly they had comforted each other, but almost every night one of the trusted adults came to them, at first to play, then to touch their bodies, and finally, as Carl and Clara now realized in horror, to rape them.

Oh, that my beloved Clara, that Carl—that any child—had been so abused! And oh, that I had with such force and cruelty abused them all over again by insisting on retrieving the event for them. Carl was too devastated to remain, leaving my Clara all alone with her terror and with her memories, which had been restored to her in all of their incendiary power. Who was I to keep her company in such pain? She was right that no one would understand. I didn't, and I don't. Just as Clara had fled my house, now I fled hers and returned home to my safely present-tense household.

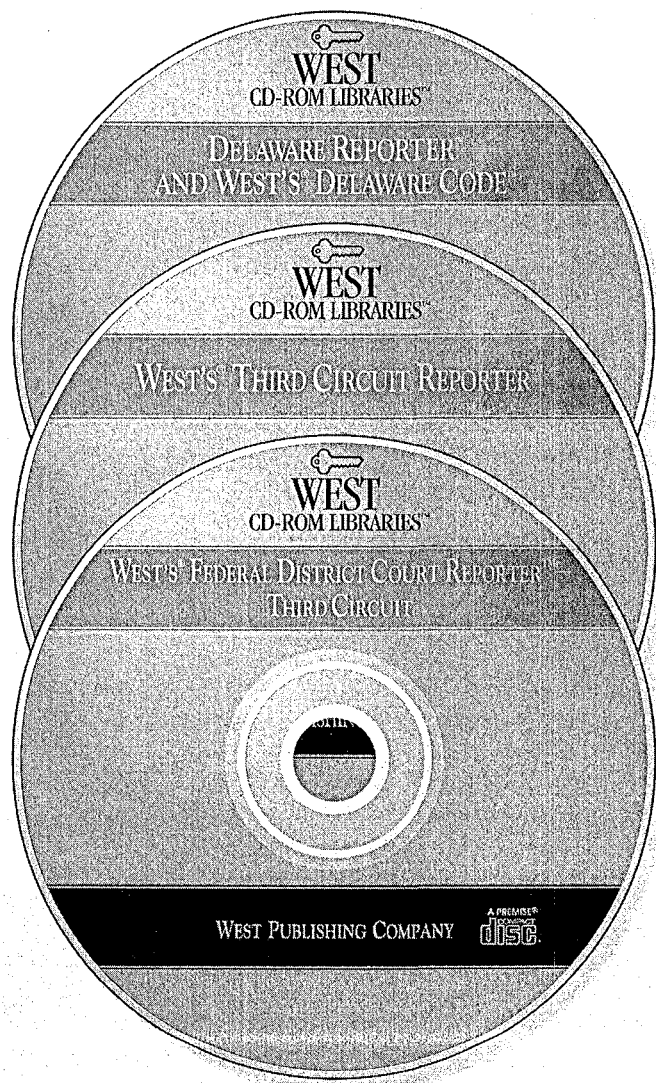
Clara and Carl both had many struggles learning to live with the realization of how brutally their childhood trust had been violated, Carl even requiring hospitalization for a time. Although Clara was able to remain at home, it took her a long time to regain her strength and her equilibrium, but she slowly resumed her life just as it had always been, yet forever changed.

We remained close in the ensuing years. I think Clara even forgave me for my need to have her confront her past. She may even have benefitted from it. Certainly, she and Carl became closer than ever and took care of each other in the succeeding years with extraordinary tenderness, mostly by telephone and letter, but also through frequent visits to each other, each finding the strength to support the other through their after-shocks. I also continued visiting Clara and assumed toward her, more and more, the role of joyful caretaker, returning the solicitousness that she had taught me so well during my college years.

Clara died this spring, unexpectedly and all alone, just after a visit from Carl and a few weeks before I was to visit her again. I will never forget her unusual beauty, her deep troubles or her indomitable spirit. She is continually in my prayers: may she finally sleep, comfortably and in peace. ♦

Author's note: Having known people who experienced sexual abuse, and having questioned the wisdom of revisiting those experiences, I wrote this story to imagine an answer to that question, not to mention for the fun of creating what I had hoped would be a suspenseful story.

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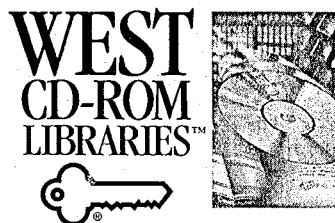
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Vernon R. Proctor

A GREENVILLE CINDERELLA

Young George Wise awoke with a groan. Light filtered through the expensive Venetian blinds in his Greenville, Delaware bedroom, right above the fifth slat from the top. George realized that he had overslept again. Thanksgiving break or no, it was time to get up and feed the Labs.

Greenville was a pocket of relative affluence in northern New Castle County, being home to both rising young executives and many established families. It was not as impregnable as Montchanin, the adjoining old-money redoubt, nor as susceptible to snob appeal as Centreville, its neighbor to the north. On balance, though, it was a pretty nice place in which to grow up.

George himself was just above average in every conceivable way: in intelligence, in appearance and in size. His life was not miserable, just banal and tedious. His "birth father," an heir to a modest brokerage fortune, had died while George was *in utero*. There, the similarity to Bill Clinton's background ended. George's fast-living mother, Priscilla, did her best to raise the boy alone, with help from a succession of hapless nannies. The boy's vague recollections of his mother involved a rather breathless young woman who seemed constantly in transit to and from various New Jersey casinos. On one such jaunt, George had gained a stepfather: Claude LaGauche, a slick Louisiana businessman who collided fortuitously with Priscilla behind a roulette wheel at Trump Plaza, producing a salad of mixed poker chips and a sudden, if inexplicable, romance.

George always wondered what had attracted his mother to Claude. Claude was everything Priscilla was not: lewd,

slovenly and domineering. Any physical passion between them must have been extremely brief, as Priscilla soon resumed her thrice-weekly journeys to Bally's, Caesar's and similar destinations.

Priscilla was a remarkably successful gambler, having parlayed her first husband's residuary estate into a small fortune that she invested wisely in short-term securities and the Greenville estate, "Pretense," on which George now resided. However, late one stormy Wednesday night, Priscilla's 450 SEL missed a curve on the Atlantic City Expressway and slammed into a bridge abutment. The short, incandescent life of Ms. Wise-LaGauche thus "came up boxcars."

That traumatic event had occurred just after George's seventh birthday. Now, nine years later, George was at Claude's mercy. After an evening of too much Courvoisier, Claude had inveigled Priscilla into signing an ironclad pre-nuptial agreement which, among other things, gave Claude total control of the marital assets in the event of her death. George, in short, was quite royally screwed.

Thus, on this bright November morning, George paused to contemplate his fate. It was hard to tell whether George was naturally introspective or just plain lazy, but the brown-haired teenager spent a lot of time thinking about his situation. How could he free himself from the domination of the grasping Claude, that *faux*-Acadian conniver and roué? LaGauche was an upper-middle-management "survivor" with an uncanny sense of timing. He had successfully anticipated and avoided "downsizings" at DuPont, Hercules and Columbia Gas. Having emerged from each situation with pension and ego intact, LaGauche was now happily ensconced as a "senior credit

analyst" at MBNA. Whatever that meant.

As much as George loathed his stepfather, he despised his step-brothers even more. The Evil Twins, Drew and Pierre "Duh" LaGauche, were a year older than George. They shared their father's passion for the Spice Channel, but little else. Vain and stupid, Drew and Duh would never succeed at anything, despite the expensive

Exeter education Claude was giving them, courtesy of George's trust funds. The junior LaGauches brought home gentlemen's C's and hefty dermatologists' bills. Both were bound for the same second-tier New Orleans college that their father had attended, and neither aimed for more than a four-year Mardi Gras haze. Fortunately, George saw little of their pock-marked faces, except during vacations. This was one of those hellish exceptions.

As George stumbled down the stairs to breakfast, rubbing his eyes and cursing his luck, Drew barged past him on the way up. "Gotta go slop the dawgs, George?" chortled the arrogant young LaGauche. Not to be outdone, Duh piled on with an enlightened salvo: "And don't fergit ta polish mah Beemer!" George bristled but said nothing. No wonder he had such a visceral hatred of Turtle Wax.

After finishing his Rice Chex and Tropicana, George filled the dog pans with Gravy Train, topped with a generous helping of Alpo. All the while, he subconsciously decried the rampant commercialism of American life. George then padded out



the kitchen door, across the well-manicured back lawn, and down the hill to the dog kennels. There, the Evil Twins' yellow Labs — Pissant and Pilgrim — greedily attacked the tendered vittles.

George made a quick mental note of his remaining tasks for the day. He had to paste-wax the step-twits' luxury car and mow the "back forty" on the new Gravely that Claude

had purchased out of the Wise-financed "grounds account." Pretense was located in a corner of

Greenville so remote that no developer could find it without a map. The only other house on their cul-de-sac was a half-finished stucco monstrosity whose owner had dissipated his assets through unwise investments in derivatives. Foreclosure followed.

George decided to tackle the lawn first. As he carved his neurotically neat parallel paths on the gently sloping hillside, the lad pondered once again his cruel station in life. He did have a car — a 1978 Fairmont — and he was in the top quarter of his class at a local public high school. However, he had a decidedly modest allowance compared to that of his peers, and his social life was abysmal. It was said that young George Wise had fewer dates than a eunuch in a monastery. However, he was not unattractive, and his amorous ambitions were high: George had set



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his sights on the bright, statuesque Muffy Worthington — of the Owls Nest Worthingtons.

Muffy was blonde, vivacious and privileged. Her wealthy parents had plucked her out of a nearby prep school on her fourteenth birthday and shipped her off to St. Paul's, where she excelled at trigonometry, drama and lacrosse. There was indeed nothing that Ms. Worthington could not do well.

**George gaped in
astonishment.**

**Max had
appeared out of
nowhere, but
George was not
attuned to the
spiritual world
and was general-
ly skeptical of
those who were.**

George was head-over-heels in love with her, but she did not even know he existed. To Muffy's eternal credit, however, she played the LaGauche boys like violins — just like Scarlett O'Hara's mastery of the sexually frustrated Tarleton twins. Although Drew and Duh bombarded her with romantic entreaties and offers of cash and liquor, Muffy would have none of them.

George's daydreams were rudely interrupted when the Gravely nearly steamrolled a dazed-looking old gent near the swimming pool. "Hey, watch it! You want a date with the *shiksa*?"

"Who are you?" asked George, puzzled as usual.

"I'm Max, your fairy godfather. Actually, I'm straight, but there's no P.C. equivalent that I know of."

George gaped in astonishment. Max had appeared out of nowhere, but George was not attuned to the spiritual world and was generally skeptical of those who were.

"Listen, old man, I don't know where you came from, but I've got a lawn to mow and a car to wax before dusk. Now beat it."

"That's gratitude for you. Then how did I know about Miss Worthington?"

Max had him there.

Curious and intrigued, George asked the disheveled spirit to state his business.

"Look, I know you've been dying to go out with Muffy. Your mother told me how rough it's been for you with that LaGauche guy and his two cretins. We just wanted to cut you a break."

Actually, the "break" was somewhat conditional. Max agreed to set George up for the Bachelors Ball the next Friday evening: a new tuxedo, a brand new pair of Nike Airs (opera pumps were passé), a fancy car and \$500 in cash. All George had to do was agree to take a summer job as a croupier at the Taj Mahal next year.

"Son, your mother misses the action. It'll be good for her, and it might be a smart career move for you."

George, being at an aimless stage of his life, readily agreed. Anything for Muffy.

"Oh, one other thing," added Max. "You have to be out of the Hotel duPont before the First and Central Church chimes strike midnight, or you'll change back to your goofy old self."

George was outraged. "Whaddya mean? The party doesn't even start until 10:00, and they start serving breakfast at midnight!"

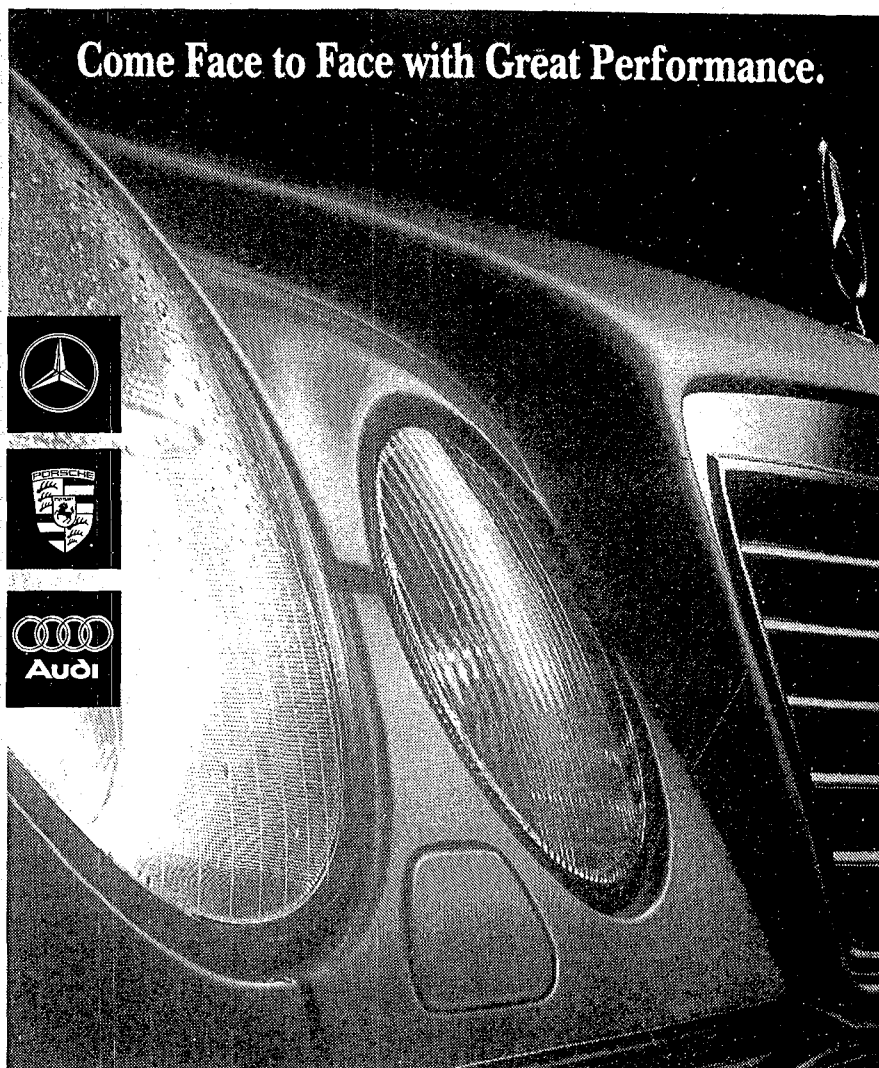
"Don't be a moron," retorted the chastened spectral advisor. "What would Muffy say if you turned into a *schlep* before her eyes? Besides, two hours is plenty of time to make time, if you catch my drift. It's your choice: pulchritude or poached eggs."

George chose the former. Then he waxed the Beemer.

The appointed evening arrived swiftly. George spent the intervening days doing his chores, parrying his stepbrothers' taunts, avoiding Claude (who was too busy selling "affinity cards" to notice much anyhow), and daydreaming. The LaGauche trio flew off to New Orleans on Thanksgiving for a whirlwind day of crawfish-stuffed turkey and binge drinking. (George spent the day with his maiden aunt, a biker.) Then the LaGauche boys returned to Wilmington on Friday to prepare for the Bachelors Ball in a pHisoHex-filled orgy of adolescent anxiety. The twins rushed off at about 6:00 p.m. in the BMW to meet some friends for dinner, hurling ungrammatical invective at George as they departed.

After walking Pissant and Pilgrim around the property, George returned to his room to find formal wear and

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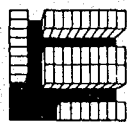
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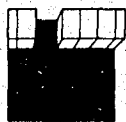
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athletic shoes arranged neatly and miraculously on his bed. George was stunned: the old man might have been a figment of his imagination, but the codger could produce.

George showered and dressed quickly. The Nikes were the most comfortable and impressive shoes he had ever owned. What was most remarkable about them was their color: a psychedelic blend of black, teal and fuchsia. Nobody in the NBA had ever worn a pair like them.

After prancing around his bedroom like Fred Astaire in training, George peered expectantly out his window at his parking space. Once again, Max had come through. There, in the place reserved for the rusting Fairmont, was a gleaming new Lexus coupe. The big model, too.

"You were expecting maybe an Edsel?" Max materialized on cue, like the old showman he was.

"You are one totally awesome dude!" exclaimed the impressionable George Wise.

"Speak English," commanded Max. "I don't answer to Valleyspeak."

"Anything you say," George stammered as he raced out of the house to his new, if temporary, chariot.

"And don't forget to be home by midnight!" yelled the ethereal busybody. All Max heard in response was a screech of tires and some garbled epithet about curfews.

George cruised into town on Route 52 behind the wheel of his plush, blue Lexus. It drove like a dream. Indeed, George seemed to be living in a dream, and the prospect of an imminent romantic encounter with Muffy Worthington energized him further. He stepped on the gas.

George pulled up to the Hotel duPont and somewhat reluctantly entrusted his car to the curbside valet. He then raced up the steps, turned right, and entered the Gold Ballroom. After handing his admission ticket to the massive matron in charge of such things, the youth found the receiving line.

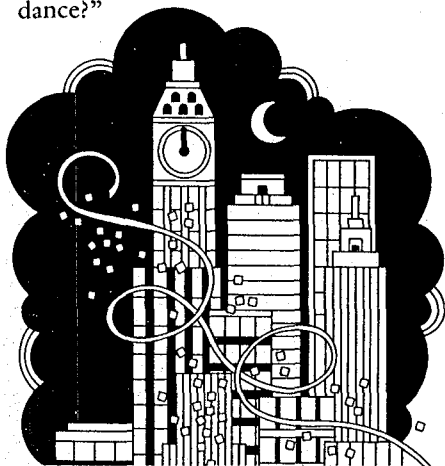
George recognized several of the young men in the line: Chuck Powers, Trip Messersmith and Matt Phillips, all of whom were in college now and had impeccable pedigrees. The line also included several lascivious old coots who annually made the Bachelors scene, seeking to maximize the opportunity for feminine physical contact.

After leaving the receiving line, George milled about the crowded room looking for his idol. It didn't take him long to find her. There, seated at a table of ten right off the dance floor, was Muffy Worthington, besieged by a band of importunate suitors. Muffy was resplendent in a silver evening gown, with shoes and handbag to match. Her beautiful blonde hair cascaded luxuriantly onto her bare shoulders. The young heiress had a bored expression on her face that read, "Every year, the same old *shrick*."

George summoned his courage and strode purposefully up to Muffy's table. Incredibly, the crowd of well-dressed young toffs seemed to part for him as he approached. Drew and Duh were part of the hopeful horde and, predictably, they were striking out.

Then the young couple's eyes met. The moment was electric.

George extended his hand a bit more diffidently than the circumstances required. "Would you care to dance?"



Muffy's eyes sparkled, and her smile overwhelmed him. "I'd love to," she responded, sensing a chance for a short moment of excitement. She grasped his extended hand firmly, rose and accompanied him to the dance floor.

Once the two were out on the floor, the Miles Standish orchestra struck up a Cole Porter medley (standard for the Bachelors), followed by some 70s rock and then some more Big Bands selections. George and Muffy whirled about the floor — waltzing, jitterbugging, break-dancing and fox-trotting. He was Gene Kelly to her Cyd Charisse. They talked about everything: St. Paul's, her lacrosse team, her upcoming trig exam, his well-pruned family tree and Pat Buchanan.

Finally, the two stopped dancing,



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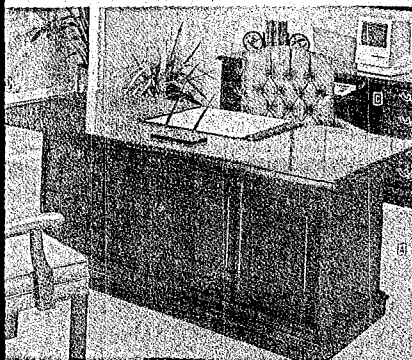


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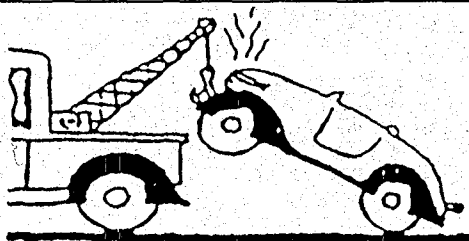
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after what seemed like hours, and headed toward the bar for a Coke. (Hand-in-hand, although Muffy usually scorned PDAs.) As they sipped their sodas, Muffy asked George what he was doing the next evening. Pay dirt! Before the amazed lad could answer, however, he heard the first chime.

BONG! It *had* been hours — two, to be precise. At first, however, the sound did not trigger any reaction from George.

BONG!

"Cannabis?" thought George in a futile exercise of word-association.

BONG! Muffy looked at George

**One of his Nikes
was gone also. As
George raced for
the car door, he
noticed the other
tri-colored Air on
the hotel steps.
Too late to turn
back now.**

expectantly. Then the boy broke out in a cold sweat. All synapses and neurons were on red alert.

"Nothing!" he yelled before leaping to his feet and bolting from the room. By the fifth "BONG," George was at the door of the hotel.

"Will I see you again? Who are you?" Muffy called after him.

"Boy, he must really have to go!" slurred a drunken reveler who watched the tuxedoed young track star's headlong sprint.

At the sixth "BONG," George was outside thrusting his claim check at a startled valet. "Blue Lexus, and hurry!" he shouted. Although George was the valet's only customer at that relatively early hour — breakfast was just being served, you see — the uniformed trusty failed to respond to the teen's exhortations of haste. Meanwhile, the First and Central chimes proceeded inexorably.

BONG! Number twelve. Catastrophe.

A battered yellow Fairmont turned the corner and headed for the hotel. It pulled up, and the confused valet

hopped out. "This was the car that matched your ticket," the bellboy said.

"There must be some mistake!" screamed George, in panic now. Then he realized that there was no mistake. He looked down: his tuxedo was gone, replaced suddenly by jeans and sweatshirt. The 500 bucks were gone, although George had enough in his wallet to tip the valet. One of his Nikes was gone also. As George raced for the car door, he noticed the other tri-colored Air on the hotel steps. Too late to turn back now.

"*Schmendrick!* I told you to watch the time!"

As George turned left onto Market Street from Eleventh, beating as hasty a retreat as the old Ford could muster, he spied a glowering Max in the passenger seat. Young Wise was in no mood for remonstrance. He sulked all the way back to Pretense.

As usual, Muffy wasted no time. Her father had noticed the luminous athletic shoe on the hotel steps. The young woman knew that the Nike was the key to finding her Prince Charming, and she pressed every one of her considerable advantages to that end. The following Monday, it being impolite to burden respectable people on weekends following a party, she called the Chairman of the Bachelors Committee and obtained the complete guest list. She then charged the Worthington family retainer, Boodles, with the task of tracking down the owner of the matching shoe: a left one, size 10 medium.

On Thursday, Boodles drove into the driveway of Pretense and rang the door-

bell. By then, everyone in greater Greenville was aware of his mission, and the more socially aggressive among them combed their sons' closets for fancy sneakers. Drew, Duh and Claude came to the door simultaneously. Each had a pair of expensive athletic shoes, but none of them matched the Nike in question. The Cajuns were crestfallen.

At that moment, George arrived on the scene. He had been cleaning Pilgrim's kennel, and he was dirty and pungent.

"Ah, yew don't want to talk to him!" drawled Drew. "He wasn't even invited to the dance."

"Mr. George Wise IV?" asked the unfazed Boodles, who had too much class or too few olfactory organs to comment upon the unsavory aroma. "Your name was on the list."

"That's me!" responded the boy. Ever the witty riposte.

Boodles extended the hand containing the Nike. George excused himself and raced upstairs. Miraculously, although his room was a mess, he found the other one almost immediately and returned in triumph to Muffy's manservant. Although victory was clearly his, George tried on the shoes in the butler's presence, if only for theatrical effect. Boodles permitted himself a small smile and returned to the limousine to call the Worthingtons. "I've found him, Mum," he said.

The dénouement was as satisfactory as you might expect. Muffy and George had their first real date the next weekend, and everything clicked. George retained an attorney who successfully sued Claude for breach of fiduciary duty and had the whole LaGauche bunch evicted from Pretense and banished back to the bayous. Newly bankrolled, George transferred to a private school near Muffy's. Their physical relationship intensified to the extent permitted by a family magazine, and both of them obtained summer jobs as croupiers at the Taj. Muffy, still the more ambitious of the two, decided that she'd get an MBA with a specialty in casino management. George never saw Max again, although a plateful of bagels and lox magically appeared on George's bureau the evening after the big Nike match, accompanied by a note of congratulations.

As George and Muffy strolled down the beach one warm summer evening, George reflected one last time on the source of his recent good fortune.

"It must be the shoes." ♦



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continued from page 17

was already late in the afternoon. "Cactus Jack," who had heard the news on the radio, was there and he came over and took John in his big bearlike arms and embraced him saying quietly, "Poor Johnny Boy, poor Johnny Boy, why does this have to happen?" John remembered that he wasn't certain whether "Cactus Jack" was talking about the little boy or himself.

The rest of the evening was a blur of people as friends and business acquaintances and even people that he didn't know came to the house. Coffee and sandwiches were being made by the neighbor lady in the kitchen. In the bar, people were fixing themselves drinks. At one point in the evening, he had gone up to their room and found that Emma was asleep or unconscious, having been given a needle by Dr. Tom. He couldn't tell whether she was asleep or simply under the effect of the needle, but he was grateful that he didn't have to talk to her at that point.

John sat there in the darkness, thinking about the evening hours. He remembered seeing Josephine in the kitchen, making more sandwiches and more coffee, and that he worried as to whether there would be enough ice from the ice-maker. In a sense, he was irritated at all of the people who had come to the house. On the other hand, he was grateful to them since it kept him occupied and away from his thoughts. At one point, he had gone to the den and had telephoned his own mother in New York. She was out for the evening so he had not been able to reach her and then he had to make the call which he dreaded most: Emma's parents in Omaha. He had told them briefly what had happened and had agreed that Emma's mother would fly in to New York the following morning and he would meet her. Emma's father was out of town on business.

At 11:00, John, bone tired, had asked them all to leave. It had taken a half hour to shepherd them all out. Finally, Bill and Beth had left.

As he sat there in the darkness, he wondered why it had happened. He knew that it was simply an accident that really wasn't anyone's fault but he knew that throughout his life, he would come back again and again to the events of the week and the night before, wondering whether some jealous overseeing spirit had been watching him and had decided to punish him for something he had done or had not done. ♦

legal system and lawyers. *To Kill a Mockingbird* made the transition from best-selling novel to major motion picture in 1962 and Perry Mason was one of television's most popular heroes in the 1960s. In fact, Hollywood has romanticized even the drudgery of law school (*The Paper Chase* and *Love Story*, just to name a few). The sheer volume of fiction about the legal profession, however, has increased markedly in the 90s. It's impossible to make your way through a bookstore now without bumping into multiple "best seller" displays featuring new legal novels. A quick glance at the *TV Guide* indicates that the viewing public can choose a legal drama or comedy almost every night of the week (e.g., *Law & Order*, *Murder One*, *Home Court*). Hollywood has even started to branch into sub-specialties of the law, such as military justice (*A Few Good Men*, *JAG*).

My greatest exposure to legal fiction was in law school, and I don't think my experience is unique. Law students are naturally drawn to books and movies depicting the profession

they hope to enter and have the time (at least during those blissfully long vacations) to indulge that fascination. Soon after trading in the backpack for a briefcase, however, the profession loses much of its mystique. And then

...there are
other, more
subtle themes in
legal fiction--
some of which
go to the heart
of our jobs as
lawyers and our
role in society.

family situations change. I recently realized that the last four "novels" I have read were all written by Dr. Seuss and that *Sesame Street* is just about the only television program I watch.

Much of the legal fiction I have consumed, however, conveys very similar images of lawyers. Most are quite attractive --Tom Cruise (*The Client*, *A Few Good Men*) and Harrison Ford (*Presumed Innocent*, *Regarding Henry*), for example. They are always "well kept." The most overworked TV lawyers clearly have found time to go to the gym, and even the underpaid public servants have fabulous clothes. Romance, or at least sexual liaison, is commonplace among lawyers and between lawyers and their clients. Most fictional lawyers can be easily categorized as either true heroes--doing the right thing for society at large as well as their clients--or unabashed villains--overtly slimy and proud of it. And, of course, every fictional lawyer has an incredibly fascinating practice.

I'm not suggesting that law students are unable to attribute these superficial aspects of fictional lawyers to the need to entertain. Putting these aside, however, there are other, more subtle themes in legal fiction--some of which go to the heart of our jobs as lawyers and our role in society. By their very repetition, these fictional-

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ized accounts create certain expectations on the part of law students.

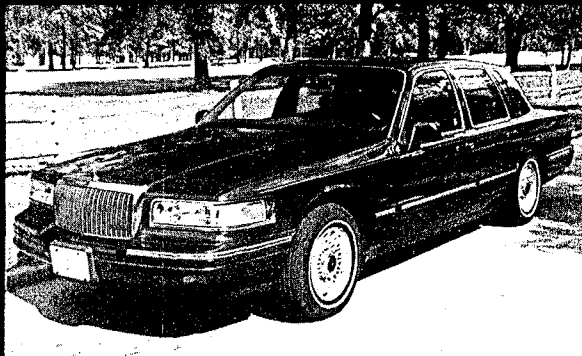
For example, legal fiction conveys the practice of law as almost effortless. Cases are won solely on the basis of innate talent and good luck, not preparation. Somehow, good facts always come to light. The protagonist of *My Cousin Vinny* committed such repeated blunders in front of a jury that he surely committed malpractice or ineffective assistance of counsel. Yet, he finally got the inspiration to win the case just as the prosecution's last witness was testifying. In actual practice, one can only be sure that such inspiration will come after many hours of preparation—including pursuing many, many dead ends. Of course, this plodding preparation is not portrayed in fiction.

Similarly, in the world of fiction, the skillful lawyer is always able to make other people do the things he or she needs them to do. Perry Mason always got the real culprit to confess, usually during trial. He never had to defend by mundane conventional methods—such as establishing holes in the prosecution's case. On TV, parties always seem to fold during negotiation sessions and witnesses break into tears on the stand. It hasn't happened to me yet.

As a final example, fictional lawyers are affirmatively and aggressively hostile to opposing counsel and parties, both professionally and personally. I have been pleased to learn that vigorous "real world" advocacy does not entail personal invective and animosity (putting aside Joseph Jamail).

Like most of my law school classmates, I practice at a private law firm handling civil cases that involve, generally, contractual or corporate disputes. At a recent reunion, we joked about those Thursdays in the pub and how our professional lives do not approach *L.A. Law* levels of excitement. Nonetheless, most of us had come to accept and appreciate the quieter thrills of receiving a favorable motion ruling or exposing some key facts at a deposition. Even for my classmate who is a federal prosecutor in New York, just going to trial is exciting. Still, like thousands of other practicing lawyers, I look forward to the next Grisham book/movie when, for a few hours, I'll escape to the world of lawyering that I thought I was "looking in" on as a law student. ♦

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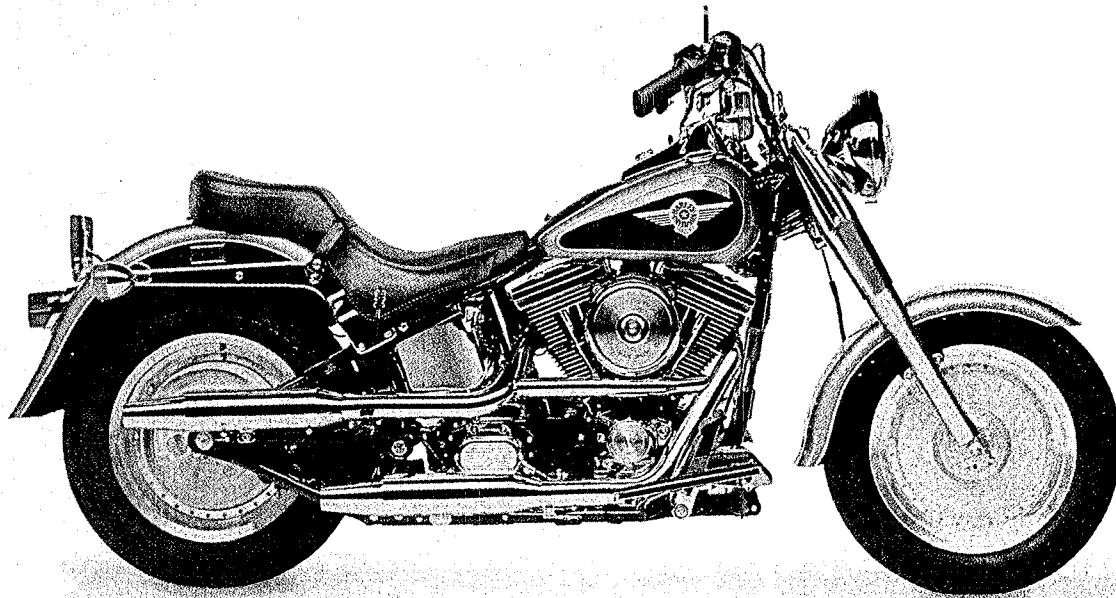
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Delaware Lawyer authors discuss topics that include

- Cross-Disciplinary Experimental
Courses & Alternative
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- Economics of Creating So Many
Lawyers: Are We Selling
a False Dream?

WINTER 1996/1997: LAW & TECHNOLOGY

This issue covers technology in the legal field in the 1990s: computers, videos and other modern technology will be reviewed. Experience a **high-tech trial** or visit the **home office** of a local attorney. If your firm has a **HOME PAGE ADDRESS**, be sure to send it to us; *Delaware Lawyer* will discuss several current issues of interest to attorneys practicing in Delaware.

"HOLLYWOOD 101" WHAT DOES LEGAL FICTION "TEACH" LAW STUDENTS?

by Elaine Reilly

Almost every Thursday night during law school I participated in a ritual, along with a significant portion of my classmates--we sat in the law school pub, sipping beers and watching *L. A. Law* projected on a "big screen". We booed Arnie Becker, cheered Leland MacKenzie and debated whether the jury had done the right thing by ruling that a landlord

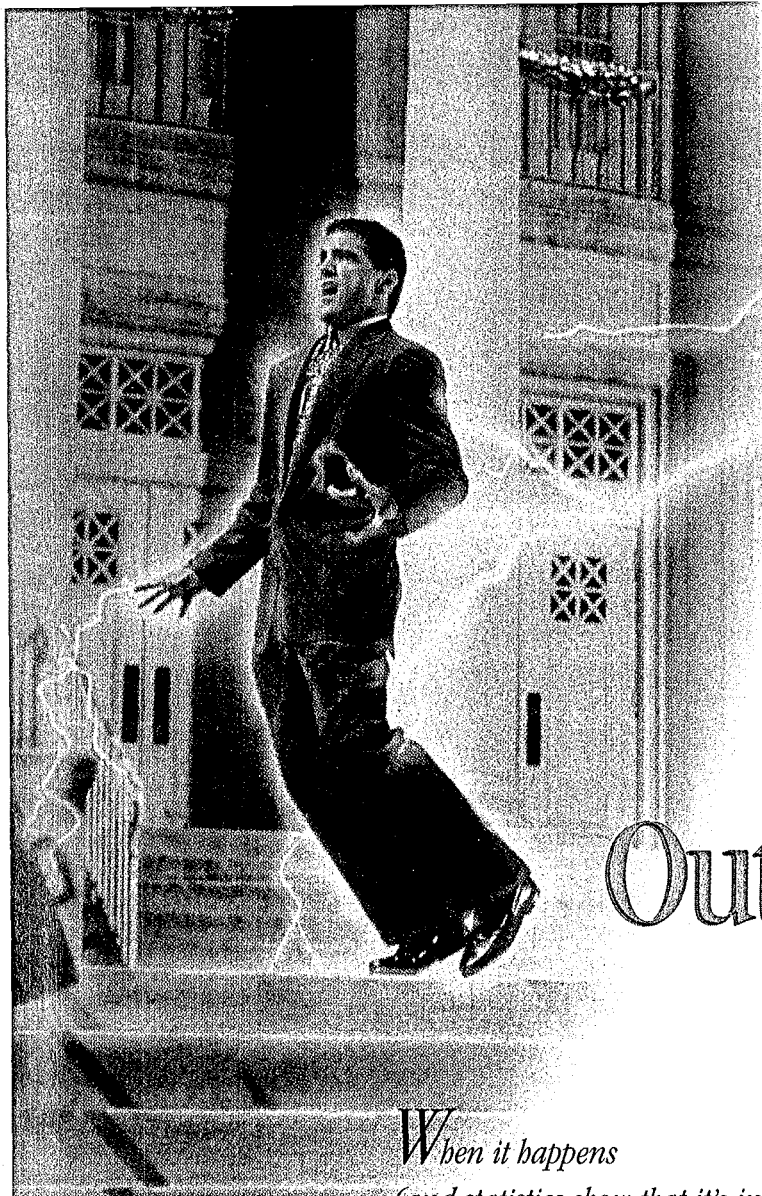
was not liable for emotional harm resulting from his eviction of a tenant with AIDS (without confronting how, as a procedural matter, a jury ever got to decide such an issue).

Current popular fiction is replete with stories about and depictions of lawyers and their practices. The popularity of Scott Turow's novels *Burden of Proof* and *Presumed Innocent* (now also a motion picture), has enabled him to do something many lawyers secretly fantasize about--devote himself to writing. Similarly, John Grisham has freed himself from the shackles of legal practice to devote himself to churning out novels such as *A Time To Kill*, *The Firm*, *The Client*, and *The Pelican Brief*--many of which also have been snapped up by Hollywood. Hollywood certainly has many sources other than Messrs. Grisham and Turow for legal fiction. *The Verdict*, *Class Action* and *My Cousin Vinny* are just a few recent big screen examples that come to mind.

Of course this is not a recent phenomenon: the entertainment industry has long realized that the public is fascinated with the

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