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THE CYNIC

Publishers: Victor Harlow
31341 Ferroll and Ken Brown
Hayward 1060 Sumatra
Hayward
CA 1-4494 LU 2-2898

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"The Butler Did It"

Monday morning, and the beginning of another miserable five days.

In their tired apartment he and his wife led individual lives, happiness a thing only to be remembered; a thing impossible, now. The seven years of their married life were, at the end, proven as wasted ones. Time, and too many differences of opinion had reduced their marriage so that now love no longer held them together; it was an undeclared law which forced them to continue. They each felt it as a responsibility: to go on, "till death do us part".

The wife, Margaret, came in the kitchen smoking a cigarette and wearing a houserobe with gaudy, patterned roses. It was nearly seven years old, and showed it. Looking at the large yellow roses had always given a slightly nauseous feeling to Arthur, but he still remembered how overjoyed she had acted when he gave it to her. They were young at heart, then. Everything was beautiful....then.

Arthur ate his cold cereal that he had gotten out himself (which was the usual procedure) while he noticed, out of the corner of his eyes, his wife drop herself into a chair. Then she got up and, making herself a cup of coffee, she began talking -- to herself (at least, thought Art, that's what she might as well be doing) about buying a new dress. But as soon as she actually asked something of him, out came the familiar "Yes, dear", and so did the fifteen bucks she was after.

bull; he was just afraid of women who could
louder than he. And one of those boisterous fe-
male was Margaret.

Arthur left work without a goodbye from his
"partner" to board the same bus which went through
the same streets which arrived at the same time
every single morning. Same....same....same, he
mused. When do I get out of this rut? He walked
into his office, fumbled around in his desk work
for a blank piece of paper, sat down, and pro-
ceeded -- to daydream and doodle.

The office boy came in twenty minutes later
with the mail and the latest gossip circulating
around the plant. Arthur learned that Jack Thomp-
son, the foreman, had quit his job so he could
get a better one with another firm, and now the
job was left open until Mr. Links, the President,
could fill it with someone else.

"Here's your chance, Art," the office boy
said sarcastically.

"Don't laugh, kid, you may be surprised,"
replied Arthur.

A little after twelve-thirty Arthur resus-
citated his courage and knocked on Mr. Link's door.

He got the promotion.

This position would give him a pay increase
of one hundred and seventy dollars a month, so he
was planning an expensive way to commemorate.

And now he was getting off the bus, trying
to memorize the way he would tell his wife of the
promotion, trying to word it so it would have power-
ful impact. He decided to make it as brief as pos-
sible.

His story was completely arranged by the time
he opened the apartment door.

"Margaret? Are you home?" called out Hoffman.

No one answered, so he walked into the kitchen,
and there he saw a note propped up on the toaster

"Of all the miserable, lousy, luck, why tonight anyway?" he bawled. He tore the note into shreds and grabbed the newspaper, threw it across the room into his chair, flounced down next to it, and started to read the headlines. Nothing on the front page seemed to interest him, so he then thumbed through the classified ads. Then an ad caught his eye that was to satisfy his desire to celebrate, lavishly.

He left this note in the same place Margaret left the one for him:

"Meet me at 104 West Anker Ave. Come as soon as you can.

Arthur"

Close to eight-thirty, two-and-a-half hours after he had written the note, Marge came walking up the street of West Anker. She met Hoffman standing in front of a nice-looking apartment house, with a smile on his face she hadn't seen for seven years.

"Well, how d'ya like it?" chuckled Art.

"How do I like what?" asked Margaret, a little worried that he had been drinking.

"Why, our new home, of course!" he laughed, slightly aggravated.

"Arthur Hoffman, have you been at Mike's place?"

"Now listen, damn it, I haven't touched a drop. So help me!"

"But Arthur, we could never afford it!"

"Well, we can now. You are talking to the new foreman of Canadian West and Company!"

"Arthur! Really? Oh, I'm so happy for you!"

And for my extra one-seventy, I bet, thought Arthur.

himself as a highly capable foreman. But he still wasn't satisfied with his salary status quo so he was bucking for a raise.

The novelty of the new apartment had worn off, and now husband and wife once more became individuals. Arthur was bringing home more pay, but the sudden strain of much more work to be done was taking his nerves. His eyes, his emotions, his nerves became bloodshot. He was a wreck.

Margaret nagged more than ever. Perhaps she took advantage of Arthur's condition, perhaps she became bored from lack of friends in their new location. Anyway, Arthur knew that he had to get her off his back somehow.

Then he got an idea. A cousin of his, whom Margaret had never met, was in town. He was looking for a job. His name was often mentioned in slightly scandalous articles, and he was known for his body-guard ability. Furthermore, he had the manners of a perfect gentleman, which clashed violently with his rugged brawn. He had served for a number of years as a faithful butler to a very rich family, but was dismissed promptly when his flaming past was revealed to the master of the house. Hoffman decided that this was the perfect answer to his problem: the man would be introduced to Margaret as an assistant; butler, cook, dishwasher, and so on. Then, if the wife decided that she had someone else to nag beside Arthur, and she left Arthur alone, he would consider it well worth the money. But, on the other hand, if she continued to squabble with Hoffman he would have his "man", well...dispose of her.

Arthur contacted his cousin and stated his proposition in full. The valet was to be known to his wife as Vincent Rey, an assumed name, since both had the same last name.

Vincent was glad to have the job. He was hired for a mere twenty-eight dollars a week with room and board. Margaret was quite surprised to hear the news of the aide; of course she carried on about how she had needed some help around the house ("My back, you know...") and how, for the money, he was such a good investment.

The Butler turned out to be a handyman all around. He fixed the leaky faucet in the kitchen, gave Mrs. Hoffman some hints on peeling potatoes, repaired the bathroom door mechanics: he really earned his keep. And he was so willing.

But all this didn't help the matrimonial situation. Oh yes, it did bring the Hoffmans closer together; they had more time to spend with each other, but as far as Margaret cared, this only meant that she would have more time to pin down poor Arthur. So, at this point, Hoffman knew that he would have to take drastic measures.

That day he decided to tell Vincent that tonight was The Night. He took the day off and wandered aimlessly through what must have been dozens of bars, then he slept off the alcohol on a park bench.

When he awoke it was still two hours before working hours were usually over. His eyes felt like tennis balls, and he felt like he was looking through the same. He splashed some cold water in his face, compliments of a drinking fountain, and proceeded to half-stumble to his home.

When he reached the apartment, instead of just walking in, he peered through the window, for no reason at all. Margaret! And....The Butler! Why hadn't he noticed the closeness between the two when the miserable double-crosser of a phony butler handed her a cup of coffee or took away her dishes?

With wild rage in her eyes, he threw open the front door and rushed in. The two lovers were wild-eyed, too -- but with fear.

The Butler put his arm around Margaret once more to reassure her, but this only threw Hoffman into a wilder rage.

"What do you think you're doing? Leave my wife alone!"

"Oh, go away, Arthur! That's what you should have done seven years ago at the wedding! Can't you see that I hate you?" shouted Margaret.

Hoffman gave out a low groan and, as if his mind had snapped, walked mechanically to the fireplace. With a nervous but powerful hand he lifted the poker.

Look in the Hoffmans' fireplace and you may notice small, ragged patches of material of two types amongst the ashes. One type could be from a woman's dress; the other possibly from a butler's suit.

The bones didn't burn, either.

the end

"When in doubt, abstain...."

Zoroaster

"All's well that ends well...."

Shakespeare

"Luney, Isn't It?"

Her name is Lulu Nell Marcus. She's five feet four, has brown hair, and the most gorgeous green eyes you ever saw. She would be the mostest if it wasn't for the fact that she's the tommiest tomboy on the whole street. She wears her hair in long, stringy pigtails, and whenever she gets embarrassed she wraps her index finger around one of them and gives it a big, hearty twist.

Lulu Nell's fifteen years old. Just the right age to be going out with boys. But, oh no! not Lulu Nell; she stays home and climbs trees like the apes (she can climb a tree faster than any monkey I ever saw). Not only that, but she can play baseball better than the team captain, and throw a side-arm-drop slicker than the star pitcher.

Lulu Nell's quite a gal. For some reason the boys got around to calling her Luney. I think they combined Lulu and Nell in some way. It's eerie. I've never understood how they did it. But it seems most people agree the name fits her pretty well.

She's got an older sister, Barbara, and a younger brother, too. That's me. My sister Barbara's really a dish. Whenever Lulu Nell's around her she gets all shook and starts twisting her pigtail. Barbara's got a date almost every other night, so Lulu Nell's got an inferiority complex. I'm not quite sure what that is, but anyway, she's jealous of Barbara.

Barbara's a nice girl, really. She doesn't mean to bother Lulu Nell, but sometimes it just can't be helped. Take last Saturday, for instance. It was noon and Lulu was in the kitchen eating lunch.

sandwich.

"Where you going?" she asked.

"Roller skating, stupid!" Barbara said. "Can't you see the skates?"

"Just asking," Lulu said, taking a long gulp from her glass of milk.

"Hey, hurry up!" came a cry from outside. "We ain't got all day!"

"My minute now," Lulu said.

"Well, hurry up!"

"Aw, shut up!" Lulu called back.

"What was that all about?" asked Barbara.

"Aw, we're going to play the chumps today, and I got to pitch. The stupid ones won't even let me finish my lunch."

Barbara did the teen-age slouch, her left foot forward, with her hand and all her weight resting on her right hip. In the most disgusted tone she could bring to the surface she said, "Is that all you're ever going to do? Just play baseball and climb trees?"

"No," Lulu said. "I'm going to play football when the season rolls around."

"Honestly, Lulu! Why don't you grow up? Dress like a girl for a change. The only time you wear a dress is when you go to church."

"Yeah," Lulu said, "ain't that a shame. And I wouldn't then if I didn't have to."

"Honestly!" Barbara said.

"Hurry up, Luney!" came the cry from outside.

"Boy, when I get outside I'm going to skin him...."

"Lulu!" cried Barbara. "Will you stop using such vulgar language?"

"Well, I am!"

"And stop cramming yourself with that peanut butter and jelly!"

Lulu had dropped her sandwich, turned around, and stared Barbara straight in the eyes. "Will you shut up and go skating!"

"One of these days," Barbara said, "I'm going to take you over my knee and spank you!"

"I dare you!" Lulu said. "I double dare you!"

With a flip of her blond hair, Barbara stormed out of the kitchen.

"Come on, Lulu!" came the usual cry.

"Will you shut up!" Lulu yelled back. "I'm coming!"

A couple hours later, Lulu dragged herself into the house and dropped her cap and glove on the divan. Her father was in his easy chair reading the evening paper.

"Who won?" he asked.

When he looked up at Lulu she dodged his eyes. With her hands stuck in her pockets she said, "Well, it wasn't my fault!"

"What wasn't your fault?" her father asked.

"How was I to know the ape would hit a homer with the bases loaded?"

"I take it you lose," her father said glumly.

"Yeah, the dumb ape was a new boy on the other team. The bases were loaded, the score was tied, and it was the last of the ninth. And he had to hit a home run!"

"Revolting, isn't it?"

"No lie," Lulu said. "And do you realize we had to buy them a coke?"

"Who's them?" her father asked.

"The other team. But I got even though," Lulu said, grinning mischievously. "Boy, did I plaster him one in the eye!"

"Lulu!"

"Well, he deserved it!"

"Since when," asked her father, "do girls

go around plastering boys in the eye?"

"It's all right, Pop. He's older than me."

At this instant the doorbell rang. Lulu answered it. On the other side of the screen stood a boy with a plastered eye, just turning black.

"Oh, it's you," Lulu said.

"Oh, now let's not feel that way."

"What do you want?"

"Nothing," the boy said. "I just came by to tell you that you swing a wild right."

"I already knew that," Lulu said.

"Good. What do you say we dig out, Luney, and go down to the drug store for a malt?"

*Lulu Nell balled up her fist. "What did you call me?"

"Sorry," Lester said. "I thought that's what all the kids call you."

"They do," Lulu said. "All of them but you!"

"All right. But what do you say we go get that malt?"

"I don't even know your name," Lulu said shyly.

"Lester Andrews. Now that we're introduced let's dig!"

Lulu's father was still reading the paper when Lester and she came home. They stopped at the door. "Bye then," Lester said. "I'll see you tonight. And do me a favor -- wear a dress."

"Okay," Lulu said, and then came into the house. Lester left.

"What's this all about?" her father asked.

"Aw, we're going to the show tonight."

Her father smiled. "Are you going to wear a dress?"

Lulu thought it over a minute. "Of course," she said, and went to her room.

It was dark out as they walked home from the show. Lulu's hair was still in pigtails, but there was one major improvement. She was wearing a dress.

She didn't look too bad in it, either.

"What are you going to do tomorrow?" Lester asked.

"Going to church."

"Then what?"

"I don't know. What do you want to know for?"

"Just wonderin'," Lester said. "Thoughcyuh might be going to play ball."

"Naw, never play ball on Sunday. Parents' won't let me."

"Oh. What are you going to do, just stay home?"

"You're sure noseey," Lulu said.

"Just wonderin'."

Lulu didn't have the slightest idea what she was supposed to do or say, so she did and said nothing. She tried to stick her hands in her pockets but found that there weren't any on her her dress. She forgot herself for a moment.

"You know, you're quite a thing around the neighborhood," Lester said.

"Yeah, I guess I am."

"Sure are," Lester said. "Everyone talks about old Luney!"

Lulu turned red and balled up her fist. "I told you," she said, and aimed for the other eye.

When Lulu came home, minus Lester, she slammed the door and went into the kitchen. She made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and then came back into the living room.

"How did your date go?" her father asked.

"On the end of this," Lulu said, indicating her fist.

"Well, that's one way to go," her father said.

"What are you going to do now?"

"Clean my spikes," Lulu said and went to her room, slamming the door.

the end

"The Eyes of Giants"

The little man stepped forward through the crowd. He stood on his toes, but still he could not see the form on the sidewalk. He pushed and shoved until he finally made his way to the front of the mob of curious onlookers.

Then he could see the body on the sidewalk. The form was that of a huge, black-haired man, with heavy brooding eyebrows; his eyes were closed and quincched in pain. His fists were nearly the length of a beer can. Blood trickled from the side of his head where the police officer's bullet had grazed his head, rendering him unconscious.

The mob of people milled around, pointing and shoving, trying to get a better look. The small man tried to hold his ground, but was pushed from side to side. He stood only four-eleven, and looking up he saw all the giants towering before him. And he hated them all.

He hated them because they pushed him around, and he hated them because they always thought they were better than he was; but most of all he hated them simply because they were big.

But he would show them. He looked back down at the defenseless man lying on the ground and thought: now he isn't any bigger than I am. Now I'm better than he is!

The big man's legs were spread apart and his arms were spread above him; one leg was curled delicately beneath the other. He was lying in a pool of his own blood.

The police officer that shot him had just left to find a call box to phone for the ambulance. The little man knew he would be getting back soon.

PIQUEUR IS DOWN ON THE LARGE MAN'S HEAD

He looked around at the large people circling him. He felt engulfed in a cavern.

He turned around and around, watching the giants, their large oval eyes peering at him. And he hated them... Oh, how he hated them!

Blood rushed to his head and he could feel a throbbing in his throat. He had to do something. He just couldn't stand there, those giants looking at him!

Why must they look at me! he thought. Why! All his life people had looked down and stared and pushed and laughed at him....just because he was a few inches shorter than they were. Did this make him a freak?

Everything began to spin around before him. Faster, faster, like a giant merry-go-round. He couldn't think straight. His hands went to his head and suddenly there was a loud scream.

Silence. Slowly he took his hands away from his head and looked about him. He looked up at the giants, and this time they actually were staring at him....staring through dark, misty eyes.

Why had he screamed....why? Frantically he turned around and around, convulsion gripping his mind. Eyes....a dozen....two dozen....fifty! Nothing but eyes! All staring down at him!

He had to do something. Something to show that he was just as good as they were; better even. And again he looked at the large, darkhaired man on the sidewalk. And all his years of anger, of torment, of helplessness, of being pushed around, of being stomped on....they were all gone in that gaze.

And suddenly a smile flashed across his face. He stepped closer to the form on the sidewalk. And then, standing over the man....towering above the giant, the little man raised his foot and

brought it down on the large man's head

brought it down on the large man's head.

Again....and again. The mob was quiet, and they watched as if in a trance. And the little man continued to stomp on the large man....his side....his back....until his shoes and pants were soaked in blood.

And then he stomped. Slowly, he turned around. And he was happy. He saw all those eyes staring at him....but he didn't mind....he showed them!

And with great satisfaction the little man shoved his way back through the crowd of giants.

the end

The time will come
when all good will
will be a thing
to scoff and kill.
When ancient times
will fade from view
and all dumb animals
will rule;
Then all of man
will rot in hell
which I might say
is just as well.

"The Perfect Father"

"What about that guy! How did a school like Jackson High ever hire a nut like that? Holy Heck-eral!"

"Yeah, I guess that the old guy does seem a little buggy. But I don't know -- I'd like to hear his whole story."

"God, we can't even nail that old buzzard for Suspicion. Mrs. Mandel, or whatever her name is, says that she heard some hell of a scream last night from his home, and one the night before, too. She phoned in -- you didn't hear about all this because it was your night off -- and told us that it sounded like someone was being murdered, and she snuk up real close to the laboratory window, to grab a look, but the shade was down. She said she heard the old guy laughing -- a real queer sound, she said."

"Ah, let's leave it to the Sarge and his "brain trust"; this is too deep for lowly flat-foots like us."

"Okay. Let's go get a cuppa coffee."

*

"Let's have it, old man; what were those screams Mrs. Mandel heard? (Good night, how long will this last?)"

"All right, Sergeant, I . . . I'll tell you now."

"You mean you're gonna tell us that there actually were screams? Why are you changing your story?"

"Simply because I just cannot take this horrid questioning any longer. I have a . . . a terrible headache."

"Okay, professor, let's hear it."

*

"This may be difficult for you to conceive, gentlemen, but twenty-five years ago I was married. Those were the happiest times of my life. But my beloved wife, Helena, died at childbirth, and so did the child. And he was to be our first! Then they were both gone. For the first few months I was miserable as could be; I stopped working and lived on I don't know what, I stopped seeing my friends (the few ones I had) I, as the novels say, "lived in gloom"."

"And then a truly wonderful thing happened. I adopted a child, or rather, as it turned out, two children."

"I had noticed one of those advertisements in some sort of popular magazine; you know the type of ad I'm speaking of: a pathetic story supposedly uttered by an orphan child in the American Slums, telling of her only possession which was a small ragged doll. Yes, it was very pathetic indeed."

"I adopted this girl who, at the time, was six years old. I had trouble procuring her from her neighborhood, though, for a small boy, also six years old, held her arm and wouldn't let her go. In a flurry of pandemonium I agreed to adopt him also."

"I must admit that I was an excellent father. I immediately had them enrolled in school -- the finest Private School in the state. The girl proved to be an avid learner and was quite intelligent for her age. The boy, though eager to learn, was, I suppose, a slight "throwback" to his class and a point of ridicule to his classmates. But he didn't fail a subject!"

"Then, the summer that they had both graduated from the fourth grade, I came across an idea that was to be the childrens' and my own downfall, though at

the time I thought that it would be an excellent challenge: I was going to educate my children in my own manner, and experiment in age regression-mentality at the same time."

"You see, gentlemen, I was about to partake in teaching my children . . . well, . . . backwards! By this I mean that I did, for the first year, give them a review of the fourth grade. This they took perfectly "in stride", but they persisted me with "when will we learn something new", and the like. They were forbidden by myself to do any outside reading; they were allowed only a minimum of outside gymnastics, and they were instructed to associate only with fourth graders. Then, beginning my second year of "teaching" them, when they were approximately twelve years old, there was a marked decrease in their mentality; they seemed less inquisitive, their minds were becoming dull. That year I taught them the third grade fundamentals."

"In four years I had reduced their thinking stages to those of kindergarteners. Although their bodies were developed to their natural years, their minds . . . well, you understand."

"Then I decided to work my experiment for a final two years longer, and then announce my victory to the world. I kept complete diaries of these stages, which are at home."

"By now the children were complete imbeciles. A baby of one year could have outrated either one of them in an intelligence test. My stomach was beginning to sicken of my exploits; I often felt as if I was going mad from lack of sleep and I felt like a fiend. But I kept on, on and on, thinking that some good was to come, surely, from my experiment in nature."

"I then decided to graduate them from this morose stage to at least a stage which would render them capable of saying a few words."

"But I couldn't do it!"

"The fact is, they seemed to gradually transfer deeper and deeper into a decreased mental status. Over and over I tried to communicate with them, but with no response. Their eyes were developing a skittish look; a look of mere animals."

"And now we are up to date, gentlemen."

*

"That is one hell of a story", murmured the Sergeant, "but what about those screams in the night?"

"Those, I presume, were emitted by my children", sighed the old man.

"Can he see them -- can he look at 'em?" questioned the Sarge.

"Yes . . . yes, I suppose you must", said the professor.

*

The major portion of the small Police Force went to the old man's home. The professor sat in the back seat of one of the squad cars with a very noticeable sad, defeated look of humbleness painted on his face. He seemed a tired old man.

When they arrived at his home, the professor led the way through the door; down the hall, down the basement steps, across the basement floor, and up to a door in a far corner of the damp surroundings. There were no lights. It was dark.

The tired old man swung open an unnoticeable door and there was light and there was brightness; there was a rat slithering across the ground there were two forms on the floor they were bone-chewing, slobbering, flea-smashing, sewer-sweat-dung smelling forms and they made the police force sick to look at them.

Good God said the Sergeant

Lord said the flatfoot

Jesus said the other flatfoot
(Success said the old man)

the end

When flowerers die from view,
And nature fades away,
Then dust will stand anew,
To darken this new day.

When beauty halts its flow,
And streams run violent,
Then all of man must go,
For none are innocent.

"His New Life"

John decided that he must go through with it. It was useless to go on like this; in fact, every day was packed with complete uselessness. This particular life meant nothing to everyone; Mr. Wilkes, the boss at the office, displayed this attitude by exercising his "firing priveleges", which seriously cut John's income. And his wife cared about him like Hitler had cared about the existence of Jewish people. But then, the feeling was mutual.

Then he thought about his wife. How would she feel about it? Would she think that this life is important, that all life is important? Would she be naive enough to believe in this out-dated philosophy? Maybe if he could talk to her about it, explain to her that life is fruitless, not worth waiting out. But no, why do that? She would never accept it. Besides, he could never approach her with such a subject. For one reason, it would be unnecessary; she couldn't talk him out of it, even if she cried and begged and promised to be reassuring and to be an emotional place of refuge for him. Also, it was a matter of ethics, of moral principles. At least she could be spared grief until the last moment.

He wondered how it would be, how his "new life" would turn out when the death mournings would be over. No longer would she plague him, he would be out of her sight, she out of his. Yes, death was truly the only way out.

How to decide upon the instrument of death. He wouldn't want to suffer, that was for sure. Poison would be nice. But then so would carbon monoxide fumes, inhaled in big, generous clouds; the sleepiness creeping over you till you slowly drift into

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Never-Never Land. No, that wouldn't be safe. Someone might barge in accidentally and interfere. It would have to be something quick, final and extremely accurate. A second try at a thing like this would be completely nerve-shattering.

After much thought given to the death tool, he chose one that was quick, inexpensive, and not very painful. Pain he could not stand.

He said a short prayer, and then wrote a brief suicide note, which read: "There is not much to be said. My reason for self-execution is simple. That is life, anyway, but potential death?" With this done, he placed the note on the desk . . . and stepped into another world.

Three days later the police broke down the door to the apartment after the hotel manager summoned them. He had called them because the door was barricaded from the inside and he couldn't get in to see what was wrong.

When the cops got in, they found the note on the desk. But most important, they found her; hanging at the end of a rope.

the end

Don't lock too closely
or too long,
or else all good
will come to wrong.

A Allegory: "The Fly And The Spider"

The Little Fly had always been a weakling and a conformist, but to try and prove that he had courage, which he hadn't, he took the dare. His fellow being had also been and was destined to be an obscure individual for his lifetime, and it was he who had dared the little fly to try it.

And so the little fly buzzed over to the corner in which the ogre of insect world killed and ate and then the little fly landed. He knew that he could easily break part of the web without getting caught in it.

And so the little fly climbed the rough wall that provided points of fixation for the web and then he hopped into the thick sticky web and tried to straddle it. His vibrant energy gave the criss-crossed structure a cause to vibrate, and the echoes caused by the reverberations nearly drove the fly's poor little mind insane. Then the spider came.

And so then the little fly struggled intensely to free himself because the hairy slobbering monstrous terrible creature was moving slowly but with deliberation towards the little fly.

But the little fly couldn't become free. The spider advanced and quickly and deftly wrapped the poor little fly in thick web. The little fly was sick and an overpowering feeling of pain and emptiness swept over his little self.

Then the spider injected poison into the little fly. The fly felt the strange emotions and warmth it gave him; he noticed the relaxation which was creeping like a shadow across his dim brain. But the little fly, by a miracle and a defect in the web broke through the ogre's grasp and fell to the dirt. He lay there

stunned for three hours.

When he realized that the situation in which he was in was dangerous, for the spider could again attack, he besied himself by attempting to remove the web that was wrapped around his body. With this done, he buzzed in the direction of his familiar surroundings. It was odd to him, but he noted that a warm glow and a feeling of tranquility had possessed his self. He wondered why.

He went back to his fellow-flies but couldn't tell anyone the predicament he had just been in because he was ashamed. He was ashamed because he wanted the spider to catch him again and inject that overpowering venom into his system.

And so the thought of the injection became an obsession with the little fly. He decided to go back to the eeriness of that forbidden corner where the sunlight glistened on the sticky web. So he went there and was caught and was injected and managed to escape again.

But, although he went back time after time after time, he knew that it would be the death of him.

And so it was.

the end

When the play is finished,
and the players forget their parts,
then there will be time for laughter,
and young passion will rule their hearts.

"Creation"

We spotted the old man's space car and we landed. The car was in a clump of bushes, all cracked up. We examined it, and found that the old man was gone. It was a big planetoid and we had the privilege of searching it. The old man had to be found. Not that he was dangerous or anything like that; it was just the idea. If an eighty-year-old man can escape from a sanitarium in the middle of an army base and run half way around the solar system, evading every military defense and police paramount on Earth, what in heaven's name could the younger generation be able to do? So we were sent to bring him back. My name is Fredrick Martin, and I'm a doctor from the sanitarium. My partner is Mick Lawrence, a nurse still in training.

We knew that the old man, Billy Barnes, was headed in this general direction, but we weren't quite sure which planetoid he was headed for. So we made the rounds, finally coming to Oculis.

I had been to Oculis once before. Knowing the general terrain, I figured out where the old man might land. And I fiddled not in my figuring. After finding the space car, we set out looking for Billy. This wasn't going to be an easy task. Billy was a paranoic, and you never can tell what they're going to do. One day Billy thought that he was the President, and he declared war on Venus. We had a nice time getting out of that one. Another time he thought that he was a woman and he wanted to have a baby. He ended up very disappointed. Next he thought he was a spy, and he tried to blow up the sanitarium; we caught him just in time. So you can never tell with old Billy.

We had searched for over an hour, and had almost

given up hope; but then we found our first trace of him. It seems that this time he thought he was a sculpturer. He had carved a figure out of a tree stump, and it wasn't too bad of a job -- a little amateurish, maybe; but still it wasn't too bad. This particular figure happened to be of a horse.

A little while later we came to another piece of art. This time it was a dog.

"You know," Mick said honestly, "I think the guy has really cracked this time.

"He's been like that for years," I said. "I remember when they first brought him in...."

"I know," Mick said sardonically. "You've told me more times than I can count on one hand."

Fifteen minutes later we came to another carving. "He's getting a little more advanced," I said. This time the carving was of a small boy. It was crude, but it honestly resembled a boy.

"Better taste," Mick said.

"Looks lousy, to me," I said, being difficult.

Billy ran out of trees so we didn't see any more carvings for a long while. But we knew we were on the right track because we saw his shoeprints imbedded in the mud as we crossed a muddy swamp-land. After a while we saw another carving. A woman this time.

I carefully studied the carving for a moment. "You know, he's rather good. I'm no authority on art, but I think he shows promise. With some instruction.... I think I'll reopen his case."

"You can worry about that after we find him," Mick said.

So we continued on.

We hadn't gone a thousand yards before we found him. He was perched on the limb of a tree, where he was putting the final touches to the face of a statue. It was of a man this time. It looked so

Billy got progressively better on each subject.

We watched him for a moment or two before walking over to him. Then I said, "How're you doing, Billy?"

"Be quiet. Don't bother me," he shooshed.

"I'm just finishing my last creation!"

"We haven't got all day, you...."

"Shut up," I told Nick. "Let him finish his master-piece."

Nick shrugged.

Billy began to talk as he carved. "When I'm through here I'm going to start a whole new civilization!"

"Sure, Billy....."

"And I'll be God....."

This is going a little too far, I thought. I had had enough by then. I reached up into the tree to grab him.

"Stop it, you fools," he said. "My creations will soon turn to beings, just like you!"

"And you're an idiot!" I said.

I grabbed his arm to haul him off. And when I pulled him to the ground I noticed that his arm felt hard and cold, and then I could no longer move him.

I saw terror in Nick's eyes as he gazed at Billy. Billy's arm felt...almost like wood. I turned and looked at him.

He was God. He created the statues so that they could turn into beings. Instead, he turned into wood like his creations. But not exactly.... there was one difference....He was petrified, so he would last forever...because after all, he was God.

the end