



**NO
POCKETS
IN A
SHROUD**

A NOVEL

HORACE McCOY

Author of

**They Shoot Horses,
Don't They?**



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WHEN DOLAN GOT THE call to go up to the managing editor's office he knew this was going to be the blow-off, and all the way upstairs he kept thinking what a shame it was that none of the newspapers had any guts any more. He wished he'd been living back in the days of Dana and Greeley, when a newspaper was a newspaper and called a sonofabitch a sonofabitch, and let the devil take the hindmost. It must have been swell to have been a reporter on one of those old papers. Not like now when the country was full of little Hearsts and little MacFaddens beating drums and printing flags and shouting over their papers and saying Mussolini was another Caesar (only with planes and poison gas), and that Hitler was another Frederick the Great (only with tanks and homosexual pyromaniacs); and selling patriotism at cut-rate prices and not giving a good goddam about anything but circulation. (Gentlemen, we are very sorry we cannot lend you our trucks this afternoon to move the loot from the City Hall, but we simply must deliver our night final. After six o'clock we will be very happy to lend you have them. Or: oh yes, sir, Mister Delancey, we understand perfectly. Those two women *wandering* in front of your son's car. Oh yes, sir, hahahahaha! That alcoholic odour on his person was from somebody *spilling* a cocktail on his suit.)

'The yellow bastards,' Dolan said to himself, meaning the newspapers, going into Thomas's office, the managing editor.

'Where'd this story come from?' Thomas asked, holding up two sheets of typewritten copy paper.

'That story's all right,' Dolan said. 'That's one story that'll stand up.'

'I didn't ask you that. I asked you where you got it.'

'I got it the day before yesterday. At the last game of the series. Why?'

'It sounds pretty fantastic –'

'It not only sounds pretty fantastic, it is pretty fantastic. When a pennant-winning ball club deliberately throws a championship series for the benefit of a few gamblers, that's what you call pretty fantastic. I suppose you're going to throw that story away too?'

'I am – but that's not the only reason I sent for you. Forget the story. The business office –'

'Wait a minute,' Dolan said. 'You can't forget a thing like this. Hell, the ball club's crooked. Everybody who saw the series knows they were in the can. They weren't even clever about it. Besides, that story's not exclusive with us. The other papers have got it too – they're using it this afternoon. We've got to protect ourselves.'

'Oh, I don't think they'll use it,' Thomas said. 'Maybe this is not as terrible as you think it is.'

'It's as terrible as the old Black Sox scandal. Baseball would be in a swell fix today if nobody had printed that story, wouldn't it?'

'And Landis still would be just another judge. Now look, Mike,' Thomas said soberly, 'there's no'

sense in us having these arguments every time you want to vent your personal spleen on somebody.
You know the policy of this paper – ’

‘Sure, sure, sure. I know the policy of this paper. I know the policy of every paper in town. I know the policy of every goddam paper in the country. There’s not one inch of gut in all of them put together.’

‘Why are you always going out of your way to offend people? Why are you always trying to kick up a stink?’

‘I’m not trying to kick up anything. That story you threw away is NEWS! You’re always throwing away news. Last week it was the Delancey kid – ’

‘We played that story down, because there is no sense in ruining a fine kid’s life – ’

‘Well, good God, *he* ruined a couple of fine lives. He got drunk and went clear across the street into the safety zone to kill those women. Yes, sir, he had to work like hell to bag that pair. Of course we played the story down. The fact that his old man is one of our biggest advertising contracts has nothing to do with it – ’

‘You’re too quixotic,’ Thomas said.

‘Is that what it is?’ Dolan said, pressing his thin lips together.

‘What was it a couple of weeks ago when I brought in that story about the reorganization of the Ku Klux Klan?’

‘The Ku Klux Klan is dead. That was not the Klan.’

‘All right, all right, the Crusaders then – or whatever the hell they call themselves. A rose is not the only thing you can call by another name and get the same odour. They wear sheets and helmets and hold secret meetings – ’

‘I’ve tried to tell you before that no newspaper in town can touch that Crusader angle. That’s pure dynamite. And the sooner you give up these reformer ideas the better off you’ll be too.’

‘For God’s sake, don’t keep telling me I’m a reformer,’ Dolan said angrily. ‘People can do anything they like right out in the middle of the street for all I care. That’s unimportant. But what’s important is printing some news about these political highbinders and about the big-time thieves and why, even the goddam Governor of this state is crooked, and you know it. What happened to that story I brought you last year that a drunken Congressman had given me – with his sworn affidavit? You threw it away. All right, the hell with that now. But you’ve got a story in your hand about a ball club selling out, and I give you an argument about printing it and you remember all those other arguments we’ve had about stories, and you think I’m a reformer. How about those hundreds of kids who go out to the park every day and make heroes of these same crooked ball players – literally worship the ground they walk on? How about them?’

‘That’s quixoticism,’ Thomas said. ‘Sit down and cool off.’

‘Hell. I won’t ever get cooled off. This is no newspaper, this is a goddam house organ.’

‘All right,’ Thomas said grimly. ‘I’ve let you pop off like this, because I thought you’d make up my mind for me if I gave you a chance. Up to now I’ve had some hope for you. I’ve put up with your belligerency and your profanity, because I thought sooner or later you’d get wise to yourself. I’ve been fighting just as hard as you have – to keep the business office from firing you. A dozen times they’ve asked me to let you go. You don’t think so, eh? Well, take a look at this,’ he said, reaching over into his communications box. ‘Read it – ’

THE DAILY TIMES-GAZETTE

INTER-DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATION

To Mr Thomas *Date* 10–3

From Mr Womack

Subject Michael Dolan

Mr Luddy of Display called on O’Hearn Sporting Goods yesterday about their new contract. This is, you know, one of our best accounts. O’Hearn flatly refused to talk new contract, because Dolan has been owing his firm \$154.50 for more than a year for golf balls, tennis rackets, golf clubs, etc. He feels, and rightly, that if he is going to do business with this paper, our employees ought to pay what they legitimately owe him. I wish you’d see me about this.

‘I’m always getting notes from the business office about bills you owe our advertisers,’ Thomas said.

‘Slightly ironic,’ Dolan said, laying the note back in the box. ‘The business manager wants me to pay my debts – apparently it never occurred to him that this paper owes some debts too. Some debts to the public – ’

‘I’m not going all over that again,’ Thomas said, a note of finality in his voice. ‘I guess maybe we just can’t see things the same way. Maybe I’d be doing you a favour if I fired you – ’

‘You can’t fire me,’ Dolan said. ‘I don’t work here any more – ’

He was cleaning out his desk when the door opened and Eddie Bishop came in. Bishop was the police reporter, fifteen years on the beat. He looked like Pat O’Brien would look if O’Brien were really a reporter. He had a girl with him.

‘What’s this, what’s this?’ Bishop said. ‘I hear you’ve quit.’

‘I did,’ Dolan said, looking at the girl standing beside him (the office was so small that three people filled it pretty full), thinking how red her lips were, the reddest lips he had ever seen on anybody.

‘Meet Myra Barnovsky,’ Bishop said. ‘You ought to know Mike,’ he said, winking slyly.

‘I’ve seen you in some Little Theatre plays,’ Myra said, extending her hand. ‘You weren’t bad.’

‘Thanks,’ Dolan said politely. When he touched her hand he shivered and his shoulders twitched.

He was embarrassed, but the girl apparently paid no attention ...

‘What was the fight about?’ Bishop asked.

‘Oh – same old thing. Another story he wouldn’t print.’

‘Well, I envy you having the nerve to quit,’ Bishop said. ‘I envy the hell out of you. Weren’t for the wife and kids I’d have told Thomas years ago where to stick this gutless gazette of his – ’

‘Don’t let us interrupt you,’ Myra said to Dolan. ‘Go ahead.’

‘I’m practically finished,’ Dolan said. ‘I was just cleaning out some junk – ’

‘What are you going to do now?’ Bishop asked.

‘I don’t know. First of all I’ve got to make up my mind whether I’m glad this happened or whether I’m sorry.’

‘Look out, now,’ Myra said, aiming her finger at him straight from those red, red lips; ‘don’t weaken – ’

‘You’re glad,’ Bishop said. ‘Take it from me, you’re glad. At least you’ve got your self-respect back.’

‘What’s left of it,’ Dolan said, looking at him, trying to smile. He liked Bishop. He had always liked him. Bishop was his friend. Bishop was the sort of friend you could go to and ask how to pronounce hard names like Goethe and Beethoven without him laughing behind your back. He wished now, suddenly, that Bishop had come in alone, without Myra Barnovsky (he wondered who she was and where she had come from and why she made him feel so funny), so he could have sat down with him and confessed that his smile and his indifference were faked and that he really felt panicky and helpless inside, and that because this was the only job he knew, maybe he’d better go back to Thomas and apologize and promise to be a good boy in the future and keep his mouth shut. But Bishop hadn’t come in alone, he had brought Myra Barnovsky ... ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘what’s left of it – ’

‘You’ll be okay. We’ll see you for lunch,’ Bishop said, starting out.

‘I don’t think we’d better leave him,’ Myra said. ‘He’s on the verge of going back to his boss and apologizing and begging for his job back. Just to be sure he doesn’t, we’d better take him with us – ’

Dolan turned around and looked at her in astonishment.

‘Don’t be surprised,’ Myra said. ‘There was nothing difficult about it. It’s written all over your face. It’s strange how these things work out,’ she said to Bishop. ‘If I had been one minute late getting out of bed this morning, if I had stayed in the johnny one minute more, if I had missed that particular street car, if I had stopped to get my usual cup of coffee – and why didn’t I stop? That’s odd, because I haven’t missed my morning coffee in years – if I had been one second longer doing any of those things, if I *had* stopped for the coffee, I would have missed seeing you. And if I had missed being here Dolan undoubtedly would have gone and begged for his job back. And he would have gotten it, too. But now he won’t. He’s finished with this. Don’t you think that’s odd?’ she asked Dolan.

‘I suppose so ...’ Dolan said, shivering again, looking at her with the look of a man who knows

the woman he is looking at is his for the asking, and that lying on the bed with her clothes off, her body will be beautiful and demand loving, and he knew, too, or he sensed (which are one and the same thing in sensual philosophy) that the act itself would be no more satisfactory than taking a beautiful corpse for a mistress.

It was this that startled him, and now he knew why he had shivered when he had touched her hand, and all of a sudden he was aware of what this girl had been trying to say in that confusing speech about how she had happened to be here. She had been confused, too, and had said it badly, but now at this split second he understood. She had felt the same something he had felt. Suppose she *had* stopped to get that cup of coffee ...

‘I’m ready,’ he said, picking up his stuff, starting out.

Myra Barnovsky stopped him at the door. ‘Take a good look around,’ she said. ‘You won’t be coming back here any more ...’

The three of them had lunch at the Rathskeller, and later that afternoon Dolan went over to the Keystone Publishing Company to see George Lawrence. This was a firm that printed trade magazines for insurance and hardware and implement and motor-car companies ...

‘Here’s what I wanted to see you about, Mr Lawrence,’ Dolan said. ‘You’ve got a big printing shop here, and I’ve got what I think is a big idea. I want to start a magazine.’

‘What’s the matter with the newspaper business?’

‘Nothing. I quit. I wasn’t getting anywhere.’

‘What kind of a magazine’ve you got in mind?’

‘Oh, one a little like the *New Yorker* – maybe not quite so sophisticated. I haven’t got the whole thing set in my mind yet, but I’d play up the society angle and amusements – with an occasional topical article that told the truth.’

‘The truth about what?’

‘Oh, anything that happened to come along. Politics, sports. Sort of keep an eye on things and look out for the people.’

‘That’s more in the province of a newspaper, isn’t it?’

‘Theoretically, it is. But none of them do it. They’re afraid. Only they call it diplomacy.’

‘Not a bad name for it,’ Lawrence said. ‘How many copies would you want? What quality paper would you use?’

‘Wait a minute,’ Dolan said, ‘you evidently don’t understand. I don’t want to pay you to put out this magazine. I want you to put it out and let me edit it and write it.’

‘I certainly didn’t understand,’ Lawrence said, frowning. ‘I don’t want the responsibility of publishing a magazine. It’s too much of a headache.’

‘You wouldn’t have any responsibility,’ Dolan said. ‘I’d take all of that.’

‘I’d be paying for it, wouldn’t I? What do you call that?’

‘You’d furnish the paper and print it, but I’d take care of all the rest. Distribution and advertising and the copy –’

‘I’m sorry, Dolan. I don’t think I’d be interested.’

‘But, Mr Lawrence, you’re the only man in town who’s got the equipment to do a job like this. It wouldn’t cost you much – you’ve got the paper and the machines – and a magazine like this will make a hell of a lot of money. Of course, there’s such a thing as the four hundred thousand people in this town getting Justice, too – but I’m not going to talk about that, because you’re a business man, and this is a business proposition. If you back this magazine for me, I’ll guarantee you two thousand circulation on the first issue. That’s a lot of circulation, isn’t it?’

‘It’s considerable,’ Lawrence admitted.

‘And it’ll go a hell of a lot more than that,’ Dolan said. ‘I’ll rip this town wide open. You can tell me people won’t read it.’

‘Sounds as if you might be biting off more than you can chew,’ Lawrence said.

‘Well, somebody has to bite it off,’ Dolan said grimly.

‘You’d make a lot of powerful enemies –’

‘Sure, you would. Look here, Mr Lawrence, do you realize that a magazine like this would probably be preserved for posterity in the Smithsonian Institute? Why, there’s not a single goddam newspaper or periodical in the whole country that’s playing fair with its readers! They’re all subsidized by advertising contracts or political affiliations – why, for God’s sake, this is the greatest opportunity you’ll ever have in your life! Sure, we’ll make enemies. We’ll make enemies out of all the crooks and thieves. But the decent element will be for us.’

‘The decent element is not in power,’ Lawrence said.

‘Well, by God, we’ll put ’em in! Don’t get the idea,’ Dolan said, hurrying on, a little alarmed by the frightened look in Lawrence’s face, ‘that I intend to devote the whole magazine to raising hell. For the main, it will be a social magazine appealing to the Weston Park crowd. But every once in a while we’ll roll up our sleeves and really get to the bottom of things.’

‘Dolan, I’m in perfect sympathy with your ambitions. But I can’t afford it. I simply haven’t got the money to take a chance.’

‘How much do you think the first issue would cost?’

‘Why, I haven’t any idea.’

‘Well, roughly, how much?’

‘How big would you want it?’

‘The size of the *New Yorker*. About twenty-four pages.’

‘Let me see,’ Lawrence said, frowning, mentally calculating. ‘Around fifteen hundred dollars for two thousand copies.’

‘Well, suppose I got fifteen hundred dollars together and paid for the first edition and it went over. Would that prove anything?’

‘It might – ’

‘If the first edition was a success, would you be interested?’

‘I might – ’

‘See you later then,’ Dolan said, going out.

That night, between scenes of the rehearsal of *Meteor*, he cornered Johnny London in the dressing room. Johnny London was but two generations removed from the log-cabin settlement that had grown into the great metropolis that was now Colton – and the twenty-storey London building now stood on the exact spot of his grandfather’s hut.

‘Now, what the hell is fifteen hundred bucks to you, Johnny?’ Dolan said. ‘You got all the dough in the world.’

‘You’re nuts,’ Johnny said. ‘You’re absolutely nuts. I’m damn near broke.’

‘I hate to ask you to help me out again, but fifteen hundred bucks is only a drop in the bucket to you – and it means everything in the world to me.’

‘What are you going to do with that much money? What do you want it for?’

‘I want to start a magazine. If you’ll let me have it I’ll sign half-interest over to you.’

‘Un-unh. I can guess what that magazine’ll be like. What about your newspaper job?’

‘I quit,’ Dolan said. ‘I quit this morning.’

‘The hell you did!’ Johnny said. ‘You shouldn’t have done that, Mike. Hell, you were on your way to being famous. Everybody in town read your column – look, here’s your pal, David,’ he said, dropping his voice.

‘Fellows, please cooperate,’ David said, sweeping into the dressing-room. ‘The last act is about ready to start, and you should be out there with everybody else waiting for your cues.’

‘We came back here because we had a little business to talk over,’ Dolan said.

‘Well, now that you’ve quite, quite finished, will you get on stage?’

‘But we haven’t quite-quite finished,’ Dolan said.

‘We’re coming,’ Johnny said.

‘Thank you so very much!’ David said, sweeping out.

Dolan growled. ‘He forgets this is a Little Theatre. He forgets we’re not getting paid for this.’

‘Don’t let him annoy you. He can’t help being that way.’

‘I don’t mind him being a pansy. It’s his goddam arrogance that gets me.’

‘He doesn’t mean anything by it. As a matter of fact, he admires you. But, look, you’d better get out there. You’re the big star, and you’re supposed to set a good example for the rest of these amateurs.’

‘What about the dough? Will you let me have it?’

‘I’ll talk to you after rehearsal.’

‘It means a hell of a lot to me, Johnny’

‘*Dolan!*’ a voice shouted.

‘That’s the Major,’ Johnny said. ‘Come on ...’

‘Could I speak to you a moment, Dolan?’ the Major called from the audience.

‘Sure,’ Dolan said, going down over the footlights to where the director was sitting with Dav and a couple of other stooges.

‘Do you realize we’ve only got six more days’ rehearsal?’ the Major asked.

‘I know that,’ Dolan said.

‘There’s a tremendous lot of work to be done. I wish you’d do your part.’

‘I will – ’

‘I’m producing this play especially for you. For two seasons you’ve been begging to do *Metec* and now I think the least you can do is to be ready for the curtains and cues. That’s only comm politeness.’

‘I was only talking to Johnny London a minute – ’

‘That’s no excuse for rudeness.’

‘I’m not deliberately trying to be rude. I’ve got a lot of things on my mind.’

‘Well, get up there and try to keep this play on your mind. All right,’ the Major called to the people on stage. ‘Last act! ...’

The rehearsal was over a little before midnight.

‘Well, it wasn’t good and it wasn’t bad,’ the Major said, ‘You can do better. Please brush up on your lines. Especially you, April. Tomorrow night, seven-thirty. Good night, everybody.’

‘“Especially you, April,” ’ Dolan said to her, as the cast broke up and started drifting around.

‘You weren’t any too hot yourself,’ April said. ‘Of course, you were good in one scene. You still have one big scene left. You’re marvellous in that.’

‘I am pretty marvellous in that one,’ Dolan admitted. ‘I make a swell corpse. But I do wish you weep over my chest and not over my face during that heart-rending monologue of yours. I’ve told you before I don’t like the taste of your tears.’

‘I’ll try to remember that, Michael,’ April said gaily.

‘You’d damn well better remember on opening night, or I’ll bust your scene wide open. I mean it,’ he said seriously. ‘Am I taking you home tonight? I mean, am I taking you up to your drive-way and letting you out where your father can’t see me?’

‘You brought me, didn’t you?’

‘I met you at the drug-store. Anyway, I didn’t know whether your blue-blooded fiancé was

coming by to get you. Or did he get through with his business conference? God,' Dolan said, laughing. 'he's starting early. Nothing like breaking 'em in properly'

'Where are we going tonight?' Johnny London asked, coming up.

'Home,' Dolan said. 'April has a headache.'

'Have I?' April asked innocently.

'Haven't you?' Dolan asked, winking behind Johnny's back.

'Yes –'

'That's too bad,' Johnny said to her. 'And on your one night off, too.'

'Do you mind waiting a minute?' Dolan asked April. 'I want to talk to Johnny.'

'All right –'

'Johnny,' Dolan said, walking into the wings with him, 'what about that dough?'

'Here comes your pal,' Johnny said.

'... Excuse me,' David said. 'Could I see you a minute, Mike?'

'Sure, you can see him,' Johnny said, moving away.

'Er – Mike, I understand you're looking for some money,' David said. 'I understand you need fifteen hundred dollars.'

'Hey,' Dolan said, surprised. 'What'd Johnny do – broadcast it?'

'He only told me,' David said. 'Do you still want it?'

'Yes, I want it, but –'

'Don't think about it any more then. I'll let you have it in the morning.'

'Well, thanks, David – you sort of embarrass me ...'

'How?'

'Well – you and I aren't – well, we're not exactly pals, you know.'

'That's your fault,' David said. 'I'm not a bad guy in spite of what some people think.'

'No, I guess you're not,' Dolan said. 'You know what I want the money for?'

'Johnny told me.'

'I'll cut you in for a half-interest of my interest –'

'No, you don't have to do that.'

'But – well, I'd like to. I'd like for you to have some kind of contract or something. Of course the magazine may go over – but there's always the chance that it won't.'

'I'll take the same chance you do,' David said. 'Drop around the theatre in the morning and I'll have a cheque for you. Or would you rather have the cash?'

'Either one,' Dolan said, still surprised. 'Look, I want this money more than I ever wanted anything in the world. But I think it's only fair you should know what kind of a reputation I've got –'

'Maybe I do know,' David said, smiling. 'You owe everybody in town money. You probably couldn't raise ten dollars from all your friends put together. You couldn't get five cents' worth of'

credit from any store in town. And I'll tell you something else. Johnny didn't ask me to lend you the money. He only told me you'd asked him. He thought it was a good joke that you'd think he was sucker enough to let you have it.'

'How'd you know all this about me?' Dolan asked.

'Everybody knows it. That's why you're having so much trouble with your Weston Park romances. The rich fathers of these beautiful *débutantes* have absolutely forbidden them to go with you. Did you know that?'

'I knew a couple of them had –'

'You're famous and notorious at the same time. You're *l'enfant terrible*. You've got a mania for getting into jams. You're in a constant state of rebellion. That's because you're ambitious, because you're trying to outgrow your environment.'

'Say, wait a minute,' Dolan said, dumbfounded.

'It's true,' David went on calmly. 'But you've managed to slide by thus far on your personality. You've got colour. You're attractive. You've got the physique of a Greek god. Answer me one thing why did you ever start coming around the Little Theatre?'

'I don't know –'

'I'll tell you. Because it's got things to give you. Instinctively, you knew that.'

'Mike!' April called.

'Coming!' Dolan said. 'Look, David, I appreciate what you've said –'

'You appreciate it, but you won't pay any attention to it,' David said, smiling. 'Go on with April. Drop by the theatre in the morning, and I'll have that for you.'

'Thanks,' Dolan said, reaching for David's hand. 'Thanks very much ...'

'I'm here any time after ten –'

'Thanks,' Dolan said. 'Thanks very much ...'

'I felt like a heel taking the money,' Dolan said to April, as he drove her towards Weston Park.

'I don't see why. It's only a loan.'

'Well, I do anyway. I always disliked him. I hate to be obligated.'

'Because he's queer? Poor bastard, he can't help that.'

'That's not it either. I don't know – it was the shock of him offering it to me, I guess. He's the last person in the world I'd have thought of asking.'

'I understand he's very rich. His people come from Rhode Island. Whyn't you ask me for the money?'

'I owe you dough now.'

'And I'm probably the only one you owe who's collecting, too,' April said, laughing.

'I guess you are at that,' Dolan said, laughing, too. 'If you hadn't loaned me the money to make

the instalment, the finance company would have this car now. How about a hamburger?’ he asked, jerking his head to the Hot Spot, a drive-in shack, the midnight and early-morning rendezvous for the younger set.

‘Suits,’ April said.

‘... Everything on it?’ Dolan asked, cutting off the motor.

‘Everything – unless – ’

‘Two hamburgers and two cokes,’ Dolan said to the waitress.

‘Everything on them?’ the waitress asked.

‘I should say not,’ Dolan said, laughing. ‘Cut the onions on both of them.’

‘You know,’ April said, when the waitress had moved away, ‘sometimes I wonder why I didn’t marry you.’

‘God knows I tried hard enough,’ Dolan said, ‘but your old man had other ideas. I thought he’d have a haemorrhage the day he called me up to his office and read the riot act to me. Did he pick out Menefee for you?’

‘That’s not nice, is it?’ April said. ‘Roy’s very attractive – ’

‘And he’s got a good job and he comes from good stock and he’s president of the exclusive Astor Club. And a Phi Beta from Yale. I know all that. But who picked him?’

‘I met him when I was going to school in New York.’

‘Er – confidentially, is he as good as I am?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Nix,’ Dolan said. ‘You know what I mean.’

‘Mike, you’re an awful son of a bitch,’ April said. ‘Confidentially – no.’

‘That’s encouraging,’ Dolan said. ‘Well, this time two weeks from now you’ll be married. And Menefee’ll be holding that beautiful body of yours in his arms, and I’ll be home calling him all the dirty bastards I can think of.’

‘Now, you’re acting.’

‘The hell I am. I mean it. Somehow, I wish this thing could have worked out between us. I’m not in love with you, April – but, God, I think you’re swell. It’s too bad I come from south of the slot.’

‘Oh, cut it out, Mike. That had nothing to do with it.’

‘You think it didn’t? I’m a bum. My old man is a clerk in a dry-goods store. Who the hell am I to want the wealthy April Coughlin? Say, when your old man pulled that crack on me I damn near busted him one.’

‘You’re only being dramatic. I don’t like you when you’re this way. There’s Jess and Lita!’

‘Where?’

‘Right beside us – hello,’ April called.

‘Howdjeddo, Lynn?’ Lita said, kidding. ‘Howdjeddo, Alfred?’ she said, getting out of the car.

followed by Jess. ‘You know Miss Fontanne and Mr Lunt, don’t you, Mr Allen?’

‘Hello!’ Jess said.

‘Hello, egg,’ Dolan said.

‘How’re rehearsals?’ Lita asked.

‘Fine,’ April said.

‘You should see April cry,’ Dolan said.

‘Hey, Mike,’ Jess called, motioning for him to get out of the car.

‘Excuse me,’ Dolan said, sliding out from under the wheel and going to where Jess stood at the back of the car.

‘Mike,’ he said soberly, in a half-whisper, ‘we had that meeting tonight – ’

‘Tonight?’ Dolan said, surprised. ‘I thought it was tomorrow night.’

‘No, it was tonight,’ Jess said slowly.

‘Well, when you shake your head like that I don’t need to ask how I came out. Buck up, Jess, old boy,’ Dolan said, a little sarcastic. ‘Don’t take it too much to heart.’

‘I’m sorry, Mike – ’

‘It’s all right. I’ve been blackballed before. So,’ Dolan said, almost to himself, ‘the distinguished Aster Club would have none of me!’

‘I want you to know, Mike, that I was for you. But it only takes one black ball – ’

‘That’s all right, Jess. I was a goddam fool to make application in the first place.’

‘Jess,’ Lita called, sticking her head around. ‘Will you come here and order?’

‘Thanks, anyway, Jess,’ Dolan said.

‘April tells me you’ve quit the paper,’ Lita said to Dolan, as he slipped back under the wheel.

‘Yeah.’

‘Does that mean you’ll give up broadcasting the wrestling matches?’ Lita asked.

‘I suppose so.’

‘That’s too bad, I used to stay home just to listen to you.’

‘Pardon me,’ the waitress said, brushing past Lita with the sandwiches.

‘What the hell do you care whether you get into that lousy Aster Club or not?’ April asked, as the car rolled through the great stone archway of Weston Park, the entrance to The Promised Land. ‘Most of the fellows in it are snobs – coasting on their fathers’ importance.’

‘I know that,’ Dolan said. ‘Just the same – ’

‘Forget it,’ April said, taking his right hand, putting it between her knees. ‘Forget it,’ she said softly, squeezing his hand with her knees.

‘All right,’ Dolan said happily, pressing her leg with his fingers, ‘this is swell. I don’t know what I’m going to do when you get married.’

‘You forget,’ April said, baring her teeth a little, ‘that I’m a nymphomaniac ...’

They were lying together on the banks of a small brook on an old tartan Dolan always carried in his car. They had their clothes off, and they lay there quietly, listening to the faint sucking noises of the water and the dull traffic noises of the city, seven or eight miles away, saying nothing, looking straight up at the stars.

‘Mike ...’

‘Yeah?’

‘What were you thinking?’

‘Nothing ...’

‘You must have been thinking something –’

‘You won’t laugh?’

‘No.’

‘I was thinking of Ezra Pound.’

‘Who’s he?’

‘A poet. He’s the poet who listens to water running and then tries to put the sounds into words.’

‘Oh ...’

They were silent again. April moved her head over and kissed his breast, making a little noise of relaxed contentment in her throat.

‘Mike ...’

‘Yeah?’

‘Do you love me?’

‘I don’t know. I like you, I know that.’

‘Well do you love to love me?’

‘Yes ...’

‘There won’t be many more times like this.’

‘I know it –’

‘What’s going to happen to us?’

‘Nothing’s going to happen to us –’

‘I mean in the future. I mean in years to come.’

‘Well, you’re going to marry that nice guy from Yale, and settle down and have a family. And then about the time you have a couple of swell kids we’ll be in a war and your couple of swell kids will be wiped out with enemy gas or bombs or something. And I’ll be lying like this on some foreign battlefield, only I’ll have shrapnel in my belly, and the vultures will be eating me.’

‘You don’t really think that?’

‘Yes, I do. We’re getting ready for it. A lot of stupid sonsabitches are rushing us into it head first.’

Mussolini started it and then came Hitler. Mussolini told Great Britain to kiss his arse and made them like it. The League of Nations is yellow. And Japan is around the corner, waiting with a blackjack – ’

‘I don’t think this country will go to war. People are against it.’

‘They are until we get in it. When they start playing the national anthem and waving a flag, everybody gets hysterical.’

She reached over and took his hand, moving her head a little closer, so close he could smell the oil in her hair. He raised himself up on his elbow, looking down at her. She was a length of curving white against the dark blue and red tartan. She moaned, wanting him again. He leaned down and took her in his arms.

‘Mike,’ she said, between her teeth, ‘if you do have to go to war there’s one thing that must not happen to you. Oh, God, anything but that ...’

At ten o’clock the following morning Dolan was at the theatre waiting for David, sitting in the reception-room upstairs, looking at a magazine, fingering the pages, none of it registering on his mind, because he was thinking about the fifteen hundred dollars.

‘Hello, hello,’ the Major said, coming out of his office. ‘Well. This is a surprise. Don’t you feel well, Dolan?’

‘I feel swell,’ Dolan said. ‘Why?’

‘Nothing. Only it’s been a long time since you’ve been around here this early in the morning.’

‘None of the old gang comes around any more,’ Dolan said, laying down the magazine. ‘You know why.’

‘So that’s what’s the matter with you. That’s what’s sticking in your craw.’

‘It’s what’s sticking in everybody else’s, too. There’s too much efficiency around here. Look at this room. Look at the rug. God, this joint’s a palace now. It’s not like the old barn we had.’

‘This is the finest Little Theatre in the country,’ the Major said, a little proudly.

‘That’s exactly what I’m talking about,’ Dolan said. ‘It is the finest – that’s the trouble with it. Only it’s not a Little Theatre – not strictly. It’s professional now.’

‘Not professional – semi-professional.’

‘It’s the same damned thing. You know, Major, winning those tournaments in New York was the worst thing that ever happened to us.’

‘Why? Why do you say a thing like that? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You were one of the organizers of the Little Theatre in this town.’

‘That’s why I’m not ashamed to say it. We used to play in a barn, didn’t we? A little lousy barn with benches for seats and no dressing-rooms. We did Dostoevsky and Ibsen and some plays by farmer boys who live around here – ’

‘Those local plays were very bad – ’

‘What if they were? By God, we gave ’em some sort of production! We encouraged the writer. How do you know we mightn’t have unearthed another O’Neill or Shaw? We had no overhead, and we could use local people in the cast, green people. There might have been another Bernhardt or Duse or Irving in them.’

‘We use local people now, don’t we?’

‘A few – but it’s more of a stock company. We’ve got to use experienced casts, and we’ve got to do hit plays, because we’ve got a mortgage to meet. What the hell are we doing for local talent? Nothing.’

‘I’m surprised to hear you talk like that, Dolan. I thought you, of all people, were grateful for what the Chamber of Commerce has done.’

‘Grateful!’ Dolan exclaimed, getting up, walking around. ‘I’m not in the least grateful. I loathe and despise ’em, the bastards. When we were in the old barn, I went to ’em time after time to try to get some money. They wouldn’t give us a nickel. They thought I was crazy. You know how I raised the money to get into that first tournament in New York don’t you?’

‘I know, but – ’

‘You’re goddam right, you know. I canvassed this town from Weston Park to the river, getting two bucks here and a buck there and four-bits from somebody else. And we won the lousy tournament. And we went back and won two more. And then what happened? The Chamber of Commerce decided to cash in on us. They got the Kiwanians and the Rotarians and the rest of those goddam luncheon clubs together, and the first thing you know we’re out here in a hundred-and-fifty-thousand dollar Little Theatre, this great Greek-Byzantine-Gothic-Mayan-Moroccan Temple of Art. Now it’s a big institution with expenses to meet; out the back door goes everything all of the old gang ever worked for and in the front door come all the goddam club women and their cheap politics and all the lesbians and homosexuals in town. That’s what’s sticking in my craw. The Chamber of Commerce!’

‘I’m sorry you feel that way, Dolan, truly I am,’ the Major said, taking his arm. ‘You’re a leader around here. I’d counted on you to help me.’

‘I’ve got nothing against you, Major,’ Dolan said. ‘Hell, you couldn’t help it. You’re a marvellous director. When they got this magnificent theatre, they had to get a paid director to go with it – somebody with a national reputation. It was too big a job for us. I’m not sore at you.’

‘I want you to know I’m your friend – ’

‘I’m your friend, too, Major. The way I feel has got nothing to do with you. It’s the theatre. It’s that goddam Chamber of Commerce. Why couldn’t they have let us alone?’

‘Don’t blame them – they only did what they thought was right. I’m sorry you feel this way,’ Dolan, truly I am,’ he said again. ‘You could be a terrific force for good if you’d only try. Underneath this hard-boiled shell of yours you’re a nice kid – ’

‘Don’t start that again, Major. What the hell!’

‘All right, Dolan,’ he said, plainly aggrieved. ‘I’m only trying to help you find a little happiness’

‘ – Morning,’ David said, coming in from the steps. ‘Sorry I’m late.’

‘Hello,’ Dolan said slowly, ill-at-ease, wondering how much of the conversation David had overheard.

‘See you tonight, Dolan,’ the Major said, going abruptly into his office.

‘What’s the matter with him?’ David asked.

‘Nothing. You know the Major. Giving me another fight talk.’

‘I ought to give you a fight talk, too,’ David said, looking at him slyly. ‘I called you around three o’clock this morning, and Larry said you were still out.’

‘Oh,’ Dolan said. ‘Yeah.’

‘Come on in,’ David said, taking off his hat, going through a door.

‘I like this office better than I do the Major’s,’ Dolan said.

‘It’s much smaller,’ David said, throwing his hat on the davenport, crossing to the desk, and sitting down.

‘That’s why I like it. Hell, when I think about the old barn – we had an office a little bigger than a dry-goods box, and at night we had to use it for a dressing-room.’

‘I’ve heard plenty about that old barn. Must have been fun.’

‘It was. Say, those are new, aren’t they?’ Dolan asked suddenly, pointing to the wall.

‘Yes. I painted those.’

‘You did?’ Dolan exclaimed, moving over, looking at them. ‘They’re nice. I didn’t know you went in for water-colours.’

‘I didn’t know you went in for art,’ David said, smiling.

‘I have to in self-defence,’ Dolan said, laughing. ‘I live with four painters, a budding young writer, and a German war ace. They sit up all night talking about it.’

‘That’s an interesting group over there.’

‘I don’t know how interesting it is, but I guess we’ve got a lot in common. Look, David, I don’t want to be rude, but – ’

‘But you want the cheque, huh?’

‘Well – ’

‘Sit down, Mike – ’

‘I hope you haven’t changed your mind about letting me have it,’ Dolan said, sitting down, wondering what was coming.

‘I haven’t changed my mind. I’m just curious to know if you realize what you’re getting into.’

‘Getting into?’

‘Johnny told me all about it last night. When you were rehearsing. I’d hate to see you make

mistake.’

‘I’ll pay you back – ’

‘It’s not that I’m thinking of. It’s your magazine. I wouldn’t like to see you get into trouble.’

‘I’m not going to get into trouble,’ Dolan said shortly.

‘You’re going to try to tell the truth, aren’t you?’

‘I’m not going to try to, I’m going to do it.’

‘Have you stopped to think what might happen if you stepped on the wrong toes? This is a overgrown country town, filled with narrow-minded people, bigots – and they’ll resent anybody who makes an effort to change conditions, I know. I know what towns like this are like.’

‘I know too. I was born here.’

‘They’ll crucify you – ’

‘Look, David, for God’s sake, don’t lecture me. Everybody is always lecturing to me. I know what I’m doing – do I get the money or not?’ he said, standing up, biting his lip.

‘... All right,’ David said finally, opening the drawer, taking out his cheque-book.

Lawrence met him as he came in the door of the printing plant and took him upstairs to a vacant office.

‘I think you’ll find this room satisfactory,’ he said. ‘I’ll have it cleaned out for you in the morning. We’ve been using it as a storeroom for our layouts and art work.’

‘This’ll do fine,’ Dolan said. ‘All I need is a desk and a typewriter, and what about a key to the place?’

‘I’ll have a key made for you,’ Lawrence said. ‘I want you to have a talk with Mr Eckman about the advertising. Eckman handles the advertising for several of the house organs we print. He’ll handle yours. Just make yourself at home,’ Lawrence said, going out.

‘When do you plan to put out the first issue, Dolan?’ Eckman said.

‘In about a week – ’

‘Got anybody in mind who might throw us some business?’

‘Not right now I haven’t. I hadn’t given that angle much thought.’

‘It’s rather an important angle. Got to have business to pay the freight, you know – ’

‘I know.’

‘What about your friends? You ought to have some friends in some of the stores who could give us an account.’

‘I haven’t,’ Dolan said. ‘I’m sorry. I’m pretty new to this racket, but I’ll try to think up some prospects for you.’

‘Well, in the meantime I’ll make the usual rounds,’ Eckman said. ‘Have you decided on a name for the magazine yet?’

‘I think I’ll call it the *Cosmopolite*.’

‘The *Cosmopolite*! Not bad,’ Eckman said. ‘Not bad.’

‘Do you think you can get any business for the first issue?’

‘I don’t see why we can’t get some,’ Eckman said, moving towards the door. ‘Of course, the advertising business is always tough, but the novelty of this ought to get us some.’

‘It certainly will be a help if we can,’ Dolan said.

‘I’ll give it a whirl,’ Eckman said, smiling. ‘Well, so long – ’

‘So long,’ Dolan said, looking out the window into the street below ...

‘Good afternoon,’ Myra’s voice said.

‘Hello!’ Dolan said, turning, surprised that he had not heard her come in.

‘How are you?’

‘Fine ... all right.’

‘Well,’ she said, smiling, ‘aren’t you going to ask me to sit down?’

‘Sure – excuse me,’ Dolan said, coming around and getting a chair for her. ‘There you are – ’

‘Thanks ... What’s the matter with your face?’

‘Oh,’ he said, rubbing the short beard, ‘I didn’t feel like shaving this morning – ’

‘I don’t mean that,’ Myra said, shaking her head. ‘I mean that – ’ she leaned over and touched his cheek with her finger. ‘Right there.’

‘It’s a bruise, I guess. I must have hit something.’

‘Looks like a bite,’ Myra said. ‘You don’t go around letting women bite you, do you?’

Dolan flushed, feeling a little uncomfortable ...

‘Nice place you’ve got here,’ Myra said, looking around. ‘Is that my desk over there?’

‘Your desk?’

‘Yes. I’m going to help you, you know – ’

‘I don’t need any help.’

‘You’ll need plenty before you get through with this,’ she said, with conviction. ‘I don’t think you realize quite what you’re up against.’

‘It’s not as bad as that,’ he said, smiling. ‘Anyway, I’m not in a position to put anybody to work. I told you that yesterday. I haven’t got any money. I intend to do all the writing myself.’

‘Travelling on your nerve?’

‘In a way – ’

‘And your hatreds?’

‘Oh, I don’t have any hatreds – ’

‘That’s the nicest thing about you,’ she said, smiling, parting those red, red lips. ‘You do have them. Keep ’em. Keep ’em alive. They’ll be very useful to you.’

‘Who are you?’ Dolan asked abruptly, beginning to feel like shivering again.

‘Why, I’m Myra – ’ she said.

‘I know you’re Myra. Where’d you come from?’

‘New York. I’ve been here a couple of months.’

‘Where’d you meet Bishop?’

‘I met him here. I had a letter to him from a friend of his in New York. That’s how I met him.

Why are you so curious?’

‘I’m damned if I know,’ Dolan said, looking out the window. ‘I’ve never been curious about women before. Usually I take ’em or leave ’em and ask no questions. But this is different. It’s damned funny about you and me,’ he said, turning back to look at her. ‘Goddam funny.’

‘So you’ve finally realized that?’

‘I knew it yesterday when I first met you. You know what’s been going through my mind off and on since then?’

‘Certainly I know. You’ve been wondering about that cup of coffee I missed – and just what bearing that’s going to have on your future.’

‘That’s it exactly,’ Dolan said, no longer surprised to hear her put his own thoughts into words.

‘Something like that’s been going through my mind, too,’ Myra said. ‘Yesterday I thought it was strange, but that was because under the impact of first meeting you I didn’t stop to think about it. We think it’s strange, because we don’t understand it. Look. A man stops to buy a newspaper in the lobby of his office building. This particular man has never bought a paper here before. On the way to his office he has passed dozens of newsboys with that same paper for sale. He didn’t buy one then. But in the lobby of the building, for no explainable reason, he *does* buy one. In that second he misses the elevator. In that elevator is a woman who would have been his wife – or a business friend who would have tipped him off to a million-dollar deal. Or – the elevator falls and kills everybody in it. But *that man* paused to buy a paper – something he had never done before. Do you understand why he did it?’

‘No,’ Dolan said; ‘not exactly.’

‘Well, that’s what happened to us. I did *not* stop to get my *usual* cup of coffee – ’

‘I just wonder,’ Dolan said, ‘whether that’s going to be bad for you and good for me or bad for me and good for you – ’

‘I wonder too ...’ Myra said. ‘At any rate, I’m going along with you. What time shall I come down in the morning?’

‘But – ’

‘What time will you be here?’

‘Around nine, but – ’

‘I’ll see you then, Michael Dolan,’ she said, getting up, going out, not looking back ...

Dolan worked until late that afternoon, planning his new magazine, thinking up new titles for the

various departments, writing stuff for 'The Main Stem', which was almost identical in style with 'The Talk of the Town' in the *New Yorker*; but the thought of Myra Barnovsky kept popping in and out of his mind, and he could not be clever no matter how desperately he tried, and he would think of her red lips, and then he would make a mistake and would go to his typewriter, and then he would curse because he hated dirty copy, and if he made a single mistake on a page he would take it out and start all over again, and finally it was late in the afternoon and he gave up, thinking he would be down in the morning and get a good start; he would go home to the house and take a nap, because he and Aprille had had a hell of a night out in the country on the banks of a brook with their clothes off in the moonlight, and he hadn't got much sleep.

'This'll wear off,' he said to himself, going down to get in his car, thinking of Myra. 'E tomorrow I'll be used to this dame, and then I can settle down to work.'

He drove home, to the big three-storey house he shared with the four young painters, the would-be writer, and the German war ace, and went upstairs and slept an hour. It was a peaceful hour in which he dreamed of absolutely nothing. When he waked up it was dark. He turned on the light and went in the bathroom – and came promptly out, swearing.

'Hey, Ulysses,' he yelled. 'Ulysses! Goddam it!'

'Yes, sir, Mister Mike,' Ulysses called, coming up the back stairs. He was the Negro major-domo of the house.

'What the hell about that?' Dolan asked, pointing to the toilet bowl on which was propped a small framed canvas with 'OUT OF ORDER' printed on the back of it.

'Mister Elbert stuck that up there,' Ulysses said. 'That's one of his old oils.'

'I don't mean the painting. I mean the bowl. Why the hell hasn't it been fixed? Why didn't you call Mrs Ratcliff?'

'I did, Mister Mike. She said she didn't mind us all artists living here without paying rent, but that she wasn't going to fix no plumbing till she collected some money from us.'

'Hell,' Dolan said. 'I'll go downstairs. Bring my shaving stuff, will you?'

'Yes, sir. And, Mister Mike, would you mind if I picked out one of your ties to wear tonight?'

'I guess not, Ulysses. I guess if we can't pay you your twenty dollars a month we can at least let you wear our ties. It's too bad you're such a little buck that you can't wear my clothes.'

'That's all right, Mister Mike. Mister Elbert let me have one of his suits and Mister Walter loaned me his car –'

'Is his gas tank empty again?'

'Yes, sir. I promised to put in five gallons.'

'Ulysses, he's taking advantage of your reputation as a great lover. Hot stuff, tonight, huh?'

'Yes, sir,' Ulysses said, grinning, getting the shaving stuff out of the medicine cabinet.

'You take any tie you want, Casanova. And get me a clean pair of socks, will you? I'll take

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