THE METRONOME.

A novel submitted in partial fulfillment
of the Degree of Master of Arts in the
Department of English, McGill University.

John Waterhouse, April 19, 1955.

PROLOGUE

He lay in his bedroom in the dark and the tick of the grandfather clock on the landing came to him as he lay, the slow and rusty tick that he had always woken to, always gone to sleep by, always been alone with when the night began and when it ended. From where he lay on his cot he could see the clock through the open door. As it was only four o'clock in the afternoon, neither the beginning nor the end of night, the sailing ship which followed round the hours on its own turning disc had not yet poked its bow-sprit up; it rode quite over-turned above the numeral six, nor would it begin to right itself again until the hour came round to six.

He knew its voyages well. Before he had gone away he had often lain awake awhile watching its laboured uphill course (through heavy, raging seas he always thought) until the time had come around to nine when it would at last regain its rightful hemisphere, when the sails would surely fill and groan with wind, the waves cleave before the new, swift prow. And to be here in the darkness now, the ship capsized and still on its downward journey, made him imagine days of darkness, nights of strong, blinding sunshine, a sudden and universal somersault.

The tick kept on; no matter how he would bury his head or cover his ears he could not silence it. But

now he looked away from the clock, he would see it no more, he turned to the window and saw here and there in the fabric of the curtains pricks of daylight to reassure him. He thought of the sense of things once more; that his grandmother had died this morning; that all the curtains in the front of the house had been drawn so that people would know there had been a death in the family. And a light evening breeze blew across the half-light of this early spring and ruffled the brown curtains of his room. They blew out into the room, and, as the breeze dropped, they whispered across his legs.

She had died that morning about eleven o'clock. At least, she had seemed all right at breakfast time and then, when his mother had taken up a cup of tea at eleven, she found her dead. His father had closed surgery right away and all through the day their crises had been punctuated with the rasp of the door-bell as the patients continued to keep their appointments. His parents would not let him see her now that she was dead and they did not want him to come to the funeral. These were the cool, the sensible facts. He would not be angry any longer, no more tears and raging. But he was going, he had to. He loved her. Why should he not see her, he had the right, the duty just as much as they.

"It's all very unpleasant, dear," said his mother, "but we have been through it before with Aunt Emma and know what there is to be done. There's no need for you to be involved. I've phoned Uncle Harry and he said they'd be delighted to have you for the week-end. Then on Monday it'll be all over and you can come home again. Don't you think it's better that way?"

"Much better, laddie," said his father. He told them then he was going to the funeral.

"I'm fourteen and not a baby," he said, "and I want to go." They were adamant; no, they said he could not go, they said it again and again and the door-bell rang through the sullen morning, and they were more bitter now, the voices climbed higher.

"You mustn't be difficult, Paul. We are doing what we think is best. You mustn't be thoughtless and make trouble, when we are so worried. Think of us a little, laddie. It is a very sad time for us all and it does no good for you to be difficult." At last his father sent him to his room, the old punishment they had used when he was nine. Now I am fourteen, he thought, perhaps they do not know.

And he had been up here since noon. About one-thirty his mother brought him up a bowl of soup and some toast, left them on the bed-side table and went downstairs without a word. And about the middle of the afternoon someone had gone into his grandmother's room with his father. They stayed in there for a few minutes talking and then they both came out, his father locked the door and they went downstairs. Nobody came to speak with him; the house was quiet with mourning. They thought he would break down, they thought perhaps he would cry and they could comfort him,forgive everything and then pack him off to Uncle Harry's. They did not know. He had been away too long.

Restless, he turned on the hot pillow, watched now the way the light fell on the clock face. The landing light was half-way up the stairs; it threw the shadows of the bannister rails across the clock. The rails bulged out two-thirds of the way up and the shadows they cast were those of a row of thin, hard women. The clock ticked and the ship descended. She couldn't hear it any longer; that was what was meant by dying, it would be that peace she would find. The clock was between him and the stairs and he felt that it over-rode him, that whatever he thought would eventually be shattered into tiny fragments. Again

he would be listening to the tick. He got up and shut the door, moving quickly and returning to his bed and it was darker now and he could hardly hear the clock.

He thought of Nanny, always with a basket of some kind, whether for mending or for cutting flowers; and playing the piano, a little bit of Grieg after supper. Or reading to him when he was five and had the measles. There in the next room, through the wall, Nanny, dead. It was then that he sat up suddenly, knowing that he would see her, that he could get into her room and he would look on her as a good-bye. Outside his window was an arch which sheltered the front door beneath. If it would hold his weight. . .yes, he could reach the sill of his grandmother's window. He leaned as far as he could out of the window and saw that the other window was open at the bottom, wedged with a rubber block. It had been so easy all the time to get in there.

He put on his tennis shoes; they were the quietest and the least liable to slip when he had his weight on the arch. Then he climbed out of the window and let himself gently down. The wood seemed to splinter under him, but he kept a firm grip on the window sill and tried to ease some of the weight off the arch and the

arch held. He was now about five feet below the level of his grandmother's window and by releasing his grip on his own window, he could edge along the top of the arch and reach for the other sill. He did this, pressing himself close to the brick, digging his nails into the mortar in an effort to cling to something, to maintain his balance in those brief precarious moments between one window sill and the other. Then quickly he grasped the second sill and he was there. He hung for a moment and then he pulled himself up and sat outside the window.

It was quite a while before he thought about going in through the window. He sat there breathing fast, he licked his grazed knuckles. At last, however, he realised that he could be seen quite plainly from the street and he slowly pushed up the half-opened window and slid through the curtains into his grandmother's bedroom.

The room seemed much darker than his and he noticed immediately a faint smell; it reminded him suddenly and irrationally of one of his grandmother's hats, a wide-brimmed black straw hat that she had often worn on holiday at the sea. He kept his eyes away from the bed, afraid to look, and his brain recorded in those first moments a flurry of trivia; that the wardrobe door was open and he could see the interior lining which was trimmed with gold; that there was a broken tile in front of the

fireplace; that the clock had stopped on the mantelpiece. Then he saw the dark shape of her head above the bedclothes, as he looked into the wardrobe mirror and in the same instant heard footsteps on the stairs.

There was no time to get out of the window; he hid himself beneath her under the bed and it seemed as though the bulge above him where she lay were pressing down upon him, that it would smoothly suffocate him into the soft, dark pile of the carpet. The steps came along the landing and the key turned in the lock. He heard his father.

"I'll leave you here, Mrs. Pollitt. When you are finished, I daresay Mrs. Hope'll have a cup of tea for you in the kitchen."

"Thank you very much, I'm sure." Who was she? What was she doing in his grandmother's room, the shadowed and the hallowed quiet disturbed. The woman switched on the light and he had a fear he would be seen. But it was a wide bed and he was well under it and realized, after a few seconds that he was safe. He could see the woman through the wardrobe mirror; she looked like a char. She wore the faded print dress of a char and, though she looked unkept herself, had a charwoman bustle of tidiness

about her. She took a bowl from the commode and filled it from the water jug she had brought with her. He heard her humming to herself. She carried then the bowl of hot water to the bedside table and her feet were inches away from his head. In the mirror he could see her above the bed and, if he turned his eyes, he could see her feet. She wore heavy brown lisle stockings.

He watched her take the eiderdown from the bed, fold it neatly and put it on a chair. Then she rolled back the bedclothes; the great bulk of his grandmother lay in an inert mass on the bedsheet. Now she was covered only with her pink, woolly nightdress, like clothing a statue in flannelette. Then the harpy, the ghoul, the gargoyle of a blowsy char began to unbutton the nightdress down the front and he could not bear to look. He could not move and could not speak or sob so that he lay with his eyes closed and let the hot and cold waves of his nightmare pass over him in a malarial terror.

He lay this way for what seemed to him at least half an hour. A minute, perhaps, before he could not stand the darkness either so that he opened his eyes and looking into the long mirror, he saw that his grandmother was now completely naked on the bed and the char was washing her with soap and water from the basin. It was ugly;

his grandmother was a huge woman. He skin was pallid and her great breasts lay limply along her chest in two liquid ovals of skin laced with soap. He was filled with disgust. If he had not felt himself so pinned and prostrate beneath the bed, he would have run away, would have turned his head at least. He felt himself fastened like a butterfly upon a bland white card. And instinctively then he sought for the well-known, the ordinary kindness and dignity of her face. And found that it was nothing. It had neither serenity nor anguish. It was the taxidermist's dummy that you had to look at twice to make sure that it was not alive, but then you knew because the expression was wooden and the eyes glassy and immobile.

It was then that the char removed his grandmother's dental plates and he was sick on the floor and the charwoman screamed and went running downstairs. He was tired and dizzy and he pulled himself out from under the bed and went back to his room and lay in the darkness. He felt as though he had been thinking just before going to sleep, that he had been here in his room all the time, faintly drowsy, waiting for nine and the strong turn of the ship into the wind. But had fallen asleep, before the hour had come, had dreamed and woken from the nightmare screaming.

. . . . . .

SECTION I

Screams are lonely things; there are screams of terror and of anguish, screams of passion and screams of surprise and all these screams need is a calm and reassurance to help them through the long night-alley of their loneliness.

When the baby screamed, he had not learned to scream yet for his loneliness. It was just that, being born, he felt the new, cold air, the exhilaration of the oxygen burn down into his lungs. It forced him to make a sound in the world, which, before, was another world for not having him in it. It was the only virginal sound he would ever make. He had come from one womb into a larger womb, and this larger womb was filled with the stinging headiness of the new air.

The first light that he saw was a vague circle of something orange, intense at the centre. It gradually shadowed back into the blur that had been normal for the ages of time since his birth. And then it was gone, the orange spot. He had felt firmness around his ankles, his buttocks being slapped, a warm rush of blood to his head. Then wrappings, and he was placed on something yielding that was a bed, and it was the nicest position he had found yet. This new world was elastic, realms of space in which he was not lost, but rather thrust

from pressure to pressure, from one kind of warmth to another; there was light and there was greyness. He was fed and he was happy and, after a while, he went to sleep.

. . . . . .

In five or six days he had grown and could look up from the cradle and see the round faces, when they were a certain distance before him. When they moved, they were filmed over again so that they were blobs, where they blocked out the light from his eyes. Later a definition came over things, a hardness of line came over chairs, the high, brown picture rail, the shining, brass handles of the chest of drawers. It was as though he had gained another pair of hands. He could grasp around him with his eyes at the people and the objects in the room as, needing security in this vast, miasmal cavern of a world, he had first grasped at the knuckle of a finger offered to his tiny knot of a hand, had felt round the strange, hard curve of the nail.

Already the world was as small as the bedroom with the warm, brown wall-paper and it was becoming much less bewildering. He was not yet aware of the window, which let in the light from the outside world, which meant another future birth to him into the smells of

the dusky city, the mud-smells of rivers, draining the land into the sea, the green of leaves and grasses, fire and its mobile red. He had felt the curve of a fingernail but not the curve of the planet over a flatness, when the sky was an upturned bowl of weather. All those bobbing figures that had only so recently come into focus were in an alliance to keep him warm and fed, as he had been before he was born. And as he began to smell things, he smelled the sweetness of his own body and knew the warmth of it, began to distinguish people by their colours (a rough, dark figure was his father; the nurse, white and easy to tell; two rather similar people, his mother and his grandmother). There were others, whose heads filled his vision as they peered over the cradle, but they had neither smell nor colour that he cared about, for there was no food, warmth or dryness to be had from them; merely an undulating cooing noise against his eardrum or a hoary, incompetent finger put into his grasp.

Then, for a time, he was ill; anything was normal for him then. It did mean an added, boiling warmth, and the filminess of things come back again, sometimes a sobbing out into the greyness that brought the white and dark figures bobbing around him to sooth him back to sleep. The white one was there more often now. He sobbed and slept; he woke and sobbed, until the hot fa-

tigue came over him, swelled up within his knobbled, popcorn body, until he drifted off again into a swoon.

One day he was sobbing less, and a clarity was in everything and then he grew and was fed more often. One day he chuckled. He learned the name, 'Paul', which was his name, not ever dreaming that he could say it, but simply that that particular explosion, as it seemed to him, was the only common sound of those allied ghosts that drifted across his horizon.

And all his horizons widened with this new fitness, the eating and the growing fat. The white figure took him down from the brown bedroom into a bigger place, where there was a quivering glow in the middle of the wall, and he lay in a sort of creche and looked at it, fascinated by the willowing, red fluidity of the flame. He had a rattle now, and the first time that it made a noise for him, he looked up, startled. But the noise was not connected with other people. He did not puzzle about it, it did not worry him. He lay quiet for a long time and later he cried and was fed. Then he touched the rattle again and it made more noise. He found, over the day, that if, while holding the rattle, he moved his hand, a noise came out of it.

Paul found that the nurse was with him from early in the morning until tea-time. After that in the night-time, it was his mother. There was always noise beneath him in the daytime; voices in the hall, his mother popping her head into the bedroom occasionally during the day. But, when he cried and the nurse was not nearby, it seemed that his grandmother was always there to cradle him in her arms and walk him about the room for a while, until he was quiet.

When he gurgled finally through to speech, it was Granny who sat patiently in the chair next to the cradle, talking slow, monosyllable baby words over and over to him. The old lady just sat nearby; he could watch her ancient, nimble fingers shuttle between the knitting needles, knitting him a tiny, blue jacket.

When he said his first word, it was 'NaNa' and the ample, kindly face of his grandmother crinkled and, incredibly, she began to cry. As she took him up to kiss him, he felt her wet tears on his own face, running down to his chin, leaving a tracking of salt on his cheek. She carried him with her and burst in on his father's surgery downstairs.

"Paul said a word," she said. "He just said 'NaNa' to me. As clear as day. I was sitting there beside him." She kissed Paul once more.

William Hope smiled at his patient. She was a young factory girl who had come straight from the works in her khaki drill overall.

"Will you excuse me for a moment, Miss Myers?" The girl turned around in her chair.

"Oh," she said, "Isn't he the ducks?"

"The son and heir," said the doctor. Overwhelmed suddenly with parental pride, he took the baby from his grandmother. Paul, who was unused to his father, began to cry. "Never make an obstetrician," muttered the doctor, and handed him back to Granny. They went off in search of Mummy, but she was out shopping.

Miss Myers sat ten minutes by herself in the surgery. She had liked the doctor before because he listened seriously and sincerely to what she had said in answer to his questions. Not like that other slick, namby-pamby doctor, always looking down his nose at you; he was honest, Dr. Hope was, and you could talk to him.

But before today she had been on a strictly professional question and answer basis. After this outburst of domestic glee, she came to think of the doctor and his family with the same sort of intense interest and admiration that the English people devote to a Royal family. On subsequent visits she always asked after Mrs. Hope and the baby and, when Paul was older, she used to bring him little bags of sweets.

. . . . . .

Gwen Hope loved her child with a love that she did not understand. When the doctor had told her that it would be dangerous for her to have a baby at her age, it was she who overcame all her husband's doubts and worryings about the conception. She wanted a child desperately, something to create and succour out of her body. She had struggled for eight years with her husband's problems, fought along with him, often without him, to obtain what she wanted in terms of respect in the town and stability within her own home. The two of them had succeeded; and then she had come to feel that something was lacking, to feel terribly afraid of the time so close at hand when she would find no more enjoyment in her husband. She, who was such an active, bustling woman, found herself afraid of silences, lying awake in the huge, deep feather

bed, wondering what all the bustle was about. Why did she work so hard? They would only live so long, William and she, and what would happen to all they had built on? The quick, intelligent mind, working through the darkness; the lonely, raw east wind coming in over the night, battling the sweating bricks of the city, swirling under the eaves of the house. There was no light anywhere and the three people in the tall house were all growing older. There was less laughter in the house these days.

So they had talked about having a child for a long time and always William had been worried about the money. If William had a child, he wanted to bring it into a prosperous world, dress and feed it well, send it to the best schools. With the huge dichotomy of rich and poor in Blackbourne, he wanted his child securely born into the former group. They had put the child-bearing off too long, until it was difficult. Gwen had suffered, the baby, Paul, had nearly died. And somehow, even in the midst of the pain and anxiety, Gwen had rejoiced in it. It was something she did not wish to come too easily. When the baby was born and survived, she had gone back to the surgery work. Whatever her son turned out to be, he was now alive and she felt that he was her victory and her achievement; there had been a struggle for him and there wasn't any longer.

Both she and William were joyful that it was a boy they had made, and they went back to their work with the rigid discipline that earlier struggles had taught them. The work was good because intrinsically and directly it was beneficial to their neighbors and townsmen; also, because with the work came money, a lot more money than they had ever seen before. They bought a car and then began to save steadily for their old age. It was such a steady, solid planning of their lives and it had turned out pretty well.

When Paul first spoke in the bedroom, it had been Granny who had been there. It was an alliance of beginnings and endings, that grew into the purest kind of love between the old lady and the child and it grew as the child began to learn from his grandmother. They both had the slow, mellow time about them; nothing was forced or hurried for them; there was the whole of the big, old house and the long, shady garden, there was grandmother playing the piano, which was a new sound for Paul, there was learning to walk, learning to talk and later, learning to read. The child mouthed at the breast of experience as he had mouthed instinctively at the feeding bottle, and the grandmother was kindling a new flame, before her own burned out.

. . . . . .

Paul, at the age of three and a half, wore a Fair Isle cardigan and grey flannel shorts. The grey flannels were new, harder and rougher than he had worn before and he had a stout, new pair of shoes which made his feet square and masculine.

It was tea-time in the autumn and one of the first fires of the season burned in the grate. His mother emptied leaves from the teacups into the slop basin.

"Ten minutes, Paul, and then you must go up to Nanny. I want you all rested for school in the morning." School. It was the first time for school. There it was, that odd, new uncertainty in the pit of his stomach. Mummy had not said much about school except wouldn't it be nice. Daddy had patted him on the head and said that he was growing up now; he would be allowed to go on the bus by himself.

"We'll put you on the bus at one end, and the teacher will meet you at the other." And then he started to give him threepence a week for pocket money.

One night Paul talked of school to Nanny, who was much more precise and understanding.

"You'll like it after you get used to it, dear. It's always a bit hard to start on things. But you'll like it. They'll give you things to make, and pictures to draw and songs and you'll meet other kiddies and have a very nice time." He asked her whether she couldn't come to school with him. "You'll find it's all right on your own," she said. "You won't find any of the other children bringing their grannies along."

"Can't you come for just a little while?"

"No, dear, I'm sorry. Mummy and Daddy will go along with you the first time and then you'll find you'll be all right on your own." With that he had to be content.

And now it was the evening before. Daddy was sitting in the armchair reading a book. In a little while he would go back to the surgery. Mummy had assembled all the tea dishes on the wagon and wheeled them out for Jennie to wash in the kitchen. Paul had a little, wooden dachshund named Fritz that moved its legs, when you pulled it along on a string. He sat down on the rug now, and pulled it back and forth in front of the fire-screen. He hated the new clothes that Mummy said he must get used to before he went to school, and he was sick with terror for the nearness of the morning. If only it were

the day after tomorrow that he had to go! If only it were this time yesterday, now. Fritz' legs were working furiously across the carpet. Paul pulled him to and fro, up to his father's legs, turn around, and back to the opposite chair leg. Fritz couldn't manage the speed. He fell over against the fire-screen.

His father looked up from his book. "Don't do that, Paul," he said. "You'll knock over the fire-screen." Paul left Fritz, lying next to the fire, his legs still moving back and forth. He ran upstairs to Nanny, who alwent up to her room shortly after tea, and went to bed. She was the only person who went to bed before Paul and so every night he would come up to her before bedtime and she would read to him and show the words to him so that he would get to know the look of them.

The room upstairs was warmer than the lounge, and Nanny was lying in her high bed. The books lay on the bedside table. "Here we are," said Nanny, "all ready for the reading." She had a wonderful face, like a huge, gentle doll, only with the eyes that moved and sparkled from the warmth of the person behind them. It was peace and it was calmness, above all trouble; round cheeks that were still firm; the wise, sweet lines of a mellow, unresenting age came from the nose around the corners of her

lips. She smiled down at him, as he stood, looking up at her from below the bed. "Fetch the stool, child," she said, "and get up onto the bed." He climbed onto the bed, sunk into the deep, soft sheen of the black and gold eiderdown, which was satin and rustled under the touch.

"I'm going to read you something different tonight, Paul. When you are older, you are going to love music very much, because I can see that you have it inside you, even now. And poetry is more like music than the stories we've been reading. You won't understand a lot of the words because they are quite difficult for you, yet, but try to be very quiet, dear, and see if you can go along with the poem as you do when I play the piano."

"All right," he said, and was very still, as Nanny read of a pale, lonely wandering knight.

It seemed that after she had finished, they were both silent for a very long time. Paul didn't understand much of the poem, but he was somehow pleased and stirred. It was very easy and luxurious for him; you just followed along the thread of the thing and didn't bother about each little word. He was listening to measured sound falling on his ear and it was soft and lulling.

"What did you think of that?" said Nanny from the pillow.

"I liked it. Will you read some more?"

"Not tonight, dear. Some other time soon. You must be up in the morning early."

"I'm always up early. It's not time for bed, yet. Won't you read some more? Five minutes?" She kissed him on the top of the head.

"No, you must go to sleep now. Tomorrow night isn't so far away. I promise we'll read some more then. Up you get." Paul got up. He said good night from the door and vanished onto the long, cold landing. The boards creaked under his feet and he walked slowly down to the bathroom with his hand on the landing rail, feeling out with his feet the special places where the boards creaked. Mummy came in later, when he was in bed. She tucked him in. Daddy, angular and acrid with pipe smoke, came up and opened the window.

Paul woke in the darkness of that night from a purple, half-remembered dream. They were dimming the gas of the street light in the road outside, for it was

nearly dawn. The gaslight flickered over the bedroom curtains. The mood of the poem came over him then; for the first time he remembered wanderings, melancholy and the silent deathliness of the lake. He was very alone as the dawn came up and it didn't do any good to knock on the wall, because his parents would not be likely to hear him, and they would be up to wake him pretty soon anyway.

. . . . . .

They were going to send him to school by bus, because that was the way he would get there in the future and he had to be shown how to do it. Taking him in the car wouldn't work, because they had to get back home in time for morning surgery.

Paul was ill at the thought of school. At breakfast the porridge was a gluey mass and the cocoa tasted burned and after breakfast he began to cry and his mother got a hot facecloth and wiped his face. His father hovered about the kitchen, looking worried.

"We ought to be going, Gwen," he said irritably. "We'll miss that bus and then I'll never be back in time for surgery."

"Do stop crying, Paul," she said. "Really there's nothing to be frightened of. Auntie Ellen has known Miss Whittier for ever such a long time and she's an awfully nice lady and terribly kind. Now straighten up and be a good laddie. You'll be home for lunch at all events." Paul stopped crying but became unwilling and sullen. Everything had to be done for him. His mother slipped on his overcoat and buttoned it in the front.

"There we are," she said, "all ready to go." He hated them both at that moment and he hated the bright kitchen, the comfortable bulges of the big, black stove, the warmth of home. Nobody and nothing could comfort him. He walked down the hall with his parents, alone and grey, the skin of his face taut from scrubbing, his hair brushed back close to his head. And those awful clothes made him walk stiffly and awkwardly between the two of them.

They left the house and walked down the hill into the town. There was a crisp autumn smell in the air and a fresh breeze blew over the hill from the brewery, carrying the heady breath of the hops. There were not many people yet about; the town was still a sleeping thing. The tall yellow trams rattled along the High Street and that was the only sound and the three people,

walking down the hill into the deserted town had some sense that it was theirs, that they possessed it by being the first to get out into the morning air. Even Paul was feeling better now that they were walking, doing something, moving in some direction.

They walked down the High Street. Only the fishmonger and the butcher were open yet, for each of the other shops had a dark green shade pulled down over the shop window. The fishmonger was arranging the shining white fishes into a tableau of ice and parsley sprigs on the huge marble slab of the open store front; the butcher was standing in the doorway of his shop waiting for customers.

"He's getting to be quite the young man," said the butcher. A big, friendly man with a big, friendly apron of coarse canvas in blue and white stripes. Everybody liked Mr. Cox. Paul smiled up at him.

"It's his first day at school," said Mummy. "We're just going up to catch the Drysdale bus."

"Well now, fancy that. And him a babe in arms just yesterday, it seems. Well, I'll wish you luck, sonny. I wish it was me and not you that was starting out." The butcher put his hand in his pocket and the blue and white

of the apron rippled over him like the gay young sea on a travel poster. It seemed as though his pocket were awfully deep because he heaved and shuffled and finally, in one last engulfing wave of canvas brought out a new penny in his fat, red hand and gave it to Paul. "That's for you," he said, "and it's for good luck."

. . . . . .

"There we are," said Mummy, "here is your school." As they went up the front walk, Paul could see children milling and talking in the front room. The school looked like an ordinary private house very like his own. There was a brass plate on the front gate that said 'Greenleaf Day School' and the house was also called 'Greenleaf'. They rang the front doorbell and a maid answered.

"Mr. Hope," said Daddy. "I think Miss Whittier is expecting us." Paul connected the name with a small, wiry woman of infinite nervousness and quickness. But he also thought of her as an ogre, an alien, a stranger who was ready to wound him if she could. His parents didn't realize this; they did not see the danger for him.

She was sitting by the piano in her study. It was a large room with big French windows that looked out over the garden and the piano pointed into the windows

like a black key to some gigantic door. She was not small and certainly not wiry and as she got up to greet them she moved with the slow magnificence of a fat person who has a dignity to maintain. Paul retreated between his father and mother, but she held him fixed by the very ponderous greatness of her proportions. Round her neck she wore a string of semi-precious stones which were round and amber, catching the morning light and focussing attention on the proudness of her bearing, the haughty eminence of her features.

Yet once she spoke the dignity maintained so scrupulously by each measured movement was lost. She spoke warmly enough, but one felt that the warmth was not sincere; that it turned upon that very unctuous obesity which she was trying so hard to suppress. And there was something avaricious in those small, hard eyes.

She had been talking with his parents; she called them by their first names although she only knew them through his aunt. They had been discussing mutual acquaintances, school routine, music lessons, a lot of things which Paul had not listened to very closely. Now she turned to him.

"So this is Paul," she said. "Well, I know we're going to get on wonderfully at Greenleaf, aren't we; so

many other kiddies, so many games and lessons. Oh, we do have fun here; you've no idea how much you're going to like your school!" She spoke again to his mother. "Miss Hilary will be his teacher, except for the music lesson every morning. She's a nice girl, I've always thought. Rather young, but charming, nevertheless." Gwen Hope noticed that her husband was fidgeting and guessed that he was anxious to be back for surgery.

"I think, Helen, if you don't mind, we'd like to meet Miss Hilary, get Paul settled and then leave him with you. I think it's better that way and William has to be back for ten o'clock surgery."

"As you like, my dear," said Miss Whittier. She tugged at an old-fashioned velvet bell-cord which hung by the side of the curtains. It was as if a Sybarite num were pulling the chapel bell for matins. They all sat down, rather ill at ease suddenly, rather too consciously waiting for Miss Hilary. There were a few oppressive musty moments when the very furniture seemed overbearing and the air dry as parchment. Then there was a knock on the door and Miss Hilary came in.

Paul liked her immediately. She smiled at them before she said anything, conscious that there were parents

to face and already used to the minute scrutiny which she must undergo on these occasions. It was a frank smile, almost an ingenuous one. There was nothing Paul could dread from a person with such a smile. She contrasted so violently with Miss Whittier that the people in the room subconsciously adapted themselves to the new atmosphere of the place. The old air and the dusty velvet, the straightness of the chairs were all freshened and softened. Miss Hilary could never have attained dignity, but she had youth.

She was a tall girl of about twenty. She wore a dark green schoolgirl's tunic, a white blouse and a Greenleaf tie. There was just the faintest trace of lipstick about her mouth. If she had known what to do with her limbs, known how to walk and move, she would have seemed more like a mistress. But as it was, her long legs and arms, emphasized by the stern lines of the uniform, still seemed to relate her to the girlish enthusiasms of the hockey field.

She shook hands with Paul's parents and answered their questions without adding much of her own to them. Then, in her shyness, she turned to Paul and away from the adults, putting herself into his world and, for the moment, rejecting theirs.

"You know, Paul, that you're going to have a desk of your own. And we'll cut out P-A-U-L in green letters for Paul and then that'll be your own private desk." She talked as though she, herself were excited by the idea. Although Paul had sensed the warmth behind that first smile of hers, the uniform seemed to represent the vast strangemess of this school in which crowds of children (they drifted all over the house in bands on this first day of term) had been molded into one body by being forced into their green blazers, their green and white ties, their Greenleaf caps and hats. He had distrusted the uniform and had been patently unsure of Miss Hilary. Miss Whittier he had dreaded from the beginning. But now Miss Hilary, he was sure, would be the one who could help him through the misery. There was none of that sing-song tone of voice that Miss Whittier had used, when she talked to him. He did not feel remote, unwanted, and he relaxed a little.

"I like yellow," he said. It was the first time he had spoken since he came into the room.

"Well, we'll have to see what we can do about that," she said, and she took him by the hand into the classroom. Miss Whittier followed them with his parents.

They took a momentary look around the classroom and then his father came over and patted him on the head.

"You'll be all right now, laddie," he said. "We must get back. Miss Hilary will put you on the bus and we'll see you at lunch-time." Strangely, Paul felt quite all right. He was glad they were going, for it was a room of children and he was being stared at. It seemed that, while his parents were around, they added to his isolation. And although, just a few hours ago, he had been terrified by the idea of going to school, had been determined not to like it, to rebel against everything and everyone in the place, he now found that he could not fight against it. They looked as if they had been here all their lives; they were all old friends.

He forgot about the rebellion. Desperately he wanted to be liked by all these alien faces. Bells began to ring but nobody paid any attention except to stop talking. Miss Hilary took off his coat for him.

"Tomorrow you'll do this for yourself," she said. "The other children will show you where the cloakroom is." She smiled and went out to hang up the coat.

. . . . . .

As Miss Hilary walked back down the hall, Miss Whittier called to her from the study.

"I think we've covered nearly everything, haven't we, Hilary? Here are the readers for first form and the attendance sheets. You have quite a lot of children in first and second forms this year, have you not? Please remember, Hilary, that as long as you have to teach the two forms both in Room A, the emphasis should be on the second form children. They are the ones that need the instruction; the little ones are usually quite all right left to their own devices. Just a little guidance and discipline with their paints and blocks. Second form arithmetic and reading is infinitely more important."

"As you wish, Miss Whittier."

"Now, of the new children only Paul Hope and Andrew McTurk do not have their Greenleaf ties and caps. Please attend to that during the morning. Of course the desk lettering must all be in green. Green for Greenleaf, Hilary, you mustn't forget that. The younger these mites get some sort of uniformity put into their lives, the better sort of people they'll grow up to be. Discipline before everything else, Hilary. If you can't command

respect among the pupils, how can you possibly try to teach them anything?"

It was a rhetorical question. Miss Whittier turned her head sharply toward the window. "Prayers in fifteen minutes," she said.

"Right you are, Miss Whittier." She went back to her form-room and started to compile her attendance lists. There was a low hum of conversation and she didn't say anything about it. Lessons began after prayers. As she recorded her pupils' names, she looked at each of them so that she would remember his name. Inwardly, she sighed. It was going to be the same as last year. She had hoped, by some miracle, that it would change over the summer but had known that it would not really alter in the slightest. There would always be the battle with Miss Whittier, the battle which could never be acknowledged by either of them, the battle in which 'Hilary' must accept all the superficial defeats, could ponder her victories only in her own mind and then had to admit that they were very petty victories, when all was said and done. In the long run Miss Whittier always held the whip hand. She knew she was kept on at Greenleaf because she was marvelously popular with the parents and because she came of good family and could draw the right type of children to

Greenleaf. Otherwise she would have been sacked long ago. For her part she stuck with the job because she refused to give in, could not afford for her own peace of mind to retire gracefully before overwhelming odds. She knew it was almost useless; as soon as the children left the second form, Miss Ivers, the second mistress, and Miss Whittier drilled and browbeat them through two years of rote-learning. By the time they were eight, the children remembered scattered verses of Wordsworth and Tennyson, five or six pieces on the piano, series of historical dates and the multiplication tables. They had also recognized that you learned so that you could perform well and, if you did not, then you were punished. Among the slower children there were often tears and slight 'illnesses' which kept them home from school (Miss Hilary's near-perfect attendance lists were one of her larger victories). And that was the way it went; she had to salvage what she could. To keep those four-year-olds from the slim, grey, merciless fingers of Miss Ivers for two years; to teach them and be kind to them; above all, to prove to herself that she could teach them more her way, that was what made the job endurable. The bell rang for prayers and she closed the register and led the children into the study by twos.

. . . . . .

They crowded into the refectory, jostling and pushing, waiting for the recess bell to release them. When it rang, they all ran down the path to the long, shadowed lawn that was veined with sunlight. Among the children were Paul Hope and Andrew McTurk and they were the only two children who were not in school uniform. Miss Hilary watched the children go down to the lawn and could pick the two of them out, grey flannel against the green school blazers of the rest of the students.

She always sat on the terrace during recess and had a cup of tea; she could see all the children and the prefects could call to her, if there were any trouble. On the lawn was a climbing frame and a see-saw and at the far end a square marked out for rounders. She felt, in her silence and space, with the faint sounds of the play below her, that she was gazing at a Breughel. But the vigorous colour of the movement had faded; there were nothing but greens left; the green of the lawn and the green of the blazers, the fast-turning green of the sycamore trees and the dark, green, cumulous shadows that they still cast across the lawn. Faces and bare kneecaps were at play; they were the only things white and moving.

She watched the two grey figures; they were on opposite sides of the lawn. There were little knots of

children all over and she noticed how each of the two grey figures was making a slow, tentative circuit, knot by knot. Neither of them joined in. They would have wished to, she thought, but they would stay at the edge of each group with a shy, nervous smile, as though they belonged to it, until they found they were not included, bid to play, called to, and then they could no longer smile and stand and they would move on to the next group. Once their paths crossed but the climbing frame was between them and they did not meet. Somehow she was disappointed. She took her eyes away from them and poured herself another cup of tea. But she found she could not look away very long. They had both wandered up to the rounders field to see the older girls playing and stood a little way behind home base, first watching the game, she imagined, and then turning to each other in their outcast greys. Now they were talking, now they must be talking. And now they were actually playing 'tag' in and out the bases of the rounders field. A tall, spindly prefect hauled them away and they went over together to the climbing frame. She was conscious of her own relief; she laughed.

She wondered to herself on the lambent, autumn terrace. Why am I so relieved? Why does it matter? That was leisure; having time to look and feed and then came

the sifting of it all, the confusion and sometimes the realization and then the sifting of that. Today, like a game of croquet, watched secretly from the top of a big tree, neat and logical. They had to meet at the end because that was the end of the drama. They had to miss each other the first time because that kept me watching them and wanting them to meet. Then they did. Voila! I was pleased.

There was a noise behind her as Miss Whittier closed the French windows. Now Miss Whittier. . .would have noticed that they didn't have their uniforms yet. That would have been the end of it for her. No leisure, except in the night, and then you still couldn't imagine Miss Whittier ever going to sleep. Perhaps she played the piano all night, she was always there in the morning on the piano bench. She never sleeps or sits down by herself, I'm sure. Too busy, has to be. Yes, and would have told me to measure them up and have their blazers and ties before the end of the week. ("There are rules, Hilary. Rules are not just made up out of my head. They're there for a purpose. One of the rules is about school uniform. Please see to it.") Sorry for Miss Whittier sometimes. Sometimes just plain angry. Seems to hover behind the French windows and think about bells and schedules, how she's going to control them all. Awed

by her long, gold dresses and the amber beads, sixty little girls and boys, all dressed in her green uniforms.

Miss Hilary remembered the two grey flannel suits in the classroom; Andrew, the Scot, Paul, the strange, dark child with the Modigliani face. There were acres of hard, flat desks between them. Both confused and alone. Andrew sat straight at his desk; a tuft of hair had bounded back from the morning brushing and stuck up at the back of his head, untamed. When anyone looked at him, he stared them out until they turned away again. He never spoke; when she asked him if he would like to draw a picture, he took the big, wax crayons (already bent from warm fingers) and drew a fire-engine sunset over a black land. She had watched him draw. Strong, heavy lines. The black crayon had broken and he had frowned but gone on drawing with the larger piece.

Before Paul had been given something to do, he sat at his desk and traced round the initials children had carved in it. He seemed afraid to look up, would have dissolved right under the desk, if it had been possible. Big eyes, short black hair. He did not know what to draw so she had told him to draw a picture of his house. He had used only the black crayon. The house was very tall with narrow windows and in the garden near a watch-spring

hedge were some stick-like people. All thin, definite lines, intelligent, a good sense of composition.

Two rebels; but she knew that Paul wouldn't be a rebel at all. Andrew, he would be the rebel, a strong uncompromising rebel. Paul would slowly begin to fit in, the shy good-fellow with enough of his own brand of pluck not to be persecuted too heavily. And Andrew would fit in too, eventually. All of a sudden he would be strong the other way, would shed his skin of malice some warm, green spring and become a figure of respect, a prefect, perhaps. They all took the cloth eventually, these babes. It was only at this moment that she could capture them in her mind as outright rebels. Intelligence, breeding, strength and forcefulness; they belonged together. There should be a pact, though what the pact would be for, she did not know.

It depressed her, all this. Her precious moments of aloneness had dwindled away on the terrace. I'm always reducing things down, she decided, until they sound like the comments someone has written at the end of a composition. I should have just enjoyed it, the greys moving through the greens and so on. She looked down at her own green tunic, fingered her own Greenleaf tie. Kindergarten mistress must wear uniform; it was the rule. Then

she wanted to tear off the tie, rip off the tunic, run bloused and bloomered, white through the greens of the trees and the shadows and the children.

Behind her the French windows opened and she started, as though caught in an open act of defiance. Miss Ivers had joined Miss Whittier in the study. Miss Ivers rang a shining bell out over the lawn and it was the end of recess. Children raced up the path. Only Paul and Andrew remained for a moment on the climbing frame. Then they, too, realized that the bell had gone and ran across the lawn together towards the house, stubby and stocky, two greys. They had almost reached the path, when Paul slipped and fell onto the grass. Miss Hilary was up at once and running down the path towards them. Andrew had already picked him up by the time she got there. He was all right. Not even a bruise. She put one arm around each of them and drew them with her up the path and into the school.

Miss Whittier still stood by the French windows, looking out over the lawn. She turned to Miss Ivers. "I would say, wouldn't you, Miss Ivers, that Hilary has picked her favourites for this term already."

. . . . . .

Paul was quite prepared to like the music lesson, even though it was with Miss Whittier. He had always delighted in listening to Nanny play the piano and she had taught him a little about the mysterious black notes on the music sheet that one gradually thought of as sounds in one's mind. Paul did not relate them that way then; there was a link missing between the ink of the page, his grandmother's eyes, and her fingers over the keys. He saw the notes as tadpoles, as strings of berries on a branch. But he did notice that hymns were nearly always round, white notes and assigned a slow and solemn quality to them, and Nanny had taught him about octaves, sharps and flats and where middle C was.

The first music lesson caught him unawares. He had somehow expected that the magic of playing, of running your fingers over the keys, of having your fingers create the rumbling chords, the thumping rushes of melody and the gruff, according bass, all this was some exalted secret, some gift suddenly and miraculously bestowed on you, a power at once given to you and you could play. At the first music lesson he did not play a note. Miss Whittier sat beside him on the piano bench and showed him how to hold his wrists well up above the keyboard, she took a sheet of music out and found him

crochets and quavers, clefs, and the number of beats to a bar. But she did not let him strike a key and when he went home that day he carried an exercise book to copy out over and over again the signs and symbols of all this complexity.

Slowly he began to play and by the time he had managed to stumble through the first short piece in his music book, there was no joy left in playing for him. He knew the notes now; they were like rows of figures. If you thought of the number, sixteen, for instance, you knew just where that number was. It was in the space between fifteen and seventeen and knowing in your mind that the numbers ran uphill to ten and then down the slope to twenty again, you grasped right away what part of the slope the number sixteen lay on. In the same way you knew the notes except that it was easier because they actually there. He practiced this first piece at home until he knew where all the notes were and how they ran one into the other. He went into the lesson next day confident of his achievement and she stopped him after the first four bars.

"Young man," she said, "you have obviously not practiced your lesson. Time, young man, time. What happened to your rests, what about all these weeks of

crochets and quavers? All wrong, all wasted. How can I teach you, if you will not practice? Play it again, go on, play it your lazy way, all the way through. Play, boy, now." It was even worse this time. He could not find the notes; he played a weird and seemingly endless chain of slurs and mistakes, his fingers stiff, the tears starting into his eyes. She pushed him from the bench. "All right, that is enough by far," she said. "Now listen to this." She set the metronome going on the top of the piano, she moved to the middle of the piano bench, she said, "I will play this over to you until you know it by heart. I will spend the rest of this period playing it over to you. You will listen carefully and try to forget what you have played. Then at the end of the period you will play it to me again, the proper way. Listen, now."

The piece was only a short one, it ran for only four lines of music. She played it through once and then she asked if he were listening. "Yes, Miss Whittier," said Paul. He had been listening, so hard in fact that the notes scattered themselves in his mind. There was no melody left in the silly little tune that had a drawing above it in the music book of a child skipping. He must find where he was wrong because he had to play it soon, the proper way. If he didn't, Miss Whittier would be very cross. He

panicked, he could hear no difference. Then the second time through he noticed that she played the last bar faster. Perhaps that was what he had done wrong. But suppose other mistakes. He listened once more, found himself waiting for that last bar, hearing no other differences. She played on and on, over and over. I have found the mistake, thought Paul, there is nothing more I can do. He ceased listening; the glint of the metronome, his eyes followed it. The sun streamed in through the French windows and made it a gleaming bar snapping back and forth across its arc, and he watched its reflection on the wall underneath the picture of the Highland cattle. Somehow the tune on the piano fitted into the swing of the metronome; that was Time. Time was his mistake, that was why even if you knew where all the notes fitted onto the piano, how your fingers should cross and leap and which ones should go down together to make a chord, you could still play the whole piece wrong because you had made a mistake with time. A line of figures wasn't the same at all; they were ants crossing a rock, a long, thin file, extending.

But the metronome reared and dipped in its tents of light above the thin, black bodies of the notes and broke their line across the page. He could see that; Miss Whittier would know where to break because the wooden tock

of the metronome would tell her. And still the tune went on and Paul, standing behind Miss Whittier, heard her sigh. That was because she was annoyed, he knew, and because she was tired of the tune. She went on playing to show him that she was annoyed and that he was the cause of it and the longer she played, the more annoyed she would become. "Time, young man, time." Again the shower of words would come, for he would not play correctly at the end of all this. The mistake he had found, he listened for again. It was six clicks of the metronome, the notes a cluster of hard, black berries hanging on the staff of the last bar. It was too late, he could not change the other bars, and he could not hear what he had done wrong in them. Time, young man, time. Like Time, gentlemen, please that his father would shoo him up to bed with. Time the clock and time the rearranging of notes which he could not do, and time the difference between running or walking to the bus stop and the bell Miss Ivers rang at the end of recess so that they all ran in from the lawn to get to the next period.

He realised that it must be nearly the end of the music lesson, that soon he would have to perform. And suddenly he remembered playing in the garden one Sunday, while his father had been cutting the grass, and picking up the tune that his father was whistling and gr

trying to hum it himself. Getting it wrong time after time and his father getting exasperated, and whistling it slowly to him, saying, "Listen to the tune, lad, listen to the tune." And then his getting it right. He knew this tune on the piano and the top line of notes, that was the tune, wasn't it? Knowing where the notes were and playing them so that they fitted into the tune, then that would be right, the time would be right. It would come, he would not be scolded. He went over the tune in his head.

Then he was sitting at the piano and the notes arranged themselves according to the pattern that was in his brain. So that Miss Whittier when he had finished said,"I should think so, too. Well, you have learned something at any rate." She set him another exercise and the bell was ringing in her hand, shining like the bar of the metronome in the sunlight and he fled from her and was free.

But other mornings it was not so easy, because he did not always remember the tunes and they themselves became longer and more complicated as the days went on. Every day he was scolded and he got worse and worse, stiff-fingered gauche, near to tears. But though the tears would well up into his eyes, blurring over the

black piano and row of white keys before him, he would bend his head and refuse to let Miss Whittier see his tears. Oh, he hated her; he carried with him the image of her face, he hit it with the image of his fist, he hit an amber statue. The face did not move when he hit it this way, the lips stayed narrow, reproving, he did not bruise the plump and waxen cheeks, she did not so much as blink a grey eye. But in his hate he lost some of his fear of her. One morning, when he could bear sitting under her scorn no longer, he got up from the bench and turned to her, looked her full in the face and said, "I'm not frightened of you, Miss Whittier," and then ran out of the open French windows down the path to the end of the garden, climbed up a tree and hid among the branches. Miss Hilary was the one who found him there at recess. "There you are," she said, "I've been looking all over the place." She led him back to the classroom. All Miss Whittier ever said to him about that was next day at the music lesson. "I didn't get you an exercise yesterday. You will please go over the exercise you had for the day before."

He thought Miss Hilary was on his side. He was going to marry Miss Hilary, when he was older. The sheer bursts of joy, when he would see her from the window of the bus in the morning; because of her, he loved

the walk from the bus stop to the school, he loved to work for her in the classroom, so that she, coming to his desk, putting her arm on his shoulder, could put the neat red ticks against his sums and cry, "Well done! Here's a boy that's already finished." And then the pride and the golden stars at the top of his exercise book.

When she led him back, that morning that he ran from the music lesson, they walked in silence across the lawn, lingering, both of them, in the spaciousness of the morning; he looked up towards the house and said suddenly, "I think Miss Whittier's perfectly horrid." She answered him quietly.

"It's not very nice to talk about older people like that, Paul. Miss Whittier is trying to help you and it doesn't help her if you are silly and go and hide in trees." Still, he was sure she didn't like Miss Whittier either. Grown-ups never really said they didn't like somebody. You just had to guess, whether they did or not.

. . . . . .

A friend was someone whom you liked who did not belong to the family. There were different kinds of friends; there were boys and there were girls and there were the friends who could boss you around and the friends (somehow never such good ones) that you could boss around. The best friends of all were the ones that you liked so well, that liked you so well that you didn't boss them and they didn't boss you.

Andy and Paul treated each other like this. When they had first met, that day when they had been the only two in the school that were not wearing uniform, they had both been new and both a little frightened but they had climbed together on the climbing frame and had said nothing of this to each other. They had gone in after recess and finished the morning classes. At the final bell they met again in the cloakroom and Paul went back to Miss Hilary with four other children. She was to put them on the bus. There was a hubbub in the dark front hall of children putting on macintoshes, of caps that were lost, of one small boy who had climbed under the hall stand and could not get out; children scampering, laughing down the stairs from the second floor classrooms, children who had just had gym on the lawn and pushed breathlessly through the hall in their whites and down to the changing room. Children watched

the door to see if it was their parents, or the maid come to fetch them home. Paul watched the door, although no one would call for him. He did not want to talk to the three other children, they were talking and giggling amongst themselves, so he looked to the door. It was somebody's mother, a very beautiful lady who wore a long feather in her hat with many colours watered through its barbs. "Oh, hello, Miss Hilary," said the lady, "is Andrew ready yet?"

"Yes, he's here somewhere," said Miss Hilary. "Such chaos."

Andrew appeared then and his mother ruffled his hair. It is what my father would do but not my mother, Paul thought. But the lady was saying, the lovely slim bird dressed in black, "I bet you knocked over all the ink-wells." And to Miss Hilary, "The whole family is notoriously naughty at school." Paul, wondering if she and Andy's father went to school as well, put on his macintosh and cap.

"Tell me now, are there any children I can drop off in the car, Miss Hilary? We're going into town for dinner. Anybody between here and town." Andy tugged at her sleeve and she bent down for his whisper. "If you like, darling," she said. "Son has made a frin

friend," she said to Miss Hilary. "He wants to know if we could take home Paul Hope. Where does he live, do you know?"

"In Drysdale," said Miss Hilary, "and I'm sure he'd love it. Paul, this is Mrs. McTurk. She is going to drive you home today. Won't that be fun?"

"Come on, Paul. I'll show you the car." Andy and he raced out to the street. It was a huge grey car with a canvas top that rolled back to let the sun in and you could feel the winds of speed flowing around you and there you were, calm with power on the soft leather seats.

"I really haven't the faintest about Drysdale," said Mrs. McTurk, "you'll just have to show me the way, Paul." She smiled across the seat at him. "Andrew, darling, do reach into my bag and get out my cigarettes and press in the lighter for me." Paul found it rich and dramatic to guide this huge grey monster of a car running fast through the narrow cobbled streets, past canals and over bridges leaving all behind them. And Andy's mother with the power in her small gloved hand, holding her cigarette, talking to them, cool and undisturbed as though she had pressed a button and the whole

landscape had run backwards on its spool and had stopped at his own house. Perhaps he was in the car for ten minutes but it seemed to him like a moment, the flick of a dream across his mind's retina.

He thought about Andrew's mother that night before he went to sleep and remembered a story he had once heard about a beautiful lady who descended once a year from her castle, laden with baskets for the villagers. They were treated to this vision of her walking amongst them, handing out her gifts and then she returned to her lord and her life above the village for another year. The whole enchanted drive with the elegant lady who smoked a cigarette like a man; he felt back for the tingling of speed in his limbs and hair. But Andy was like his mother; they both had the thrill of this every day. Andy went to school and he came back from school and he talked to his mother in the ordinary way as if there were no magic in flying over the hills and streets in the great machine, the blur of houses and shops rushing past. Then he remembered Mrs. McTurk saying, "Oh, these narrow streets, as I live and breathe," and he remembered being glad that Poplar Road was not a narrow street, felt a new sensation of possession of his street and his house, a fear that she could destroy their virtues with a remark, raze the whole of Church Hill for a whim. The McTurk's must be

very rich, he thought, and he himself had felt forlorn and dowdy, when they had left him outside the garden gate and had driven off so silently, so exquisitely fast towards the city.

So Andrew was a friend and to Paul the nobility he seemed to wear made him the more intriguing, that he, Paul, by becoming Andrew's friend would inherit some of that lordliness. Andrew had been to France with his mother and his two sisters, Andrew had a large red tricycle, Andrew's sisters took riding lessons in the long park that was near their house, in the Royal park that had been chartered by the King. He did not envy Andrew these things, he did not say, "Well, I have a red scooter." These things belonged to Andrew, they were out of Paul's reach and part of Andrew's world like the grey car and the mother with the feather in her hat.

The noblesse extended into everything; it was why Andrew could run so fast and did so well at rounders and tennis that by the middle of his second term he was on one of the teams that seniors played on. If Miss Hilary was not too pleased with what Andy did in the classroom, it was small matter when he had been given a large green enameled badge in the form of a G that showed he had played on a team against another school. Andrew dared

all that was physical, he had no fears. Paul followed him but could not keep pace.

And gradually by the middle of spring term, Andy tired of Paul. Older boys would come to watch him on the tennis court and after he had finished a set, would go up to him and put their arm around his shoulder and lead him off, talking.

"Jolly fine game, McTurk. Shouldn't wonder if you didn't make first team next year. Look here, use my locker for your stuff. I'm using the club courts these days. Don't see why you shouldn't. You're as good as on the team already." If you weren't on a team at Greenleaf, you did setting-up exercises on the lawn during gym periods and could play tennis and rounders if you wished to either during recess or on sports afternoons. Paul was kept at exercises on the lawn and used to watch the three or four of his classmates that had graduated to teams running down the path, out the gate at the end of the long garden and across the road to the tennis courts. He began by staying for sports afternoons; he liked tennis, but with the prowess of his friend before him as an example, he became acutely conscious of his own clumsiness and continued to go down to the courts only so that he could watbh Andrew. Paul noticed that

he became more and more distant towards him. He began to call him "Hope" as was the custom of the older boys, he would walk to the courts with Paul in the afternoon and give Paul his racket as though he were doing him a favour by letting him carry it. He talked almost incessantly about what one of the prefects, Middleborough, had said to him.

Paul was confused and hurt. One day during recess when they were both sitting on top of the climbing frame Andrew was telling him how Middleborough was letting him use his locker this term. And Paul burst out,

"What's so good about Middleborough, anyway? You never thought anything about him before you started to play tennis so much. We used to be friends and now all you can talk about is Middleborough. Aren't we friends any more or do you only like seniors now?" Andrew, sitting precariously on the top bar of the climbing frame, stretched his arms indifferently. It was the first hot day of the spring and the sun beat down on them, perched there in the middle of the lawn. He said lazily,

"You used to be all right, Hope. But you've been such a horrid little funk lately, always running to Miss Hilary, never playing any games. You really ought

to do something, you know, not just stand around." It all came out then, all the growing hurt and resentment.

"You're so good, McTurk. You're so jully good with your old sisters and your badges and your dirty old tennis that you think you're so good at. Just because your father's got pots of money, you think you're so good. I'm a funk, am I? Well, I'll fight you. I'll fight you right away. I'll kill you and then we'll see who's a funk."

"If you want to," said Andrew, "only you know I'll win, don't you?"

"You think so, don't you? You just think so much." The children that had been climbing underneath them heard it all, watched from beneath the legs of the two boys, waited for the final declaration of battle. Then they ran swiftly all over the lawn, whispering of the fight and other children broke up their knots of play, came streaming in from the outer corners of the green and gathered around the climbing frame. "Fight, fight," they whispered, eager for blood.

The code for fighting had been formalized and even in the very youngest children the etiquette was ad-

hered to. Since fighting was absolutely forbidden, a corner at the very bottom of the garden which was out of view from the terrace had become the official site where such agreements were settled. It had been named "The Patch". Here the prefects formed the quickly gathering crowd into a square around a flat piece of hard-packed earth that had once been a vegetable garden. Two of the prefects designated themselves as seconds, Middleborough for Andrew and a thin and freckled girl named Jennifer whossupported Paul. These two climbed studiously up opposite sides of the climbing frame, helped their respective protagonists down and led them away separately to give them advice about the coming fray. "He's a good fighter," said Jennifer to Paul. "I've seen him fight before. But you'll be all right. My brother, who's at Winchester"(she rested on the word to give it its full emphasis) "always says you should lead with your right hand and keep your left hand up in front of you to protect yourself. You try that. It usually works for him. Anyway there'll only be time for threeeshort rounds before the bell rings. Maybe it'll be a draw."

Paul's fury had in part already given way to awe before the sight of the tight and muddled pack of children that had gathered round the edges of the patch, but the sight of Andrew surrounded by prefects and supporters brought on again his outcast rage. Jennifer

took off his blazer and tie and rolled up his sleeves. The prefect, Landsdowne, just back from the tennis courts and hence appropriately dressed in white stood in the middle of the square to act as referee. "Come out and shake hands," he called, "then turn around and start fighting. There will be two rounds of a minute each. When I shout 'Corners', you will stop fighting and go back to your seconds. All right, shake hands." Then they turned about and Andrew straight way caught Paul a glancing blow of the side of the head which threw him off balance and drew a murmur from the crowd.

Paul went straight in then. He forgot everything except the sting from the fist and the hot red rage that blurred across his eyes and sent his arms flailing, his legs rushing him forwards into the embroilment of grey flannel, of the hard contact of fists with bodies, of his own teeth biting at his lips so hard they drew blood and he tasted the salt of it in his mouth. Vaguely, as though from a great height, he heard the oceans of cries and exhortations in the crowd around him and then the white arms of the referee that broke the two of them apart and sent them to their corners. By this time Jennifer had managed to get a bucket of water that she sloshed over his face with a wet towel; the sting and the freshness of it. "Great work, boy," she said and the towel was passing over his eyes and her

fingers were feeling out the bruises around his sockets, the wetness of one finger, wrapped in the towel, was moving gently and deliciously over his swollen and broken lips. And as he became calmed again, as he found he could once again focus, could see Andrew on the other side of the Patch also being taken care of, as time came back to him with a rush and reminded him how long that one minute had seemed, what a gulf had yawned into the morning, then there was no more anger in him but only a cold, leaden dread of this second round that the faces about him were calling for ("Landsdowne, old boy, the second round quick before Miss Ivers rings the bell"). He wanted to stand in the middle of the ring and say to them all that Andrew and he were friends, that there was no more golden alliance, that they, all of them, had done this, had made the fight, had stood by and cheered on their disputes and separations. He wanted to stand by Andrew and say, "We will fight them all, all of them together and then we will see how many buckets of water they will need." But this could not be done, he knew, he had to to on through the next round.

Round two was called and Jennifer patted him forward into the Patch. They were both tired, they ambled at each other, they punched each other away from the face. Paul, the coolness of the water having dried away, felt

that his skin, so dry and puffy, would flake away like layers of an onion leaving the blue-white bones of his cheeks and jaw that he could feel throbbing and pushing their way through the flesh. One eye was closing fast. But through the other he saw Andrew. Blood on his shirt, on his neck and chest where they had not wiped with the towel, blood again beginning to pour from his nostrils. There was triumph in it for Paul, he felt it, he remembered the words, "only you know I'll win, don't you", the complacent, lazy mouth of his friend, the arms stretched in abandon at the sun. So there it was now; somehow in the thrashing of arms and legs, of fists gripped, hard and white at the knuckles, in that one swimming moment he had hit Andrew's nose. Blood changed everything. Wasn't that all that the throng was interested in, the sudden shock of liquid red running over the white face? That meant that he, Paul, had won, as far as they were concerned, the run of the blood.

The bell was ringing over the lawn and the fringes of the crowd unravelled across the green towards the school. Landsdowne shouted "Corners" at them. Andrew's face was a mess of blood. There could not be any doubt who had won. Landsdowne announced it as "Hope's fight." I have won, he thought, without even knowing how to fight. And then he began to think of Andy and the

departed friendship, was it really ended? He began to realize that perhaps it would have been better if he had lost well, for the pride would be gone from Andrew's eyes, he would never want Paul for a friend. Many children that he had never known patted him on the back. The said, "Jolly D, old chap," they shook his hand, they disappeared across the lawn. Even Middleborough went, anxious not to get a demerit for lateness. He rushed off and left Andrew holding the towel to his nose, his head thrust back trying to stop the flow of blood.

The Patch was bare, the shouts were dying away. Paul crossed the brown square, his head down, seeing the scuffle marks in the earth, and in the silence now, with only the small spring leaves, sticky with sunlight rustling on their branches, he cared only that this was his friend, the first and the only ffiend. His hands in his pockets and his head to the ground, the awkwardness of crossing this square, of winning this fight, of becoming the victor by surprise was upon him and it was he who had to make these gruff overtones.

"Is it stopping?"

"Yes, I think it'll be all right. I'll have to go and clean up before I go back. Miss Ivers won't half

be cross. It's reading now. I suppose we should go in."

"I'm sorry we had to fight. I hated them all once we were scrapping because they were liking it so much." Andrew, forgetting his nose, brought his head forward and the blood began to flow once again.

"Yes, I know. It's funny because we were both so boiling mad in the first round and then after that I wasn't at all and when I came back to my corner Middleborough kept saying 'Now this time really lace into him and bloody up his nose a bit' and I didn't want to do it at all and thought all the time he was working on me that he didn't want you to do well because he likes me and thinks that next year when I'll be on everything he will have me for a friend. I think he wants to own me and doesn't want anybody else around and since you're the only person he was glad of the fight."

"It was a silly fight. I don't even remember what we were fighting about."

"Mostly about me being a little snot just lately, which was right. And about Middleborough, too,

I think. But it doesn't matter; we would have probably had to fight sometime and now it's all over with. Sacks to Middleborough, he's a bit of a sneak at the best of times. I say, how about coming to tea next Sat.? Mama could probably come and pick you up in the car or your father could drive you over or something."

"All right, it'd be lovely. And we can use the tricycle."

"I will ask Mama, but it should be all right for Saturday. Look, it's stopped at last. Do you have a handkerchief? Then I could sort of mop up a bit."

They strolled up the lawn caring not two buttons for Miss Ivers or Middleborough or the reading lesson or any other children besides themselves. The tired sunlit feeling with their arms around each other's shoulders, crossing towards the refectory, back to the sharp smell of chalk dust and the sour inkwells, to read of paper cut-out children who lost their hoops in the street or rescued a kitten from a savage dog. They were both taken off sports for a week for being late and had to stay in that noontime and write a hundred times in the book with the three ruled lines, "I MUST NOT FIGHT WITH MY SCHOOLMATES OR BE LATE FOR LESSONS."

. . . . . .

If you are adding figures, he learned that spring, you put a firm cross by the side of the sum, a straight up-and-down cross unlike the multiplying cross that looks like the middle of a wide, white country gate. Dividing has a line with a dot on either side and subtraction a line without the dots. You could tell what to do with the figures by the signs that were next to them. Arithmetic was so simple, so beautiful; learn your tables and follow the signs and there is your book with the red ticks beside the sums and the gold stars at the top of the page. If you got crosses like the multiplying ones only red, that showed you had gone wrong. Andy, who didn't know the tables, was always getting these; he was still on the page where they gave you pictures of apples to show how you cut the apple up for division and how you put two rows of apples together for addition and took some away again to subtract. There were pies, too. Apples and pies; but far better to use the clean black figures in the white exercise book, two neat columns, six sums to a page and no rubbing out and no clumsy pictures.

At Prize Day they all sat in a big tent that had been raised on the lawn. The parents all sat at the

back back of the tent on tall wooden folding chairs and Paul and Andy with the other children on low camp stools near the platform. It was hot in the tent and sweet smelling from the grass beneath; it was like Sports Day, it was like the church bazaar and there were no shadows except the shadow of one tree on the vault of the tent. There was the sound of august adult talk from the back seats, the impression of many people being introduced to each other all at the same time, and the rings of the women, if you looked back, sparkled in the bright sunshine that wedged through the open tent flaps. The children were quiet; the prefects were casting their warning glances about and the children could only fidget on their stools, whisper among each other when the prefects were not looking and wish that the whole thing would soon be over and they would be on their way home for the holidays. Paul was wishing his parents had not come. He had glanced back a couple of times and they had seen him and waved and then he had flushed and turned around quickly, hoping none of the children had seen him. He told himself that they had come because all the parents came on prize days, even those whose children had not won anything. Andy's mother had come, after all, though his father had not. Andy's mother was sitting at the very back of the tent talking with many other people including a rather fat gentleman with a silk hat and a bright red

ribbon across his shirt front. This, Paul discovered from Andy, was Mr. Justice Sandys who was going to present the prizes. But he noticed that his parents sat by themselves, that they did not seem to know anyone else, that when his father noticed Mrs. McTurk he tipped his hat until he discovered that he was not wearing it, and then he made the gesture with his hand. His mother smiled; but they both remained where they were and did not go to meet Mrs. McTurk.

Why had they come, or anyway why had they both come? He felt as though they had thrown him out to fend for himself in this place and, after he had struggled through and managed it they had now come back to him, to the school, and wanted to share his part in it. When they arrived earlier in the morning, he had been determined to get them away, had taken them down the side garden path to the tennis courts, anything to prevent them mingling in and meeting the children he knew. Away! keep them off by themselves. But finally they had come back for the tea and sandwiches on the lawn and he had become desperately shy and hid himself between them as much as he could. More than anything else he dreaded some older boy coming by and calling him by his last name. They must call him 'Paul', they had to name him as a friend, Paul, and his family must

think that this place was no different from home, that he behaved in the same way whether there or here. He must keep them out of the separate cell that was school and let them keep thinking that he belonged to them as much when he was here as when they could look through the surgery windowsand see him playing in the garden. Andy met them at the buffet; that was all right, they had had him to tea and they knew nothing about the fight. They had seen the black eye, but Paul had said he had had a fight with another boy. Andy was a friend; he had touched upon the closeness and uniqueness of home and did not belong completely to this drilled and ordered and loveless struggle. But then came Middleborough who did and who was an enemy, whose father had a mustache and looked like a colonel, whose mother, pale and timid, stood like a faded iris severed from its stalk and fallen to the grass. Middleborough, since the fight a bitter foe of both of them, suddenly both polite and offhand, sweeping by them under his father's gleaming leather baton, "Oh, hello McTurk, Hope." Paul had blushed them. He had asked his mother if she would have some lemonade, or some tea, almost pulled them over to the urn to be moving, to hide his confusion.

The talking at the back of the tent fell away now, and everyone turned to the centre aisle as the tea-

chers came in procession towards the platform. The pianist hired for the occasion patted his patent-leather hair, you wondered for a moment if he would play, straightened his back, raised his hands dramatically above the keyboard and brought them down in a resounding chord. Circles of sound expanded till they filled the tent and still the procession came forward until at last the children were given a sign by the head girl and rose to sing "Jerusalem".

"And did those feet, in ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green. . ."

Feet passed in front of him, brown shoes with three straps that buttoned across with shiny, metal buttons. If you see one row of teachers, each with three metal buttons on each of their shoes, supposing there are ten teachers in the row, how many metal buttons do they own between them? Supposing he had not won the arithmetic prize, then he would not have to walk himself across that vast high platform in front of his parents and all those other faces. Would his father nudge the person next to him and say that that was his boy that was getting the arithmetic prize for this year? Oh, shame to think of it. And the joy of accepting it if they had not been there to peer over the hat of the lady in front of them, to gaze out and own him as he stood by the table of prizes.

Miss Whittier rose and shuffled in her black and flowing robes. "Let us pray," she said, and everyone

stood with bowed heads. In the moment of quiet the summer breeze hushed in from the tent entrance and flapped softly at the canvas and the shadow of the tree wavered and then was firm once more. "O Lord God, our Father, Who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day. . ." And then came the speech. "So, taken all in all, we have had a good year at Greenleaf. Many of our children will be passing on this year to their prep-schools and a few to their public schools, but we hope that they will not forget their happy years here and will come back to see us often. Now it only remains. . ." Now it would come, he thought. The rich and learned judge was rising to his feet, seeming to Paul, with the light and space of the tent about him, rather like the ringmaster at the circus, the lionesses grouped round him on the platform, inert and tawny, ready to jump through the hoop. And he, venturing into the ring himself soon. "J. A. Andrews, the Head Mistress' prize for History." It began, the parade; the creaking of the camp stools and the procession of muted feet across the podium, the handshake and the few words spoken with the judge and then across and down the far steps. What did he say to them, the ringmaster? Perhaps that they, too, might grow up as he, to wear the shiny starched curve of the shirt-front with its pearl studs and the lapping luxurious ribbon meridian across their chests. And the lionesses with their snapshot

smiles. Did lions smile? "Lower school: first prize for arithmetic, P. G. Hope." There it was, the jellyfish legs. Still, he walked quickly for the platform seemed immensely long and he was anxious to be off it again. Above the polite clapping (the audience was becoming weary) he heard one pair of hands clapping loudly. He was sure people were turning around and looking at his father. He went hot and then he managed to smile at whatever the judge was saying, shake hands, and accept his prize, a small leather-bound book. And then as quickly he was down again among the children who, in their green blazers, reminded him momentarily of a bank of aspidistra below the platform. He was glad of the prize now, proud that he had won it. He ran his hands over the smooth soft leather binding. Feet were still pushing past him, the procession went on across the platform. But here he was now happy and safe amongst the others, and afterwards they would go out into the sunshine and home for the holidays, all of them; no more school for six weeks. Lazy summer, and a week at the sea with the waves beneath your window and the smell of the seaweed along the beach, the tiny crabs that were stranded in rock pools when the tide was on the ebb. The hills of Wales and the waterfalls where he had once last year found a lamb with an injured foot and had carried it, struggling under the weight, right up the

side of the waterfall to the road above. The farmer had given him sixpence and said he was a brave fellow and no mistake.

The judge, the learned judge, carried on, now pausing to wipe the perspiration from his forehead with a large white handerchief, now smiling, now engulfing another small hand in his own. Before him on a stand was a typewritten sheet and under the headings History, English, Arithmetic, Reading, Spelling, French and Music were listed the prizewinners. As he got down the list the smile became more glazed, the salutation more perfunctory. He was conscious of the women behind him, the indolent, beaming huddle grouped behind him on the podium like a weathered outcrop of smooth, black basalt. And yet, he felt, they had mass, like a building thunderhead; he felt an oppression from behind, he felt he must perform well, he must be jolly with the children and impressive with the parents or the thunderhead would burst or the basalt groan, crack and consume him. He hurried through this last list. So hot! and these clothes. He thought of a cool drive and a tankard of porter at a country pub. And he read out the last name on the list: "Lower school: third prize for Music, P. G. Hope."

In the front row somebody nudged him. "It's you," they said, "go up and get it." And he awoke, dazed, dreaming of the long days of the summer and brought back with a start to find them all waiting upon his walking again across the platform. He turned to his neighbor. He asked, "What is it for, am I getting another prize?" but they would not tell him, urged him forward, prodded him playfully towards the steps. He wandered slowly across the platform as if it were an empty corridor. Then the judge was before him once more, handing him another book. "Hello, you up here again," said the judge. Paul, confused at finding the first prize still in his hand, dropped the second book, picked it up, shook the hand that was offered him and fled from the platform the way he had come. A ripple of laughter ran through the tent, more in relief that the ceremony was over than at his own particular mortification. The pianist came back on the stand and they all stood to sing "Hills of the North." Paul found his place and then he opened the book. Inside the flap it said in the purple ink of Miss Whittier's pen, "Lower School: third prize for Music, P. G. Hope." And he knew that because of the prize, there would be more music lessons in the autumn. His parents would not let him stop, now that he had "shown some promise".

. . . . . .

Paul got so used to the daily round of school, the bus home, dinner, play in the garden or read, tea, music practice and early bedtime that none of these things gave him much delight. He lived in constant dread of his morning music lesson with Miss Whittier; he would count the hours in the evening. Fifteen and a half hours to go; sleep, breakfast, the bus ride, the walk up to school with Miss Hilary, prayers; all these things would happen before the next music lesson would come along. He tried to stay awake at nights because sleep was the longest thing between him and the music lesson, and as soon as he was asleep he was awaked again, it seemed. In the morning the lesson was too imminent. Instead he counted the hours until it would be over again for the day. But he had made it his battle, he said nothing to his parents. At first, when the fear had been new, he had practiced his scales and his tunes hour after hour on the piano. But this had seemed to do him very little good; the scolding had always come, slowly released at him, heavy and menacing. There was always something wrong. And so he found that however hard he practiced, his fear began to overcome his facility. It did no good to practice, especially when they started to play duets and just the idea that he had to keep up to Miss Whittier, sitting beside him on the long piano bench, kept his fingers awkward and stiff. He felt it a

horrible injustice. He was angry deep inside himself. He began not to care, to practice only enough to keep his parents satisfied, and then grudgingly he would make a very weak run-through of the scales. Sometimes he would deliberately practice the wrong exercise.

Still, even this dread became a commonplace; it was the contrast by which the subsequent part of the day became overwhelmingly free and luxurious. The lesson was over for another twenty-four hours. But when the holidays came and released him from the daily horror, he soon became restless, tired of amusing himself all day at home. The upsurge of joy that he felt during the term, when he had just finished a music lesson, was not there during the holidays. The time was dreary; he would go to birthday parties and Christmas parties occasionally. Sometimes Andy would come over for the day; but he lived on the other side of the city and it was seldom that they saw each other when school was out. He was always glad of the holidays, he would never have admitted that he was restless. He dreamed the holidays away. Nanny would read to him in the afternoons. She read him Grimm's Fairy Tales and the Jungle Book. He began to read very slowly by himself. When he was not reading, when he was sent out into the garden to get fresh air, to play on the grass, he would think of his

heroes. He would become Mowgli for an afternoon; he would start over by the first rockery and see if he could reach the poplar tree at the end of the garden without touching the ground. Walls and the branches of trees helped him; if he came to a place he could not cross, he would go back and find himself an old plank or a box to span the gap. He liked the high places; he could climb up the trellis where the virginia creeper was just beginning to grow and gain the top of the wall overlooking the Patrick's next door. Their's was a garden twice as long as his own but they were old people and had let the bottom part of the garden, which was walled off from the house, grow rank, writhing with nasturtiums, morning glories, ivy and sycamore seedlings; an old greenhouse with most of the glass gone, three or four apple trees which brought forth only small green apples. Paul sat astride the wall breaking the old, dry mortar from between the bricks. He had just escaped from the tangled jungle, a leopard had been chasing him. Now he sniffed the pureness of the sunlight, the soft breezes of the morning, after the dark undergrowth he had escaped from. Freedom on the top of the wall! And perhaps the greenhouse below him was a sunken treasure-boat; everything beneath the wall was the blue water of the Caribbean. He was Captain Nemo; he peered over and saw his own reflection

in the roofs of waves. Clumps of sycamore coral, a butterfly goldfish, swift, deadly sparrow-sharks. If he were to reach his foot down so far it would be bitten off. These reveries occupied many of his afternoons and what he read supplemented them with new conceptions and transfigurations. There were two worlds; the garden. . . or everything else.

The garden was long and somehow gave him the feeling of being in a deep valley; it was well-kept but could never have been in any way ordered or meticulous. There were hawthorn trees and pear trees, plane trees and poplars; there were three sprawling rockeries with miniature sand paths that ran crazy-quilt over their flanks; two small areas of lawn and a rose garden at the far end of the garden. There was the sundial.

The sundial stood at the top of the first rockery. Above it with curved and Japanese grace stood a hawthorn tree. In the winter the sundial got about an hour of sun each day, if the sun happened to be out at the right time. In the summer there were no gnomonic hours at all for the branches were thick with the tight green foliage. It had been bought in an expansive moment when Gwen Hope had decided to have a little pool built in the middle of the lawn. It was made of a smooth brown stone and had a circular trough around its circumference.

This now served as a bird-bath for the chaffinches, for the pool had never been built. Nanny filled the trough up with water and hung a coconut shell from a branch just above the sundial, and the little blue-breasted birds chittered about in the tree, swung from the coconut, dunked themselves in the sundial trough. There were always a bright throng of them there by the timeless sundial. On the top of the rockery they felt secure from cats and human beings. They would never have come near the sundial had it been placed in the middle of the lawn.

Paul never bothered with the birds, the birds never bothered about Paul. But the image of their swoopings and swingings, the neat, self-contained movements of their bathings, their conceited chirps and warbles were part of the dreaming unreality of his days in the garden. Time stood still; the garden was never fixed pitilessly in the sun. The sun crept in as a gentle thing in the late afternoon or evening just before it set in the sweep of sky between the pear trees and the upper rockery. Then it bathed the garden softly with its last cerise flushes. The garden. . .or everything else. Alert brightness or the long, sad shadows, the timeless age of his fantasies or the brisk pendulum of meals and work and sleep. And Paul was already becoming tired of his fantasies.

They had decided not to go to Wales that Easter holiday. Paul had been three, when they had first gone to Wales, and they had gone back the following year. It seemed to him as though they had always gone, but this year they were very busy in the surgery and put it off until the summer. As it happened, his parents were very glad they had decided to stay at home, for within the first week of his holiday, Paul came down with the measles. Nanny nursed him and read to him, his mother brought up his meals. The room was always dark to protect his eyes; there was only the glow from the gas-fire and the little light that filtered in through the curtains, the ring of the doorbell all the day and the tick of the grandfather clock. After the first stages of his sickness had passed by, he was restless. There was nothing to do; he grew tired of playing with blocks, he was not allowed to read and the bed was hot and sticky. Nanny came in to read to him, but she could not read for long before her voice gave out; a gramaphone was a diversion for a couple of days, until he over-wound it and the spring broke. He was alone much of the day in the gloom and called out for a drink of water, to have his pillows turned, anything to have somebody there for a little while. Nanny never heard, Mummy grew more and more impatient because she was busy downstairs. Soon he was calling so often that nobody came, when he called. Mealtimes were the only oases and

he became acutely aware of sounds, noises of plates, the first footstep at the bottom of the stairs. He came to judge the time of day by the noises that he could hear from the darkened bedroom, played a game in which he counted the number of times the doorbell rang betweem breakfast and lunch. He also came to realize that his afternoon tea tray was almost immediately preceded by the shouts of the children getting out of the council school around the corner. They played in the street, not wanting to go home right away, and he listened, envying their running about, hearing their boots on the roadway and the crack of a cricket bat. He remembered from Nanny that they were nasty, dirty little children. They played in the gutter. This made them extraordinarily fascinating, especially as he could not see them. They were a crowd of unknown blackness that swarmed out of their school and passed through his world in a burst of muddled, joyous, active noise and left behind them in the following stillness a set of cricket stumps chalked on the brick wall of the vicarage.

He had seen these on walks with his father, and he had seen the children too. On Saturday mornings his father would take him for a walk in the park, and on the way back would buy him a pennyworth of sweets at Mr. Lambert's. Mr. Lambert was a patient. Mr. Lambert

was enormously tall and enormously fat and he ran the little general store in Broomfield. Back you came from the George William Park, dizzy with the swings, happy with your father and Saturday, down you went down the solid brick corridor of Broomfield with the pots of geraniums on the window ledges and the worn-down, sway-backed doorsteps scrubbed and whitewashed ready for the Sabbath, and in you went to Mr. Lambert's for humbugs of all sorts, or perhaps a black and shining coil of licorice that cost a halfpenny. The shop was dusky and had windows like a regular house. It smelled of clean tools and paraffin oil and all along the counter were the tall glass jars of bonbons. Behind them Mr. Lambert with his round and rimless glasses, his black cap, his triumphant, walrus-like mustache stained yellow from tobacco. Who always said, "And what'll it be today, sonny?" Paul, not daring to say a word, would point to two or three jars and Mr. Lambert would reach a gigantic fist down into the jars, bring up one sweet of each kind, put them all in a cone of brown paper and give them to him. They they would leave, the door tinkled its bell as they opened it and they went back on to Broomfield.

It was then that the children appeared. When you came down from the park, there never seemed to be anyone on the street. When you came out of the sweet

shop there seemed to be ten or twelve children running around playing tag or fighting, dirty knees, red faces, long grey socks circling their ankles, sharp noses and chins. When they saw Paul and his father they all stopped playing; they stared at Paul and they stared at the brown paper cone of sweets. The ones at the back muttered to each other. His father picked out the smallest boy and the smallest girl and gave them each a halfpenny. But it always seemed that the older ones expected money too, for they would continue to stand there until Paul's father had almost to push his way through them to get by. And then the whole pack turned and followed Paul and his father down the street, and some in the road behind uttered wild cries that Paul did not understand but which he sensed were aimed at him.

It was in this way, through the few things Nanny had said and the walks with his father on Saturday mornings, that he first got the impression that other children in the nearby neighborhood were very different from himself. They were not as good as he was, they were rough and dirty children. Nanny had said this herself. Yet he understood that they had a certain cameraderie and he envied them that and recognized their light-heartedness and their gaiety and envied them that.

Their blackness attracted him. He began to wait expectantly in his bed for the sounds that told him school was out. Then he would creep out of bed and go over to the window and watch through a chink in the curtain that separated him from them. The vicarage wall was wonderful for games and the road between it and the church was little used by traffic. There was always a cricket pitch, he found out; the children ran between the wall of the vicarage and the low wall of the church on the other side of the street and they slithered the last quarter of the way on the hobnails of their huge black boots. One very tall boy was a demon bowler; he had long shiny blond hair, always wore the same striped shirt, and sometimes had an unlit cigarette in the corner of his mouth. When he bowled you did not see the ball at all and when he was scored off, the ball by sheer force of the rebound would usually sail over into the graveyard. After a while Paul came to realize that this was a six. If the blond boy (Paul recognized him from Broomfield) was bowling, the batter either made a six or was out and if the batter hit a six into the graveyard, he had to go over and get it himself before the game could go on. Paul watched a series of batters steal through the lich-gate of the church, tiptoe amongst the grave plots to the ball, careful not to disturb the dead. However many times

this happened, those who were waiting in the street stood silently until the ball was thrown over the church wall, before the clamour would break out again.

Girls did not play cricket. They had a regular length of the wall that was recognized as theirs and here they played with larger rubber balls. Between their legs went the ball; it bounced on the ground, hit the wall and they turned and caught it. Or they chalked squares for hopscotch on the pavement and hopped from one end to the other. Their short little skirts were always tucked into their bloomers. Paul had, over a series of days, recognized all those children who used to stare at him on Saturday mornings. Then he made an attendance list; there were nine of them altogether and he would check them off day by day. Those that came irregularly he would scold and rage against, as he had heard Miss Whittier do in school. Slowly, during the last ten days of his illness, he started to think of them as his children. They were here at his bidding to amuse him. He preserved a lordly isolation against envy. The window was his tower and throne, the curtains his robes of state. He resented the arrival of his tea tray now. He had always to listen for his mother's step upon the stair, had then to abandon his courtiers and beat an undignified retreat back to bed so that he would not be caught outside the

covers. Sometimes his mother would notice the noise outside. "What a terrible row," she would say, and would go over and close the window. "Really, those children. I don't know what this neighborhood is coming to, really I don't."

By the time he was well, Greenleaf's long Easter holiday was ended. It was time to go back to school. But his father decided to give him a week of convalescence to find his feet, after being in bed so long. "He must get all the sun he can," said the doctor. "And we'll feed you up. No more soups for you, laddie. Soon you'll be as plump as a hippopotamus." His father went out and bought a miniature deck-chair "just like the grown-up ones". He and Nanny sat for most of the day, if the weather was fine, on the lawn outside the surgery window where he could get the most sunshine. Nanny knitted and read to him, he was allowed to read himself now. But the long garden at the back of the house was no longer the idyllic place that it had been before. In the late afternoon he tried to steal into the front garden so that he would not miss the children. He was not allowed in his room, unless it was wet; he was not really allowed in the front garden because the patients came in that way and his father thought it did not look well. Nevertheless, Paul disappeared

every afternoon about quarter to four and hid himself between a rhododendron bush and the street hedge and watched them as of old. For a few days it was all right. Then Nanny started to worry about this clockwork vanishing act. She found him one day behind the rhododendron bush. "Oh, Paul, what are you doing," she said. "You know you're not supposed to be in the front garden."

"I'm weeding," he said quickly.

"That's very nice, dear. But you know Daddy doesn't like you in the front garden during surgery hours." And he was dragged into the house for tea.

"Weeding, eh?" said his father at the tea-table. "Well, I'll show you a nice little patch on the rockery that needs it badly and I'll make it twopence for the job." Paul was silent and his father was puzzled and his mother noticed.

"You know, William," she said, "the front garden does need it very badly. The gardener never bothers about it and, after all, that is the part that the patients see. Why don't you let him work on the front? I don't see what harm there can be in it. I'll give him one of

the side beds that can be his to plant what he likes, providing he keeps the rest of the garden looking neat. How would you like that?" Paul smiled back at her.

"Oh, yes, Mummy, lovely."

"Well, we'll have to see," said his father. But the battle was won; everyone knew it, and next day Paul was given his flower bed under the bay window of the lounge.

So he still watched the children every day. But he could not see them as well through the hedge as he had been able to from his high bedroom window. And at the same time that he did not have the view of them, he was closer to their voices, he felt less aloof from them. He was glad of the hedge, for there was a strand of fear woven in with his fascination and he shrank from them even in his attraction.

One day his mother brought home a box of marigold seedlings and said he could plant them in his flower bed. She showed him how to dig the neat lines of holes in the earth with a trowel and he went to work. He did not forget the children; he went every once in a while to the kitchen and read three and

twelve upon the clock and later three and six and knew that when the clock read four and twelve, the children would get out of school. He went on with his marigolds. He bent over the rich, limey soil, digging deep, precise holes, filling them from the watering can, watching the water drain into the soil, laying the gawky seedling in the hole, filling it in, pressing down the soil on either side of the stalk. He broke a few marigolds at first; later he was more careful and broke no more. It was quiet in the small front garden. It was a quiet, pleasant street. The only busy times of the day were when the children came out from the council school and made their way over the hill to the poorer districts on its flank and then at six when all the factory whistles blew down in the town and the overalled workmen struggled up the hill on their bicycles, home to their high teas. Otherwise it was a peaceful, shady street with the row of poplar trees along the vicarage wall and the huge sycamore on the corner.

Paul dug. And then he heard a giggle behind him. He straightened and turned. Standing by the gate, looking in at him were three girls with skipping ropes in their hands. They smiled at him and he turned his back and dug another hole. There were more giggles from the gate. He turned again and flushed. He and

the girls stared at each other and one of the girls began to skip. "Hippety-hoppity-blackamoor-Joe. Over-and-over-and-cross-and-through," she chanted and her feet beat the time on the pavement and the rope swung easily over her head, crossed on the third turn and was back again at her feet. "Baker-boy-baker-boy-bring-me-some-bread. Around-and-around-and-over-my-head." The other two girls stood at the gate and giggled. Then the tallest of the three asked him his name. "Paul," he said. They all tittered.

"Paul, wanto skip," asked another one. He shook his head and ran into the house away from them. He ran all the way through the hall and out into the back garden and then he came back and stood behind the curtain in the lounge. He could hear them all chanting now, and the slap of the rope on the pavement in rhythm with the feet. He peered cautiously from behind the curtain and saw that two of the girls were turning the rope for the tall girl in the middle of the road. She was skipping very fast. He could hear the swish of the rope in the air. Then a car came up the hill and they all left and went up the road. He could hear the rest of the children playing around the corner but he could not see them from the lounge window. He did not go out to the hedge to watch them that day.

Next day they were back again. They were less shy, they leaned on the gate. "Do you live here?" they asked.

"Yes," he said.

"Coo." They asked him where he went to school.

"Greenleaf," he said. They said they had never heard of that place. They said they went to the Trinity.

"C'mon and skip," said the tall girl. Paul looked through the lounge window. There was no one there.

"All right," he said and slipped through the gate into the street.

"It's easy," said the tall girl. "Hold the other end, Grace, and do it over slow for 'im. Easy does it. That's right. Jump-and-jump-and-jump-and-jump."

"Cor, ain't he the one," said the third girl. "Hasn't missed yet."

"Try it by yourself," said the tall girl. "You'll be all right." Paul found it easier still when he was hold-

ing the rope. He could tell better when it was coming over his head. He got skipping quite fast. "All right, you take the rope, Hilda, and let 'im get 'is breath back," said the tall girl. Paul stopped skipping and remembered that he shouldn't be caught in the street.

"I've got to go in for tea now," he said.

"Oh," said the girls in sympathy. They had never thought of going in to tea before "our Mum" shouted at you from the window. But this was such a posh place. They looked at each other and didn't say anything else. Then, as Paul was going up the front walk, the tall girl said, "We'll come round tomorrow, all right? Then you can skip some more." He nodded and went into the house. But they stayed skipping in the street all through tea-time, and occasionally Paul could see one of them peer in at the garden gate. Nanny saw them once and said, "Oh, those naughty children!" Paul suddenly saw that he had a secret that he must keep from everyone. He saw Nanny august and proud at the tea-table; she was his enemy at that moment and for the first time he grasped a difference between her and his parents. They wouldn't care, Mummy and Daddy, not that much. They would say he was wrong and not to do it again but if he went on doing it, they wouldn't notice after a while or they

would be too busy. But Nanny was a stickler. Like Miss Whittier, he thought, except that Nanny loved him. Perhaps she didn't, though, perhaps she just said. They weren't nasty children and she had said they were. Perhaps she didn't love him at all. Anyway, he didn't love her. He took a savage bite out of his brȇad-and-butter.

But he continued to play with the girls every day that week, always making sure beforehand that Nanny was in her favourite place in the back garden. On the Friday he had just finished skipping twos with Hilda, when he noticed himself being eyed by two of the boys from the cricket game. One was the tall boy with the blond hair that he had noticed from his bedroom window. They were talking about him.

"Naow, he's too little," said the blond boy.

"Go on with yuh, Herb. He's noways tinier than young Archie." The blond boy spat; it was beautiful the way he spat. Paul could not take his eyes away.

"Cȇmere you," said the blond boy. Paul did not realize for an instant that they actually wanted him. And then he walked towards them. It was the sheer shock of the summons and the power of the commanding

voice. He felt that if he had run, that voice would have frozen his shoes to the tacky blackness of the pavement before he had reached the safety of the house.

"Don't go with them boys, Paul," said Grace. He barely heard her. He was there, he was next to them, he expected to be swallowed. The blond boy drew on his Woodbine and threw it into the gutter. He reached out a large and dirty hand and gripped Paul's shoulder.

"We need a fielder, see. Muh know how to play?" Paul nodded. "Awright, we'll put you at silly mid-off. Okay, you stand here and don't move unless the ball comes to you." He clapped Paul on the back and was off to bowl another ferocious over.

"Wot cher, 'Erbie. 'Oos the fancy pants," someone shouted from the wicket, and in one refexive movement from the shout the blond boy had picked up a stone from the street and hurled it at the offender. "That's from me, Bill Owen, and don't you forget it." So Paul was defended; he had his protector, he was reassured. He lost himself in the game. The ball whizzed past him, fast as a meteor, a comet cutting through the shadow of the sycamore. It cracked against the bat, it soared over his head. Once he stopped a low grounder and the sting exploded in his

hand so that he knew that if he looked at it, his hand would be the size of a balloon. He bit back the tears and threw the ball to the bowler. The pain was glorious; he had stopped the ball. Because of him the boy at bat could no longer run to the graveyard wall. What did the sting matter? He had saved a run.

"Bonzer for you, young 'un," said the boy next to him. There was no higher praise. And then quite suddenly the game had stopped. Except two boys who were fighting to get the bat next, everyone had turned and was looking at the manifest, terrible anger of Nanny who was walking towards them, unrelenting, as though she would sweep them all clean off the face of the hill like so many motes of soot. They stood fixed, they all stood fixed. Even the batters stopped their squabble. She came on down the middle of the road, a giant and purple vengeance from the grave. Where she would walk they backed away and without a word she took Paul firmly by the arm and carried him off, away from them. It was all silence. And then when the two of them had reached the corner, Paul heard behind him a low and nervous laughter break out like the ebb of a wave upon pebbles. A slow release, a hiss, until by the time they had reached the garden gate there were shouts and loud bursts of energy and the crack of the cricket bat once more.

"Up to your room," she said. "Straight away. I shall have to tell your father." Her rage: he could not comprehend it. Her eyes in their electric wrath, her neat tight mouth, all the more terrible in its round and gentle face; her angry shoes leading him to his room up the ladder of chattering, accusing stair-rods.

She left him there and shut the door behind him. That laughter behind him in the street, that shame, it twisted in him. "I hate you, I hate you." He screamed it at the sound of her steps on the tiled, mosaicked hall. A hoarse sobbing. He threw himself ontbo the bed and his bitter, expanding torment wept into the pillow fierce tears of loneliness; and choked and tasted salt and felt the pillow wet beneath his face and the linen stiffness coming into his cheeks. At last he lay exhausted looking at the ceiling, hearing the noises of the children in the street remotely through the closed window.

. . . . . .

Gwen Hope and her mother and William sat in the lounge at tea and talked it all over. The old lady had chosen to pour the tea and she sat at the head of the table. This was her scene and she knew it and enjoyed the power it gave her, the power she had gradually lost

as she had become more and more bedridden. They were her children now, Gwen and the boy she had married. It was something she had forgotten with the passing of time. She had endowed the marriage heavily; with her consent and with her money. Why, the very furniture that they were sitting on came from the old house. Yes, it was time for her to be wise, time that they listened. Did she not love Paul more than they, had she not cared for him, taught him, stayed with him? While they were so busy, always so busy. That common trash in the street. The danger of them, that they could break Paul like a thin and delicate twig. He would grow up like that butcher's son who went to the grammar school, whose father had so much money these days but who slicked back his hair with water and gave away his upbringing as soon as he opened his mouth. That's what Paul would come to, if they weren't careful.

"And the strongest cup for the man of the house," she said as she finished pouring the tea. She always said that. She had said it to her husband and her mother had said it to her father. It was part of the formal ordinance of the tea table along with the blue Worcester tea service and the same lace tablecloth that had been used through the calm of her childhood and the velvet and mahogany prosperity of her married life, that were on the

table before her at this moment. You did not give up the graces, even in a crisis; they had always been a part of your life and they steadied you in the face of the extraordinary. She handed William the teacup. Now was the proper time for talk. And William began it.

"Have a spot of bother with Paul this afternoon?" he asked.

"He's been very naughty," she said, "he's really been a very wicked child." She paused. Two lines of puzzlement came between her brows and she shook her head slowly as though Paul's wickedness had confounded her beyond belief.

"We heard you come in with him," said Gwen.

"Yes, I did come in with him and sent him up to his room straight away. I think you must talk to him very strictly, William. You see it all began with the butterfly. I saw one, you see, in the garden. The first one this spring and so I went through to the front garden to find Paul quickly before it went away and he was not there. So, I thought, he must be in his room and what a shame on such a lovely day. I called up the stair and there was no reply. Well, I got quite upset by then and

went out to the garden gate and looked up and down the street and he was not to be seen. I did not know what had happened, I was quite beside myself. I was just about to come and fetch you, William, when, what do you think happened?" She brought up one finger to emphasize her question. "A little flitterbegibbit of a girl, one of those that have been about lately, came right up to the gate and said, 'If you're looking for Paul, he's with those boys around the corner,' and then she ran off again. And there he was, she was right, there he was in the middle of the street playing some noisy game with those ruffians from Broomfield. Well, really, William, what are we to do about it? That child, I've always said we should never have moved into this neighborhood and now look what's come of it.

She gave a haughty lift of the chin, the neck still proud even at seventy. Gwen was reminded for a second of an old daguerreotype, oval and sepia, which which she sometimes came across in the big box of photographs upstairs. Her mother in a high lace collar, her long brown hair swept up into a bun, all gentility and grace. We have patronized her too long, thought Gwen, even without realizing it, and now she comes back at us to capture her pride again. This shadowed across her mind imperceptibly quickly and then was swept away

by another thought that, of course, Mama was right; that Paul should have been brought up in the old house. It did not do for him to play with those children; he would become ill-mannered and coarse and though it was not Paul's fault but theirs for living where they did, still the trouble would have to be nipped in the bud.

"William, I think the best thing to do is not to be cross but to try to explain to him. After all, he will have to realize sometime that these sort of children are never going to be part of his life, that he belongs with another kind of people and the more he gets mixed up with them the more difficult it will be for him in the end. Don't you think so? Don't you think I'm right?"

William contemplated the tablecloth. He did not think it an elegant piece of work; beneath it was the wood of the table, the flow, the curve and current of its grain fractured by an overlay of dainty white patterns in string. The sheen of the wood seemed to stick to the strands of the web as though the lace had exhuded a heavy treacle over it and held it trapped and broken. You listen to the two women of your household and what can you do if you aren't much good with words to answer them? Could you say to Mama that she was

wrong to crucify the lad that way, that it was men against women at that moment and he would stick by his son and believe them incredibly cruel and blundering? No, you couldn't without standing up and making it a real row because you sat next to Mama and looked up to her face when she was talking. But he was damned if he was just going to sit there and agree.

"Well, William, what do you think?" He looked over at his wife. The two women waited for him to say something.

"Supposing you are right," he said, "how do you explain all that to a lad of six?" But the words had not come out the way he had thought they would, clipped and strong, decisive and male. As it had happened before, he spoke with all the nuances of apology in his voice. So that the women, perceptive of the weakness, pounced right back at him.

"I think it's up to you, William, to say <u>something</u> to him."

"Yes, Mama is right, don't you think? There are certain times when a man's hand. . ." And he imagined himself as a gaunt and bewhiskered Victorian (that was

what it came down to in the end) with an elegant waistcoat and a gold watch, gruff and dogmatic, the pivot of the household. He sighed and wrinkled his brow.

"I will speak to him after tea," he said and on the strength of his sudden and capitulating agreement with them uttered one last, despairing assertion. "And now we will not say any more about it."

. . . . . .

When Paul had recovered from his outburst and lay quietened on his bed, he began to wonder how he would be punished and thought he would not care. It would be a spanking at least. But he had never been in serious trouble with Nanny before. He did not know what it would be, and sensed that it would be some different sort of penalty that he had in some way grown into, now that he was older. After all, he thought, next year he would be at prep school, where they whacked you all the time and a whacking with a ruler (as he had heard it was done) would make a spanking seem awfully tame. It was growing dark outside and the children had gone home. Stillness; and the room seemed hot and dry to him. He got up from the bed and struggled to open the heavy, warped window. And stuck his head full out of the window and smelled the

sweetness of the budding sycamore above the erstwhile cricket pitch and the blessed coolness of the purple evening air upon his cheek. Since he could remember, since he had had his own room, he had always had a fondness in the evening for this junction of streets that was beneath his window. The flickering gas from the streetlamps and the church road that seemed so ordinary by day but which fell away over the edge of the hill under the darkness as though it were falling to a bottomless hell. And the church itself, on the crest, safe and sure, with its spire that the owls perched upon and its file of bonneted ladies and blue-black suited men that came for the vespers on Sunday nights. And those that went with wild, dark laughter over the edge of the hill to the pictures. He knew it well, now, this evening of his street that began with the lamplighter and his pointed ladder and ended with the heaviness of his own eyelids and the long corridors of sleep.

Now he focussed his eye upon one of the iron pickets of the tiny balcony outside the window and tried to align it with a curious sceptre that had been erected over a grave in the churchyard. And having them once in a line, moved his head this way and that so that the picket marched back and forth in front of the sceptre,

a sharp and spiky sentinel. Meanwhile thinking that there were two ways to go about this spanking and that the choice between the two lay only in how his father looked, when he came in, and also by his voice. If he stood by the fireplace with his arm on the mantelpiece and said, "I'm afraid I'm going to have to spank you, Paul, because Nanny says you have been naughty," then it would all be very easy and Paul would yell and cry with the gentlest of smacks. Daddy would soon be satisfied with the punishment. That was the good way, because then you had paid for your wickedness and everyone was glad and happy towards you and everything was forgiven.

The other way was gloomy and made a botch of things for ages. He sat down on the bed and he talked to you, as though a great hoe was pushing the words out from the back of his head. That was when he was really angry and that was when you didn't have to care what he did to you, when you had to get angry yourself and then it didn't hurt because you were mad and blind and suddenly as large as the moon. And afterwards you didn't speak to anyone for ages and needed no one, never smiled, and ate in an insulting way. He remembered once turning right around in the middle of the spanking and hitting his father in the face. His father had gotten up from the bed right away and walked out of the room. At first

Paul had been glad that he had hurt his father, but later had wanted to throw himself in his father's arms, and cry that he hadn't meant it. He found that he could not do this either, because he was both wrong and proud about it, and he had never done it again, because there had been that terrible ache about it that came when he knew he was wicked and there was no way through to grace.

The spanking and the way of the spanking and the tread of his father's foot upon the bottom stair, the change jingling in his pocket with the large bunch of keys; these things filled his mind and the cricket game and the angry Nanny had happened long ago and were forgotten. But then his father came to him at last and he remembered the feeling he had had before that it would be different this time. For his father came and sat on the bed and yet was not angry, said nothing harsh to him, had said, "You are a strange son for a man to have," in an old and rusty voice and then "I'll ask you not to go out in the street again until you are older, because it frightens your grandmother. And now, come on with you downstairs. Kiss your grandmother and let's have all hard wishes behind us." With his arm about Paul, they went downstairs, and Paul, cushioning his head against his father and smelling the clean

tweed of his father's jacket and the tobacco in the jacket pocket, came into the lounge where there was a great glowing fire and the women waiting. He kissed his grandmother and he kissed his mother.

"That's right," said his grandmother, "and you won't be naughty again, will you?"

"No, Nanny," he said and such was the gladness in him that he forgot his hatred and his rage. These were gone now and the lump in his throat from so much crying had dissolved right away. He ate quantities of bread and jam, gooseberries and cream cakes.

"That's a laddie," said his mother, "eat up." They were all extra nice to him. That was always the way it was after you had been bad and were forgiven.

. . . . . .

So it was that William Hope found an ally in his son. It was a curious alliance. Indeed "ally" came guiltily to the tongue of thought one day and William discarded it. Ridiculous to think of your son that way. But there it was, an inchoate tide of feeling that ran between them, clumsily present, a maleness that united

them. William began to find a strength for himself in Paul. For Paul there was no more playing in the street; that little row was over. He went back to school and Miss Hilary and the terrors of the music lesson with an active will and the knowledge that there would be no more Miss Whittier, no more music lesson, no more Greenleaf after the summer term was finished. Prep school loomed ahead in the exciting and dramatic autumn; he looked forward to it and forgot about the roughnecks and the cricket in the street. It pleased his grandmother to see it so. A good, hard spanking and a talking to was what the child had needed and William must have given it to him.

For William it still remained an injustice to his son that had not been set right. The lad was lonely; what was more natural than that he should try to make some friends. And then to be scolded for it! But the real and rankling unrest that William felt was the impotence within himself; that the women had battened him down and then had stood quite firmly on the hatch. He did two things that week for his son and knew that he did them for himself as well.

One morning before surgery he took the car and drove out to the great lines of timberyards on the Walsall

Road. Fresh-cut yellow boards; the smell of them, wet from an early morning shower, wafted over the highway. Long lengths in stacks by the roadway and areas of dark, black earth between. He went into one of the yards that said "H. Smithers, Timber Merchant". He could see someone in a small hut at the end of the yard and when he went over there, found himself in a small, dim room with an enormous pot-belly stove and a bent old man puffing at his clay pipe. The room was unbearably hot, the air opaque with clouds of evil-smelling smoke.

"Mr. Smithers?" William asked.

"Ay, that's who I am."

"I wanted to see about having a shed built." The old man took the kettle off the stove and filled the teapot.

"Oh ar," he said, "what sort of a shed was it you'd be wanting, a potting shack, per'aps?"

"Yes," said William, "something about that size, I should think. What I really want it for is a playhouse for my son. I thought it could be put up at the end of the garden for him and his chums to play

in. Just a small little hut with a window and a door."

"Never 'eard o' that afore," said Mr. Smithers. "Potting shed'll be what you want, summat plain and sturdy like. See here." And he showed William a blueprint.

"Yes, that seems all right. Could you put it up the week after August Bank holiday? We'll be away then, but I want it as a surprise for my son's birthday."

"Oh, ar. That'll be all right. My son-in-law, he'll get it up for you. Tell 'im what you want and where to put it an' he'll have it there when you gets back. And a good job from our Jack, too if you please. We'll fix you up." William thanked Mr. Smithers, declined a cup of tea and went out into the sunshine with the son-in-law's phone number in his pocket.

Later in the week while on his usual morning walk, he stopped in at the dairy up the road. This consisted of no more than three stables that had been built alongside each other. Now only one was used for the dairyman's horse and the adjacent ones had been cleanly whitewashed and held lines of the tall metal churns, rows of clean empty bottles, huge casks of butter, frames of eggs, and poultry hanging from the ceiling. Mr. and Mrs.

Peabody and their daughters lived over the dairy and you reached them by means of a long brick entry through the middle of the stables. William had never visited them before, although the family were patients of his, and he had often met Mr. Peabody on the street with his cart. Now he went through the gloom of the entry and found steps leading up to the front door and a large and brightly polished door-pull of brass. Which, by pulling it, brought him with welcome into the front parlour (for best) and left Mrs. Peabody in a whirl of misplaced hairpins, and cries and lamentations that she could not have given the parlour a dust before he had arrived. And the olive green mats and their fringes which were laid over the arms of the chairs, and the stuffed fish over the mantel.

"It'll be Mister you'll be wanting to see, I'll be bound," said Mrs. Peabody, fine and plump and mischievous as a dairyman's wife should be. "Well, he should be back from the round any time now. You just sit back and I'll get you a nice cup of tea." And she busied herself into the kitchen.

William was now sorry that he had come. Even when going on his rounds, he had never become used to the formality and respect with which he was treated. He

did not like to be called "sir" and the mean streets of the town and the rough and calloused hands of his patients, the yellowing lace curtains, the tatters that the children went about in, made him feel more fortunate than these people but never any better than they were. His family had lost their wealth so suddenly, when he was a boy, and he did not forget the shortness of the distance between Poplar Road and Broomfield. This call on the Peabodys was now an occasion, he could see it looming as one in spite of Mrs. Peabody's homely ways. And she would probably sneak downstairs to catch the dairyman before he came up, with a tie in her hand for his collar, and a strong threat to mind and comb his hair, quickly now and give a wipe to his boots with his handkerchief because the doctor was upstairs.

And this made it hard for him. He would have done better had he met Allan Peabody in the street and got to talking. But to make a great thing out of his wanting to ask the dairyman to let his daughters come down to play with Paul, made it seem in some way as though he were conferring a seignorial favour upon them. He would rather have mentioned it casually that it might be a good idea.

But in spite of his misgivings, everything turned out for the good. When Mr. Peabody came into

the parlour, it was quite obvious that he had just taken off his huge and doubtless muddy boots. He was wearing in their stead, however, a pair of the most disreputable bedroom slipppers that William had ever seen.

"How do, Dr. Hope," he said and they shook hands. A giant's hand on a bullock of a man and a tan on his face that you did not see often in the town, that came from being out-of-doors so much of the day. "I can't think why the wife put you up in this musty old room," he said with a wide smile. "Come and finish your tea in the kitchen, while I'm having a spot to eat like." William was gladdened by his warmth and followed him. "And what's this, putting the good doctor in the gloom of the parlour, girl," he was saying to his wife. "Tea's what he needs and what better place than the kitchen for it." His wife all blushes then, but serving them both right away, the dairyman with his breakfast and William with a large mug of tea, and then going out to the washing on the line and leaving them to talk. So that William came to his point quite naturally.

"Ay," said Mr. Peabody, "I'm not saying it isn't a lot better for them than playing in the street. The wife and I try to get them out to the country once in a while for a bit of a romp but it's not the same as

somewhere nearby where they could play with some grass and trees about them. As soon as I make my little sum, it's back to the country for us. This is no place to bring up young 'uns."

So it was settled that Sue and Evelyn Peabody came down to play with Paul during the summer holidays and William felt that what with the hut and the promise of these new companions for his son, he had made amends.

. . . . . .

By the end of the summer the hut had been painted three different shades on the inside. By the end of the summer it had been divided into two rooms with a curtain, furnished five hundred ways with butter boxes, transformed in turn to Grace Darling's row boat, a castle, tall and turreted, a stockade out of the Wild, Wild West, and most conveniently of all, a house.

This last was the favourite game of the Peabody girls; Paul became the father and the two girls mother and baby. Hours they played in the hut, riding the baby in the wheelbarrow, hanging washing on a line, all sorts of domestic miniatures. But all the other games, all the other transformations came from him, from his reading.

He felt a growing wish to be a voyager, to travel to new landscapes. He visualized now, the space of journeys; patchworks of villages, dark thick forests, the fretwork of white and shining fortresses. Or labyrinths and minotaurs. Any story that had a road to follow, a grotto to explore, secret passages, a maze, held him fascinated and he imagined all these new topographies and laid them out across his garden.

But his epics were too much for the Peabodys. They could not be so picaresque, preferring teacups filled with warm pop and sipped in the parlour of the hut. He must explain, they said, they did not understand the game. It was a silly game, they said, they would rather play house. And finding, at last, that they could not compromise his wish for action, they taught him the street games that he had so often watched before from his bedroom window.

The days shortened, though; the thin oval leaves fell from the beech tree slowly one by one. And soon they covered over the summer paths around the hut. Paul, thinking more and more of prep school, was impatient with the Peabodys. "You're only a girl," he said, "what do girls know?" They were hurt. "We'll tell our Mom on you," they said. They sulked for a moment, it looked as

though they would go home, they headed for the back gate. But then turned again and began to skip rope in the open patch by the swing and after a while asked him if he would want a turn, or want to hold the rope. He had some right to say these things, he who was about to go to a big school in the city. They saw the difference between him and the boys who went to the council school, they knew that they and he were not at all the same. They deferred to him, sometimes a little sadly, knowing that they were invited to play.

And Paul, eager now for the masculine realm of masters and whackings, football and tuck, looked forward to the new school, Budleigh House, and away from the summer. He felt he was about to leap a step forward in the estimation of the world; now he would stay at school the whole day, take lunch in a place called 'Hall'; now he was to have a locker with a number and this number was branded on all his clothes and possessions. Two-three-five-oh-six; his mother ordered name tapes with his name and the number; the number was hammered into the soles of his shoes with tiny brass nails and his uncle gave him an orange tuck box with the number carved on the lid. So many things were suddenly allowed, a penknife, for instance. His father bought him a little beauty of gleaming pearl with a small blade and a large blade, so slim and sharp

and showed him how to keep the blade keen on a carborundum stone.

"And a bottle of iodine to go with it, I suppose," said his mother, disapproving.

"Nowt wrong with a knife for a lad who's going to prep-school," said his father, winking at him as if to say, "Women!" Oh, pride!

On their first day at Budleigh both he and Andy were ragged. Some older boy managed to chalk an X on the seat of their trousers and then throughout the day they were kicked lightly, hard enough to hurt, and other boys in older blazers than theirs would run past shouting, "X marks the spot". They took the ragging; already now they knew that coming to a new school meant that they had to start all over, that their top form privileges from Greenleaf counted no longer.

Budleigh School was an old Victorian mansion close to the centre of Birmingham. By the simple procedure of screwing rows of desks to the floors of all the rooms, erecting blackboards, and knocking together the servants' quarters for a dining hall, the two men who owned the school had made it tenable for seventy

boys. By the simple procedure of applying Dr. Arnold's theories of what a school should be (modified occasionally after all this was the twentieth century), they gained a reputation in the best suburbs, as a preparatory school that "knew what it was about" and could get little Jimmy or Charles or Oliver into Marlborough, Winchester or Denstone if anything could. Latin and French began when the boys were eight and so did fractions and decimals. Pupils, said the brochure, were well schooled in English Grammar, English History, Deportment and Divinity.

There were prefects, Paul found out, who had the power to set you lines, even to paddle you if your insubordination were that enormous. And these boys, within an ace of their public schools, were lords indeed; their long striped mufflers, the casual angle of their beat-up caps, their deference, their captaincy in every game and gambol set them apart from the common throng. They governed everywhere except the classroom itself. But this was a school for boys, not babies; from the lowliest desk in the lowest form at Budleigh, Paul sneered back at Greenleaf. If here, he found the work hard, the prep in the evenings long, yet he found also that it did not do to take his studies too seriously. Only swots did that. This school demanded a new vocabulary; swot, spunk, sherring and fag. And then was a boller, which

was a heavy slab of dark brown treacle toffee, eaten after football matches. Its taste remained with you all the way home on the school bus, sweet, tacky and substantial.

But in spite of the strangenesses, Paul liked Budleigh. Fair was fair; you didn't get whacked unless you deserved it. You made your way or you didn't and it was up to you. And much of the charm of the old mansion remained; there were fireplaces in most of the classrooms, for instance, and tall windows in Paul's form room which let in the sun from the former garden.

However, it was not until his third term that he was accepted as a "good sort". This he overheard one day as he was passing the prefect's room and he connected it immediately with his new position as Tynan's chariot horse. Tynan was a prefect, chariots a game often played at recess; chariots swarmed all over the playground, jockeying for position, racing, tussling, tangling in a chaos of grazed knees and torn blazers. Tynan grabbed Paul (as chariot horse) by the coat tail and as Paul surged forward in the traces, Tynan half ran, was half pulled into the fray with other chariots. The in-fighting method was for Paul to suddenly stop in his tracks so that by the strength of Paul's blazer, Tynan would whirl

off tangentially into the midst of the opposing foe. Ideally, the horse wore rubber-soled shoes, thereby being able to take the strain of this whirling action without slipping on the playground. The rider wore leather-soled shoes with metal studs so that he could slide and hit his opponents the harder. Tynan was bulky and Paul agile; they made a good team. They accepted and issued many challenges and usually won.

There were only three sporty prefects that term; Rodgers, Wilson and Tynan. That is to say, these were the only three that played outstanding cricket and football, and they were the only three who became gladiators. The other six prefects were, in varying degree, swots. They played indifferent football and cricket, they played on the chess and tennis teams, did well in Latin and Ancient History and felt it below them to ride the chariot. But Tynan was captain of the football and athletics teams, the best centre forward and the best 220 yard man in the school. It was a signal honour for Paul to be his horse.

And Paul, having overheard the remark from the common room, thought the voice was Wilson's, wondered if he were actually talking to Tynan. Thrilling to feel his name was even mentioned in that sacred room, even

more thrilling because it might mean that Tynan was thinking of him Paul Hope, to run the hundred yards for the school! It was unusual for a boy to get on a school team in his first year; but then, thought Paul, he has seen me run and said I was good. Tynan had taught him too, to keep his arms bent and close to his sides to lower the wind resistance. Tynan took trouble with him; he was Tynan's horse. I am not good enough yet, he thought (to dull the sharp edge of longing), and I am only a sherring. You never make school team until you are a fag. Nevertheless, every morning before prayers he went to the athletics notice board to see if the team list had been posted. He lived, dreamed the hundred yards; he ran up and down the garden at home, practicing what Tynan had taught. He imagined glorious victories, himself breasting the tape, the crowd clapping, he read in the record books of the great sprinters, he idolized Jesse Owens. And Tynan.

One morning the narrow white list was there, he could see it from half-way down the hall. So then he turned and went back to the end of the hall and then paced out the distance, step by slow step, heart pounding, yes or no, coming close enough now to stop and count the number of names upon the list, even though he could not read them yet; then a plunge to the board. "100 yards

open: Tynan, Morris, HOPE!" Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. He did not dance around the corridor, nor shout, nor wave his arms, nor cry for joy, nor laugh. He turned from the board, threw back his head, smiled and walked back down the corridor to prayers. His heart sang for the whole of the day.

Then the congratulations and the amazement of his classmates were sweet to hear; the envious whispered "of course, he's Tynan's horse", stage whispering, furtive eyes and the faces turning to glance and smile their sly smiles. He knew it for envy, he did not care. He would run for the school against St. John's and he would win.

. . . . . .

No, he did not win; he did not come second, but in almost a photo finish he beat out his opponent for third place. Of course, Tynan won and somebody from the other school was second, but Paul was third and there was glory in that because the school gained one match point for his placing. And he got his school colours at the end of the year. But it was when Tynan would no longer have him as a horse that he knew he had done well.

"It won't do at all," said Tynan. "Horses have to be such utter sherrings."

. . . . . .

At home strange things were happening; his mother bought ten pairs of shoes and his father timber and corrugated iron and two huge washtubs, one for kerosene and one for petrol. Paul asked his father why. "We are hoarding," said his father. "We are stocking things up because, if there should be a war as everyone seems to think, then your mother won't be able to buy shoes and I won't be able to buy petrol and oil. And don't tell anyone about it; this is a family secret. We're hoarding just in case but we shouldn't be; it's unpatriotic."

"But what about the corrugated iron?" he asked.

"That's another thing again," said his father. "I hope we won't need that at all."

To Paul the idea of the war seemed both exciting and remote. Yet inevitable too, for his parents talked of it more and more and at school it was argued constantly in terms of ships and planes and tanks and men.

But a long way away and slowly massing, as though a great many people (the important ones whose voices were on the wireless) all had to agree before it could begin. Nevertheless, before the summer term had ended his father and the gardener had levelled the rockery by the garden wall. They dug ten feet down, they squared off the corners, they sank the timbers, built a floor to the hole and began to line it with the corrugated iron. It was an air raid shelter, his father finally explained. Maybe the war would not come but if it did, there would be bombing raids and the safest place to be was underground.

"You'll see," he said. "This'll be the neatest little burrow. I'll have an oil lamp down here and four bunks, a kettle for tea and some of your mother's sandwiches, just as cozy as you please." The thought of living underground was a thrilling one, secret, dark, with the earth all around them and the oil lamp throwing shadows round the currugated walls. Imagine going out to the garden to sleep, Paul thought.

"When we sleep out here," he asked, "shall I still go to school in the morning?"

"We'll have to see," said his father, "we'll have to see what's going to happen with you."

When the shelter was finished, the curved metal roof was covered with earth and then with squares of turf. The sides were left uncovered; they gleamed in the morning sun, they stood up, functional and straight, from the flower bed. Paul could see the even hump of the shelter from the bathroom window and he noticed, looking out over the strips of neighboring gardens, that there were three more shelters going up. That was the way war was coming, little humps in the earth.

The Hopes went to the sea that summer, as though there weren't going to be a war. And Paul felt it different to be with the family for such a long stretch. Why, for instance, did Nanny fuss so much when he spent his pennies on the pier? He had special pocket-money for holidays, threepence a day and by far the most exciting way to spend this was in the machines that lined the promenade on the pier. If you won at bagatelle, you got two pennies back; the ball whirled round and round in its case, you waited for it to drop into the row of cups, some marked WIN, some marked LOSE. It did not cost anything to get onto the pier, but only to go into the fun fair at the end, and Paul would often escape from the shopping (always boring; the Boots Lending Library, cider for the dinner table, knick-knacks, general holiday buying) and come to the pier, where,

after he had spent his threepence on bagatelles or fortune telling or name plates you stamped on a metal strip or gum from a machine, then he could watch the people stroll. Wonderful people! Stiff and ramrod colonels, mustachios abristle, walked their black and gleaming boxers; the fisherman, now trippermen for the summer, still passed with a nautical squelch to their high knee waders, high black sweaters and half an inch of white stubble on their chins ("All aboard for the 'Sea Prince' departing the quay for Barmouth"); and elderly ladies in dark silk dresses and straw hats like Nanny's; coal-miners now scrubbed with carbolic, striped shirts and shining collars, always a dark blue suit that never fit because the shoulders were too broad, talking quietly the musical Welsh, leaning over the pier rail in twos and threes. All for him; he clapped his hands from his velvet cushion on the pier bench and they all paraded obediantly before him. Now today, he would think, I will throw this man to the sharks. Seize him as he passes. His turban-wound and pantalooned slaves would throw the victim over the rail.

But Nanny did not like him on the pier. "Those machines," she said. "It's throwing money down the drain; just teaching him to gamble and throw his money

away. And you can imagine, William, the kind of people who go to places like that." Why did she fuss so? Why did she make such a noise? Anyway Daddy had said that it was his money and to spend it on the machines if he liked. "It's a holiday," said Daddy. "Let the lad have a bit of leeway."

It was a good holiday and the weather was very hot and sunny for the end of August. Paul and his father played French cricket on the beach. Once Mummy and Daddy and he climbed the headland. He had a bottle of pop at the cliff top cafe. And there below the creamy line of surf; you could see where the shore sheered away for, quite definitely, from the cliff there was a line where the sea became darker. The cormorants wheeled. A slight breeze rustled in the coarse grass. What of the paraders now? Mere insects walked the matchstick pier. And the three bays curved away below him like fingernails of the sea. On a clear day, someone had said, you could see Ireland. With the naked eye? No, not with the naked eye but with the telescope that cost a penny for two minutes. But the trouble with that was how did you know it was clear enough until you had already paid your penny? You didn't.

From the headland it was only a short walk into Cwm Woods. They would go, said his father, down through the woods to Borth and catch the bus back from there. "We will just have time for a roundabout hike before lunch," he said. "It's all down hill from here, at least." They trekked down through the wild and tangled woods that sprawled over the lee side of the headland. Paul was happy, as he always was in woodland with the scents of the moss and foliage, the sudden wide glades and the twisted winding paths. They could see below them the valley running down to the sea at Borth, which always seemed a valley undiscovered, for there were no houses, no farms, no people. The warm fields ran down to a deserted beach; the tides were dangerous, it was not used for bathing. The bus ran down the sandy road only to pick up charcoal burners who worked in the woods. The Hopes saw it now, a green roof above the hedgerows, and hurried to reach the bus stop before the bus turned at the end of the valley.

. . . . . .

The next day the headlines in the morning paper said that Germany had invaded Poland. "Well, there wasn't any doubt it would come," said William Hope, "no doubt at all. And now we must wait and see what happens."

And Gwen Hope, looking up from the paper, said, "Do you think this means that Mr. Chamberlain will really declare war?"

"My dear," he said, suddenly authoritative, "the whole country has been arming itself as fast as it could for six months or more. When every man, woman and child is issued with a gas mask, and every day you see a new barrage balloon, you don't really think they're going to call the whole show off?"

"I thought I read something about an ultimatum," she said vaguely.

"No, it's come," he said and smiled. People at the other tables in the room were talking loudly of the news and behind the earnestness, the serious, dogmatic male voices, ran a curious current of levity. Women were quiet, a little sad; they sat and ate their porridge, they asked meek, resigned questions. But among the men there was a new gleam in the eye; jokes and laughter after the first shock had worn off. "Well, they're for it now, all right. . .haven't a chance. . .a few months perhaps. . .Maginot Line. . .should jolly well think they'll take me, wooden leg and all!" The undercurrent of excitement. It had come at last, no more waiting around.

"Do you think we ought to go home," Gwen asked. "We've got only three more days. Don't you think it would be best to be at home before anything happens?" She imagined the house no longer there, the bombs falling. And strangely, she felt there would be nothing worse than returning to a ruin. Better almost to have been inside or at least in the shelter. All the dishes broken, she thought illogically, all the silver buried in the rubble.

"No, we will stay," he said strongly, ending all discussion right away. "If anything were going to happen, we'd be much safer where we are. But nothing will happen for a while, I think. We're not even at war yet and when it comes it'll be slow starting. No, we will stay until Monday and finish our holiday. Who knows when we'll get another."

It was another beautiful day and Paul and his father left the two women listening to the music from the band shell and went off for their daily game of clock golf. This was always the best part of the day for Paul. The short course of miniature bunkers, greens and fairways was set up in the grounds of the castle that dominated the three bays and the air was balmy now with the smell of the closely mown grass. They went through the

usual ritual of selecting clubs and then they were off on the first hole. "Keep your eye on the ball," said his father, "otherwise you won't stroke properly." His father had said that every morning since they had come. And he still said it, now that there was a war; people still gawked through the promenade railings, even though there was a war now. Paul felt it a slight disappointment; for if a war suddenly came with the headlines on the breakfast table, then he somehow expected (even down here in Wales) that the streets would crowd with soldiers, that planes would shriek out of the sky and ships in the Irish Sea give forth with such a cannonade that it would rattle every windowpane in town. No, it was a dull war so far; perhaps it was because it hadn't really been declared yet.

On the eighth hole he turned to his father. "When we get home," he said, "shall we sleep in the shelter now that there's a war?"

"Perhaps we shall. I don't know yet, laddie. Anyway, after we've finished the course, I think we ought to have a little talk about the war. I tell you what we'll do. Finish this hole and then we'll go over to the 'Three Bulls' and you can have a ginger beer and I'll have a Guinness and we can sit in the garden at the back and talk. How about that?"

"A pub!"

"Why not," said his father. "You're allowed to sit out in the garden even if you can't go into the taproom." And there was something new from the war if you like!

They sat at a little metal table in the garden of the 'Three Bulls', Paul with a pint of the strong milky ginger beer which got up your nose just by smelling it, and Dr. Hope with a tankard of thick black stout. "But on second thoughts," said his father, "there ought to be a toast. So if you'll swear an oath never to tell your mother, we'll shandy up that ginger with a little light beer. An oath, mind. Never to be divulged."

"All right." His father called for half a pint of mild, emptied some of it into his stout, then filled up his son's glass. "Now, a toast," he said and paused a moment. "Let us toast 'today' because we finally decided to take the plunge." Paul didn't understand the toast but he clinked glasses with his father and then took a long sniff of the manly shandy. There was not much difference in the smell, a faint whiff of the hops but the ginger still came through strong. With the first sip, he thought, I shall be drunk. Like the colliers

at home, who reeled down from the ex-serviceman's club every Saturday night singing, with their old tweed caps and a bright kerchief around their necks. He hesitated, not wishing to sing in front of his father.

But his father was looking out over the garden. "It's funny to think," said his father, still looking away, "that you'll probably remember this day, not because Germany invaded Poland but because it was when you had your first taste of beer." Paul noticed that odd dispassionate quality in his father's voice, the effort behind every syllable, the old prelude to a serious talk. "But it's probably a better reason for remembering it." And then he was silent again. Paul took his first swallow. It was bitter, bitter, bitter; he grimaced. Not at all like the rich, heady smell of the hops that came from the brewery sometimes.

His father looked down into his glass, he lifted it, he took a long draught. "Well, old man," said his father, "this is what I wanted to talk to you about." (Now the words would come, unleashed quickly) "I think this is going to be a very long war. And you see, Paul, where we live. . .is just the part that Hitler will want to bomb. That's why I built the shelter, because where we live is the part of England where we make a good portion

of the guns, and cars and ammunition that the Germans will want to put out of action. I think we're going to get bombed quite a lot and it may even turn out, if things go the wrong way, that the Germans will invade England just the way they went into Poland this morning." He took out his pipe and began to fill it from the oilskin pouch. "Now, I've talked all this over with your mother and here's what we thought. . .now don't say anything just yet; wait till I've finished. . .we thought, both your mother and I, that we'd feel a lot happier if we could send you abroad for a little while. Where, I don't know yet. Perhaps to South Africa or Australia, perhaps to America. And then, you see, your mother and I wouldn't be worried about you because we'd know that you were in safe hands and away from the bombing. It might not be for very long, you know. If things got easier, then you could come back, perhaps very quickly. The thing is, though. . .that we're not going to send you anywhere if you don't want to go. If you decide you'd rather stay, no, no, if you decide that you definitely don't want to go, then we won't make you, but then, you see, if you did go, you'd make us feel a lot happier because we'd know that you were safe and sound and coming back to us just as soon as all the danger was over. Now, what do you think about all that?"

Paul frowned, they both drank from their glasses, Paul drew his finger through a small pool of shandy that had spilt on the table.

"Daddy, isn't it sort of. . .running away? I mean going to America or somewhere and just staying till it's all over and then coming back. Isn't it sort of funking it?"

"I'm glad you asked," said his father. "It's a good kind of question. But you wouldn't be funking it. You see, this is a grown-up war; I mean if you stayed here you wouldn't be expected to do anything to win the war. You could boo the Germans and cheer for our side and so on but we grown-ups started the war and we're the ones that have to fight in it. And that means your mother and I just as much as anyone else and I think that the two of us would do a much better job when we know that you are all right. So, if you went away that would possibly be the best thing you could do towards helping the war. Do you see that?"

"Um," he said, thinking how exciting it would be going to another country. He would like to see a kangaroo, he thought, or go on a ship across oceans. And a stream of questions tumbled out then: how would he

get there, who would look after him, would there be other children going too?

"Whoa up," said his father. "You think about it for a while and let me know when we get home. Don't decide anything on the spur of the moment, never do, especially the big things."

. . . . . .

But they both knew that the decision had been made already. Paul would go. He told his father and mother so when they got back to Drysdale. However, even after war was really declared, nothing really seemed changed to him. He heard the melancholy wailing of the sirens testing, saw signs go up "Air Raid Shelter; capacity 100 persons"; he carried to school with his satchel that autumn a tin box containing his gas mask; most impressive of all, he saw the barrage balloons swim up into the sky on autumn afternoons like gentle bloated fish, their grey silk fins shimmering in the sun. And once, when one of these got loose from its moorings, he followed it on his bicycle through a labyrinth of streets to watch it settle slowly at last upon the roof of a small brick villa and with a certain aristocratic langour crush the mortar and slate beneath it. The Hopes slept out in the

garden twice for practice and once when there was a light raid but the oil lamp did not dispel the dampness half enough for Nanny's liking. She refused to go down there any longer and his father sandbagged the cellar window and moved the bunks down there instead.

There was nothing violent about the war then, nothing strong in black and red. At night the lights were dimmed; the street light was now only a dim glow through the curtains of Paul's bedroom. But as the moon waned into winter, so the lights of towns were ordered blacked out completely and the traffic lights and headlamps of cars were painted over black so that only a slit of light was showing. His father made shutters for the downstairs windows out of plywood to prevent any chink of light escaping to the street and his mother thick black curtains of felt for the second floor. Often Paul would shut the door of his bedroom, shut off the light and draw back the curtains, would look out then into the novel darkness of his street and see only the cold stars, the dim outline of the church steeple. Every person that was abroad after the blackout curfew carried with him now a small blue flashlight which he shone down on the pavement to help him on his way. Paul would watch the blue spots bob and plunge, pass each other, group and separate; sometimes he would see through the gloom

the white helmet of an air raid warden or a policeman. The voices, the talk came to him through his open window as though over the ether, with no more than a prick of blue to place them by. Perhaps the people were not there at all; he could not see them, could not reach them. Through the murk only the moving blues and the sound of occasional cars creeping along the blackened streets were proof that the town was there beyond his window. At night each family drew back into its own small conch of light and shut the blackness out. Paul, gazing off into the gloom felt it silent and lonely like living at the bottom of an aquarium.

In this way, a slow dimming into blackness, the war became more apparent to him. But it was not until the end of the winter that the raids began. One night he felt an arm shaking his shoulder. "Come along, Paul, come along now, wake up." His mother in a pink flannel housecoat; he saw the pink by the candle that she carried, saw the pink as he came heavily out of sleep. "We're going down to the cellar, laddie. Come, be quick." Then he heard the thuds in the distance, the quick pock-pock-pock of the gunfire. "That's right," she said, "put on your slippers. I've a nice cup of cocoa for you in the shelter." By the time they got down

there he was awake, wildly awake, excited by the noise, eager to know everything.

"Are they close," he asked. "Is that a German plane? Listen, Mummy, is that a Jerry?" They could not tell; it passed too quickly. Was there one or a whole squadron? Were they ours or theirs? They could not tell; the gunfire was too loud.

"At least the anti-aircraft's there," said his mother. "At least they're not having it all their own way."

"Gwen, I think I would like a cup of tea," said his grandmother from her camp bed. She drew the blankets round her.

"Are you quite warm enough, mother? If not I can give you another blanket."

"Quite warm enough, thank you. But I would like a spot of tea."

"I'll go up and get the tea pot. They don't seem to be getting any closer. William ought to be back pretty soon and he'll be wanting some as well.

Oh dear, I do hope he remembers about the tin helmet." She started towards the stairs.

"Where did Daddy go," Paul asked, "will he be back soon? When will he be back?"

"It's his turn for the fire-watching," said his mother from the stairs, "he and Mr. Peabody. But he gets off at half-past two. He ought to be back any time now. Stay under the covers, Paul. I don't want you catching cold." She disappeared up the dark well of the stairs with he candle.

"Quite cheery down here, isn't it, Paul," said his grandmother. "See what a nice job of white-washing your father did." The cellar had been done over, the walls freshly washed, the flagstone floor scrubbed so that the red squares gleamed in the warm light of the hurricane lamp. "Here we are just as snug as can be," she said, smiling across at him. "Much better than that smelly old hole in the garden." A thought came to him; he sat upright in bed.

"I say, Nanny, there ought to be some shrapnel tonight."

"What was that, dear?"

"Some shrapnel, you know, from the ack-ack. Some of the chaps at school have three or four pieces and Thomas had such a big one that Chambers swopped a bit off the fuselage of a Heinkel for it. Anyway I'll have a look round the garden in the morning."

The noise, the rolling surge of the guns and the sudden muffled explosions of the bombs went on; it came in waves from the outside darkness, now closer, now retreating into the distance the way a summer thunder storm will ricochet capriciously about a range of hills. It did not occur to him to be frightened of it, for if it was the cause of his animation, his pulsing excitement, yet as he lay in the warm light and colour of the shelter with his grandmother, it continued without injury to him and thus became merely the orchestration to his mood. It came from that remote world upstairs beyond the confines of the cellar. It would not touch him. This was a secret picnic they were all making with tea and things to eat and new hard makeshift beds to lie in.

His father was back. He heard the talk upstairs and then the sharp feet on the stone steps. Mr. Peabody too was coming down. Daddy, very war-like, looking like

a fighter in the old tin helmet from the first World War and an old soiled macintosh.

"Well now, my lad," said his father, "you'll have to look after your mother better than that, you know. Here I come back from the post and where do I find your mother? At the garden door, if you please, looking at the sky. Fire going up and fire coming down and there is your mother just as calm as you please, standing in the doorway. I don't know." He wagged his head playfully at her. She turned all girlish then as Paul had never seen her before.

"Eeee," she said, "it's rather a game, it really is. SO-O-O beautiful, so pretty, the shells and those rocket things. And you know it wasn't near at all. I was quite safe, or I would have come down." Almost she did a little dance in delight, but instead she started to make the tea.

"Sit you down, Jeff," said his father to Mr. Peabody. "Later with the tea, Gwen, later. First a little nip of something, maybe two. You know we put out four of the incendiaries tonight. Jeff with the sand and I will the stirrup. The first bad night, wouldn't you say, Jeff?"

"Ay, a real corker," said the milkman.

"It didn't sound too near," said Gwen, "once or twice, perhaps."

"The far railway bridge. That's what they were after. But the fire things were all over."

Paul sat listening, drinkkng in every word. How merry everyone was! He was warm and comfortable and happy. He loved everybody. He yawned. He did not hear the all clear. He was asleep.

. . . . . .

The raids became so frequent in the early summer that the Hopes went to bed in the cellar every night so that they would not have to get up. So used did they become to the noise that they would often sleep right through a light attack. France fell, the men came back from Dunkirk. And Dr. Hope decided on America because then the ship that Paul went on would not have to run down the English Channel, which was so dangerous now that the Germans had their batteries on the French coast. They took Paul to London for interviews and medicals and innoculations, taking care to take the early morning

train and a train back again before the evening blitz began. Paul would be allowed one large suitcase, they learned, and would have to be ready to leave at twenty-four hours notice. It was really war that summer, no cricket in the afternoons at school, and at one time no school at all for two weeks because of the daylight raids. When they went out in the country at weekends, they found now that all the sign posts had been taken down and all the main roads to Birmingham had road blocks where you had to stop and show your identification.

It seemed a long time to Paul since he had had the shandy at the 'Three Bulls'. Though all the preparations were being made, he couldn't believe that he would actually be going away. He loved the nights in the cellar when he would sometimes wake to find all sorts of people there that his father would bring back with him from the post. His father measuring out little tots, talk and quiet laughter among the men and a great warmth, his mother making sandwiches, looking after the men, bustling about in her pink flannel housecoat. Where was the danger in it? He felt perfectly safe and sound. Why did they worry about him?

But when the embarkation notice came, there was no time. The tingling thrill of a long journey,

quick packing and a night train to London which stopped three times because of raids. There was no time, when he kissed them goodbye in the lobby of some hotel. Where other children were kissing and saying goodbye, where there were many quick hot tears and families were standing in tight knots, hopeless to speak. He did not cry then, a lump but no crying. His parents said goodbye and left because they could do nothing else. But in Liverpool that night in an air raid shelter filled with the dim forms of these other children that he did not know, he wept so that his body shuddered with the chill of it. And then was ashamed for nobody else in all that shapeless multitude cried that night.

SECTION II

They were going into Boston for the theatre. Marion Richter took the stub of an eyebrow pencil from her dressing table and traced round her eyebrows the thin curve of black, thinking. This is a mask of me for the theatre. And, seeing in the mirrored top of the dressing table the confusion of scents and powder puffs, the curved and crimson-legged centipede of cigarette butts in the ashtray, orange sticks, a nail file, a torn veil hanging from the mirror, dwelt for a moment on the fact that she was thirty-five next month. With two children, she thought, and still glamourous, still a pride to my husband's arm. No dowdy faculty wife, this. And she was pulling the comb through her hair. "Franz' bride from California," Professor Bauer had said at the first faculty party after their honeymoon, and she was remembering the tall rooms, the dark browns and mahogany lustres of the faculty club. "At Stanford, uh-huh. German literature. That was how I met Franz, you see, the German Club." The senior professors open in their admiration or was it their flattery? Well, one led to the other in any case, and their younger colleagues with the gaunt intelligence of their limbs, deferential and polite. How she had carried off that evening, the exhilaration of it! The new milieu it was then. She remembered the novelty and the happiness of that first glimpse into the evenness and calm sta-

bility of these other lives. Mrs. Tennant had said then, "How very nice to meet you, my dear. We've all heard so much about you, and here at last you are with us, I hope for a very long time." Looking into Mrs. Tennant's face, the kind grey eyes, the fine, high cheek bones, the utter serenity, she had thought, "How I envy this woman. This is what I want, this peace for myself, this is what I have married into."

But that was a long time ago. Did one ever really think like that? She drew her hair back now, experimenting. Braids pinned high in a bun or perhaps bound straight and tied with a ribbon at the back? A long time ago. But how you carried your life about with you! The musk of memories, the pot-pourri of drawers long filled and seldom cleared, of a dressing table perhaps. Yes, she would wear it straight, but with a clasp, not a ribbon. And then from across the hall she could hear Hansie crying and the voices of the nurse and her elder son arguing. She listened a moment; the somehow soft Irish indignation of Elizabeth and then answering it the nasal, the determined accents of Austin. He has never lost that flat Arizona speech, she thought. He has held onto it. I am not allowed to forget it. But not another scene, my God, with Franz home any minute and the dinner and the play this evening. Her brow wrinkled, cracking

through the thin application of makeup. She got up suddenly, impatiently from the dressing table and went out to the hall.

"What is the matter, Elizabeth? Austin, you should be outside until dinner, not mooning around the house."

"I just don't know what to do with him, Mrs. Richter. Here he is knowing the little one's asleep and then he brings that Erector set down from his room and drops it right outside the gate, crash. Hansie's not going to sleep for hours. He'll be tired and upset all tomorrow, all because of this one. I don't know, I just don't know."

"Why don't you go downstairs and ask Mary to warm a bottle for him. He needn't have it all, just enough to soothe him. God knows I'll go out of my head if that child cries much longer. As for you, young sir, maybe you'd better come upstairs with me." He looked up at her sullenly.

"Can't even play around here. Who wants to go outside? Nothing to do outside." Austin aimed a careless kick at the Erector set and the red and blue

metal rods clattered across the floor. The baby yelled.

"That'll be quite enough from you," she said. She slapped his hand, she gripped him under the arm and led him upstairs to his third floor bedroom. He was crying as well now. "I'm warning you, Austin, I'm angry. There was no need for that at all. I shall have to tell your father, when he gets home. Why do you do these things? Why not behave yourself once in a while?"

"Him! He's not my father. Tell him, see if I care. Not my father." More sobbing. He kicked at the stairs. Oh, Christ, here we go again, she thought. Not tonight, please God, not tonight. Already she felt the excitement she felt for the evening out, the rare event, when her husband did not go back to the lab or shut himself up in the study, turning tired now, that animation like old makeup at the end of the evening. Always this black cropped head has the trump card, she thought. And then incongruously, what a sophisticated child this will be in two or three years. And what a mess Hansie will be, if I can't get Austin off his back pretty damn soon. I swear, all Ivan's wildness caged up in that small head.

She left Austin in his room and told him he could come out when he was ready to apologize to Elizabeth. When she came down the stairs, the house was suddenly conciliated and quiet. Hansie had been given the bottle and Elizabeth was in the hall picking up the Erector set. "No, leave that, will you, Elizabeth. I think Austin ought to pick it up, when he's thought things over."

"If you wish, Mrs. Richter." And now, she supposed, Elizabeth was out of sorts and if Elizabeth kept getting this kind of thing to cope with, they would be losing Elizabeth like the last one and the one before that and the one before that. She went back to her bedroom and lit a cigarette, sat down again at the dressing table and tried to repair the torn patches of her earlier reverie. She pulled her long, fair hair back behind her neck and fastened it with a tortoiseshell comb clasp. The blonde sheen followed a downward line from her forehead; it framed her face simply and effectively. I do not look like a Jew, she thought, but like a true Aryan maid for Herr Professor. How did these things work? If Ivan was all Jew, and she half, that made Austin three-quarters Jew. But he does not look Jewish, she thought, not yet anyway. And with a name like Austin. Hansie, on the other hand, would be only

a quarter Jew and a quarter Anglo-Saxon from his mother, half German from Franz. Yes, the Aryan won out in Hansie. And here was Jew fighting Aryan, the old story. To hell with it, that wasn't right at all. Austin was plain jealous of the new baby, another old story, and then there was the divorce and the second marriage to Franz to be reckoned with. And to think about it too much, she reflected, builds it up into a bigger issue than it really is. If only Franz didn't so obviously love Hansie more?

She heard her husband's key in the lock and took a last look at herself in the mirror. No, I won't tell him about Austin, she thought. We'll have to talk about it all evening then. I have a right to an evening out without this mess. "Is that you, Franz," she called, "I'll be down in a minute, dear."

"Okle-dokle," came from the living room. Yes, he would settle down with the paper for a few minutes. She went quickly and silently up the stairs to Austin. He was playing with his fleet of cars on the floor and as soon as he looked at her she recognized the attitude, the casual, indifferent sulk. "I want you to come down with me right now and apologize to Elizabeth," she said. "Then we'll forget everything and you can come down and eat dinner with us in the dining room." He had a toy

car in each hand and he ran them together, making a palatal crashing sound as they collided. "Do you hear me, Austin?"

"Oh, that! Sure, okay, I mean, if you really want me to." She led him down to the nursery, where Elizabeth had at last managed to get the baby to sleep.

"I'm sorry I made you mad, Elizabeth."

"Ah well, Master Austin, I'm sure it won't be happening again. All it needs is a bit more quiet by the nursery, when the baby is asleep."

"I mean it's not as though I was making a racket on purpose."

"Now, Austin." She took him out into the hall, quickly away from Elizabeth. "Upstairs, young thug, and wash and brush your hair. And for dinner. And a shirt and tie tonight, I guess."

"Aw, mother."

"Away with you, quick before Mary rings the gong." So that was that, she thought.

She went downstairs to her husband. Franz Richter by the fireplace in the den, looked up from the paper. "My dear," he said. He got up and kissed her. Why doesn't he get his hair cut, she thought, great bear. "Good news," he said.

"Oh," she said.

"Good news," he said, "I stopped off at the Anglo-American people. They granted the petition and the child will be coming in about two weeks. They're not just sure yet which one it will be because the social workers look them over for a couple of weeks before they place them in families. It's just as well. After that last boat went down, they decided to stop bringing the children over. Too risky. So this will be the last boatload." They had been standing in front of the fireplace and now moved to the sideboard and started making the drinks.

"I'm so glad, darling. You don't know how glad I am. Somebody for Austin. Will this boy be the same age? Do they know yet?"

"Well, of course they can't be sure yet which child they're going to give us, and naturally they're more

interested in the child's welfare than they are in ours. But I was talking to Miss Snow. Very queer bunch, these social workers. I came from there and immediately remembered what you had once said about feeling utterly drained away, when you have finished your psychiatric treatment. Perhaps this was more subtle but I got the distinct impression that I was being cross-examined, as though when I had left, Miss Snow would rush over to the filing cabinet and write down all I had said on a little white card. Still, the one thing that augurs well, I thought: She said at one point, I think we were talking about the problems of placement, and she said that the individual problems of the child and the problems of the family situation into which he was going were really only one problem."

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, we want a boy of eight. We want him because we feel it's rather a difficult period for Austin right now and he needs someone his own age around. That is what Miss Snow would call the problem of our family situation, if she knew about it. Now if they gave us a boy of five, he wouldn't fit in nearly as well. Thus and so. He wouldn't be as content as a boy of eight whom

we would adjust to and who would adjust to us much more easily. Hence I read into that that we'll probably get what we want."

But she had skipped past him. She had not been interested in Miss Snow; she had thought, watching him make the drinks, how exactly similar their movements over this room were every evening. One would suppose that the carpet would eventually wear in a track from the fireplace to the sideboard, from the door to the fireplace. Did they kiss each other in that same spot in front of the armchair every night? Their marriage, her children. One by each marriage; who knows what the third one will be like. What were English children? a pinched, small face, a figure in flannel shorts seen on the newsreel with a voice as delicate and brittle as a teacup, clutching at a brown satchel; a group of strange mannered infants with luggage labels, ludicrously large, tied to their coat lapels. Children of the blitzkrieg, silent children that were used to war and did not whine, old-young children, brave children, she supposed. And yet she felt them effeminate, polite, the farthest thing from Huckleberry Finn. Austin, she felt, will be more than a match for him, whoever he is.

"Are they bombed-out children that are coming over?"

"No. I think children whose parents want to get them out of the path of the invasion. Hitler can't delay much longer crossing the channel. You realize what we're taking on, don't you, darling. If the parents die, we are under obligation to adopt."

"Franz, this is what I want. We've talked this all over before. You know that all these problems with Hansie and Austin are the one thing that hasn't worked out in this marriage yet. Dr. Savage went as my sponsor; he thought it could be the solution to the whole thing."

"Yes, I think it will be all right. I have a very high opinion of Dr. Savage in spite of his being a psychiatrist." He twinkled at her.

"Franz Richter. For a scientist, you're absolutely parochial." And then they both started to laugh suddenly. It was an old joke, an old argument.

"Here, I think I can just squeeze another martini out of that decanter." Before dinner, the husband and the talk, her hour in the study before dinner. But tonight she had him the whole evening. The rich scents of the theatre lobby swirled through her mind, the red

plush below the mirrors, the furs and the tight black dresses. She sat in the stalls and watched the play unfold in its golden frame of seraphs. She would be brilliantly alive with friends in the lobby and, in the dusk of the theatre, would feel for her husband's hand across the seat.

. . . . . .

The hotel which served as the Boston reception centre for the children was on a cliff, a bold rock bluff, and the sea had washed its base with sand, had covered its foundation so that it rose sheer and black from the beach. And greedily, the sea had not then been content but had thrown these same, warm innocuous grains af the upright rock, seeking to cut it away from beneath, seeking to bring it down, to level the profile of the shoreline and blanket it with soft, damp sand. And already at this spot the sea had hollowed caves in the bluff and soon some attempt would have to be made to buttress the headland, or the hotel be abandoned.

That Saturday it was early September and an Indian summer day. The U.S. Army camp at Meridon had chosen it for a wiener roast; they were saying goodbye to the English kids and they were pleased that the

weather was good, that it was so clear and warm. It seemed some sort of tribute to them, to their open-handedness, to their esprit. Even the tides were right, for the sea was well on the ebb by eleven o'clock, leaving a broad strip of sand between it and the cliff.

The children were not allowed down on the beach that morning; the impression was to be sudden that on turning the last corner of the cliff path, they would see their party in all its magnificence laid out before them; the two great fires banked in the cave entrance, the rows of forked and whittled sticks for their wieners, the apples that had been hung with string from the cave roof to be bobbed for. Paper hats and streamers, horns to be blown and whistles to be tooted and a giant rubber sea-horse to be ridden over the bay; all these were to be theirs and all these were to be gilded with surprise.

Nor could the children look down on the preparations from the cliff top, for the edge was unsafe and a white, board fence kept them all ten feet back from the brink! Yet they gathered inevitably at the white fence that morning; soldiers, climbing the path from the beach saw a row of heads silhouetted above the fence line, as though each white paling had grown its own bulbous embellishment, a round head and two small fists for arms-

ment. The children were quiet; they talked softly among themselves, they watched the smoke from the fires trail up from the beach below; they watched the khaki figures mark out a baseball diamond, drawing deep canals in the sand with their heels; they waited for release.

Except for Lizzie, the red-headed one who seemed always to be wearing a dress with polka-dots on it; they were brown polka-dots and they swarmed up into her face and became freckles. Her name suited her. When the children were bombed in Liverpool, she had cried and shrieked and moaned and whimpered for her mother and a counselor had stayed with her throughout the night. Her pillow had not been damp in the morning, for she had not thought to cry into it. And now she cried again for im - patience, "Oh, when <u>are</u> they going to be ready? When, oh when, oh when. Why can't we go now? It's long past dinnertime." And then in sing-song she paraded before the stoic row of backs changing, "When are we going, when are we going." A row of grey flannel shorts ignored her; a row of tunics and black stockings pretended not to hear. She reached the point where the fence turned inland towards the hotel driveway and she kicked the fence, turned and strode back again. Louder she chanted, "Why don't we go-o, why don't we go-o." At last the boy, Ian, turned from the fence to look at her. He was younger than

she and smaller but there was a stocky authority about him, already a masculine grace in the way he moved, in the very turning of the dark, Iberian head.

And Lizzie stopped. She stood grinning at him, a loose, gangling, formless grin and he regarded her in silence for a moment or two. Then he said slowly, "Why don't you shut up, Lizzie? You're such a little funk." He turned back to look at the smoke, indifferent to her again. Lizzie's grin vanished; she was serious for a second, before a sudden spastic laughter came over her and she ran to him and hit him on the back, crying, "Make me, make me." And she ran away.

But then the slim young officer whose name was Ascati opened the gate. "Okay, you guys," he said, "we're rolling. Take it easy down the cliff, now. We don't want to have to carry you back before you ever get down there." He pushed through the crowd now milling around the gate, through the immediate rush of their release. "Hey there," he said, "easy on. Watch it, fella. Want to trample me to death." The mob surged by him and he walked across the lawn of the hotel and on to the terrace. Mrs. McCall was sitting in a deck chair;she was the chief counselor. As he walked across the flagstones towards her,

she raised an eyebrow in the direction of the racing, gamboling mass that was headed for the cliff path.

"Oh, they'll be fine, ma'am, don't you worry about it. I've got men stationed all along that path at ten yard intervals. Don't you worry about a thing."

"I'm sure I don't have any cause to, lieutenant," she said. "You're doing a wonderful job." The tired lines came into her face for a moment. The colour had been drawn out of her face, the hollows below the cheek bones were beginning to appear. The long weeks of worry, of almost unbearable strain showed themselves there in the sudden, forgotten quiet of the terrace. And the briskness, the competence fell away. She said, "You don't know how nice it is just to be able to lounge out here for a few hours, knowing that they're quite safe with you." He looked at her for a moment.

"Yeah, that North Atlantic run must be really something. You wouldn't get me on it. One time I shipped out to Havana; that's the only time I was on the sea and that was plenty, thank you. I don't like the sea anyway. How many times did you cross, ma'am?"

"It's been four now, but it isn't too bad once you get about five hundred miles away from the

coast. Or it hasn't been up till now; you're never quite certain how things are going to be the next time." Neither of them spoke; from the beach below they could hear the faint shouts of the children. Two soldiers, they could see, were holding a tape at the water's edge and the children were racing to the sea, leaving in their wake a broad, dotted band of footprints. "You're doing me an immense favour by taking Birney down yourself," she said to him. "I suppose it's wrong of me to separate her from the rest, but she's only four and since I know her father, I feel specially responsible."

"Sure. I'll watch out for her. She'll be okay." A small girl was saying goodbye to a woman on the porch of the hotel. "That her?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes. She's been having a chat with one of the social workers we have working at this end." She rose from her deck chair and called to the woman. "Miss Snow, how are you?" But Miss Snow waved, smiled and disappeared into the hotel. The girl came slowly down the great flagstone steps towards them; the lieutenant noticed her hair immediately. It was black and drawn tightly from her face, braided into one long pig-tail at the back. She was thin and quite tall for

her age and she held herself well, her posture was severe and disciplined. "Her father was an Olympic steeplechaser," said Mrs. McCall, as though she had also noticed the straightness of the tiny figure on the wide, flat terrace. "And Birney's quite a horse-woman too. You can see that, can't you?"

"I guess so; I wouldn't be much of a judge." Then Birney smiled at Mrs. McCall, waited to be introduced.

"Birney, this is Lieutenant Ascati. Lieutenant, Birney Passingham. The lieutenant's going to take you down to the party, dear, since you're a little bit late." Birney shook hands with him.

"How do you do," she said politely. The lieutenant said, "How do you do." Usually he had a way with children; he was ebullient, almost rough, he mock-prodded the boys on the chin, flirted pleasantly with the girls; he was cantering and easy. Now he felt himself reined in hard. He managed to say, "Well, I sure wish we had a pony for you to ride, Birney, but I guess you'll have to settle for a sea-horse today." He felt as awkward as his first dancing lesson.

She looked up at him and grinned, a great farm-boy grin. "I love parties," she said. "I think they're super."

"Well, all right," said Ascati. "We're away." And they left Mrs. McCall to her deck-chair and started off for the cliff path. Mrs. McCall watched them go across the lawn hand in hand and, though she hated to think of consequences, she could not help thinking of Colonel Passingham, the widower, the stern, proud man who had been given a girl child in place of his wife; she had watched him turn, broken, back to the predatory world, to war and the hunt. He had surrounded himself by men these last four years, his grooms, the members of his London club, his subalterns and batmen; he had fired the maids, the cook, had kept a nurse for the first two years only because the child needed one. He could not bear that one wisp of the warm, the feminine should stray across his horizons. The child was christened Birney after her grandfather, a great Tartar of a man whose portrait hung in the library, and after she was three, the colonel began to teach her to ride and the grooms became her companions. She rarely wore a dress, she was a boy.

Consequences now. A long war, a few awkward letters he would write her, on proper behaviour, on

giving thanks where it was due, on the horses perhaps. And Birney would go back to him in a gay print dress with the relaxed New England accent in her voice. Oh, it did not do to think this way. The children were safer, better-fed, better off a thousand times where they were, in America. That was the way to think of it. No more thought of condequences, please. She got up and went into the hotel for lunch; it was the first time she had eaten out of sight of the children for more than three weeks.

. . . . . .

Paul Hope rode on a sea-horse in that bay North of Boston and Ian Ashworthy pushed him off. They laughed and splashed and struggled and the rubber horse groaned as they grasped at its flanks. Then they both leaned hard on its back and it shot from them both and bobbed calmly and superciliously away on the ebb. They walked in to the beach, gathering water with cupped hands as they went, splashing each other with the skeins of spray. Paul got a mouthful of water. "Pax," he cried, "I give in." They fell on the hot sand and lay flat on their backs, the heat of the sun slowly drying the water from their bellies, from their shoulders and legs and faces, leaving only filigrees of salt upon their skin.

They licked their lips and tasted the salt and each limb now seemed to have a briny drowsiness of its own; they stretched their bodies until they could stretch no longer, they spread-eagled their arms and legs, and then at last they dug their toes into the soft sand and sprung into a sitting position. A soldier ran past them in khaki swimming trunks and swam quickly out after the horse which was floating away with the tide.

"Gosh, I forgot all about it," said Paul.

"So did I." Ian thought a bit. "Paul, do you think soldiers wear khaki everything? I mean everything, vests and pants and woollies and everything."

"Don't know. I suppose if they wanted to wear a white vest, they could and no one would know, unless they were having gym or something. Anyway, I saw one of them yesterday with a khaki watch-strap, so I think they must like it. I mean, you wouldn't <u>have</u> to wear a khaki watch-strap, if you didn't want to, would you?"

"Shouldn't think so."

Paul dug in the sand around his hips to make a comfortable hollow. "I think we're leaving tomorrow," he said. "I think the people we're going to stay with are all coming to take us away. What'll it be like, do you think? Going into somebody's house, and other children and things. I mean, I don't have any brothers and sisters, do you?"

"No." Ian turned onto his stomach. The sleepy, drowsing day, the narcosis of it left him and the old rugger feeling came back. This was a day no longer but a day-before; he recognized that feeling that he would have before a big match at school. An irregular day, when you ate tuck in your study and did not go to Hall for meals, when you seemed to spend the whole time making yourself comfortable, trying to forget tomorrow. He and the other fellows kicking a football loosely, aimlessly in the Great Field in the strange, sharp dusk between tea and vespers. Cocoa at the tuck shop afterwards, then at last (oh, the relief of it) sloughing off the unreality and talking with the others crisply, decisively about the game. Only then came the growing excitement, the drained away feeling in his arms and legs, in the pit of his stomach, the right, the proper tension that he knew he would have to have to do well in the game. He had been the captain of that team; they ate his grub

in his study those evenings and they asked him their questions. He had had to be the calm one, the strong and confident captain.

That old, forced assurance came back to him now. "But look here, Hope," he said, "it's just the same as when you stay with someone for the hols. You always get a bit fed up with each other after a while. And what happens then is that you have a high old row and bloody each other up a bit and then everything's all right again. In fact you usually like the chap lots more than you did before."

"Um. It's not quite the same though, is it? Because if you're staying with someone for the hols, I mean you thought you liked him and all that but it turns out later on that he's an absolute swine and you fight all the time, you always know that the hols are going to be over in a fortnight. You can even mark the days off on the wall and you know that after that you won't even have to talk to the chap if you don't want to."

"Well, you're not going to stay here forever."

"Just till the Jerries get licked. Oh well, I suppose that won't be long. Anyway, I'll probably

like the people. I don't get fed up very often; I usually go off into the garden and moon around for a bit and then I'm all right. There's this absolutely super hut my father built for me."

"What's the name of your people?" Ian asked.

"Richter. Mrs and Mrs. Richter. I saw her the other day; you know, in one of those interview things everybody's been having."

"Sounds German."

"No, it's American because I met her the other day and she was very tall and had an awful lot of lipstick on like they do in the films. She drives a car too."

"All Americans drive cars," said Ian. "My father told me; even if they're about fifteen, they drive." He felt the heat of the sun on his back, turned over once more and licked the scales of salt from his arm. The soldier, who had finally retrieved the sea-horse, heaved it up onto the sand and walked over to them. Ian sensed a row. Quickly he said, "I say, we are most frightfully sorry about the horse. We forgot all about it."

The man came and stood over them. "You didn't hear what the lootenant said, maybe?" he asked. "This is what the lootenant said. He said, 'There is to be no swimming until an hour after lunch is completed.' Wise guys, you had to try and get a cramp." From their position on the sand the soldier seemed huge. Indeed, since he was standing right over them, his legs apart, his hands on his hips, he seemed heavy enough, menacing enough to crush them with his little toe, to pick them up and juggle them against the sky, to sneer them right off the face of Saturday.

"We didn't really go in," said Ian. "We were just sort of paddling around."

"Up," said the man, "on the double. Back to the party. I give you three; after that I run after you. And, brother if I catch you. . ." They did not let him; they scuffled over the sand, the dry seaweed crackling under their feet. It was half a joke, a game and they laughed, each of them as they ran towards the caves. But even Ian had been frightened. The thick-set soldier, the hair on his chest matted with sea water, his great head cropped almost to the skull, his heavy, unfriendly eyes; they saw that he had stopped chasing

them now, that he was walking up towards the other side of the cliff, but they did not stop themselves until they reached the camp-fire.

"Blighter," said Ian. "After all, we were only paddling."

"Oh well." But the party was no longer the same; it was not that their crime was held up to them, not that it was even mentioned. A dark and alien American; fitfully, the shadow remained with them, maliciously it formed, dissolved, reformed. All through the party, through the baseball game, the races, the gift giving and the prize winning, Paul and Ian would look at each other.

"He was a twirp, anyway," said Ian. "Couldn't even speak properly."

"I suppose we were wrong, but why did he have to be so beastly? I mean, at least he could have been friendly at the end." They didn't see him again; he wasn't among the group of soldiers that fed them ice-cream until they bulged, that cheered them on in the races, that piggy-backed small girls across the sand. The sea-horse lay on its side with the same superior idiot smile on its face. The sun was setting, the barbecue fires

were being allowed to smolder into the sand, their charcoal beds ready for the first curling wave of the incoming tide to hiss over the embers. Someone collected the seahorse and carried him to the foot of the cliff path and the younger children started for the hotel with their new toys under their arms. Paul and Ian were round the fire with the other remaining children; the lieutenant was teaching them a song. "Get along, said he, for you give me a pain," sang the lieutenant. "Get along said he, for you give me a pain," they chorused.

"My cabin doesn't leak when it doesn't rain."

"My cabin doesn't leak when it doesn't rain." The party was over; the dusk gathered like the vapours of some sweet-smelling bubbling potion and the light was pink and black, you could not call it a single colour.

When it is light again, Paul thought, I will go away from here and there will be no Ian, no anybody and the sea will not be here any longer. He suddenly imagined that perimeter of the land with the sea and the green blot of the United States in the geography book like a large veined dock-leaf. And he was sliding down the leaf tomorrow and could look over the edge no more.

"But the old man kept on a-playing at his reel."

"But the old man kept on a-playing at his reel," sang Paul not to think of the leaf. And Ian was whispering,

"We will sneak out tomorrow before breakfast and come down here and swim."

"Yes," said Paul, "yes, we will."

. . . . . .

They sat with stiff, parchment faces from the soap, their hair neatly parted, their nails clean. They were in the drawing room of the hotel and they sat quietly as they had done when they were waiting for the party to begin. But they were severe and solemn; there was no white paling gate that would open for them today. Instead they sat dully, as if soon a short and balding man would set up his camera with its ostrich legs in front of them all, shroud himself in its black burnoose and, from the folds cry, "Please to look!" And there they would be for that one moment and thereafter never again.

Only the ladies from the committee were busy; large ladies in blue silk dresses, short ladies with the pert, sharp features of sparrows; they all moved with the same quick energy like maids dusting the parlour hurriedly before the guests arrived. Mrs. McCall stood in the foyer, the hostess, as it were. The Visitors were already arriving; they shook hands with Mrs. McCall, passed down the receiving line of ladies and through the glass doors into the smoking lounge.

Paul, from where he sat, could see that they were being served coffee. Cars scrunched along the sweep of the driveway, car doors slammed, the people chatted in the foyer and then disappeared into the other room. Paul did not see Mrs. Richter arrive, but Ian had seen his people and they had waved to him. It was funny how all the visitors would look into the drawing room before they went through for coffee and would wave nervously at their future charge, when they had picked him out. Often the children did not see and it was funny to watch the people waving and getting no wave in return, especially since they were so nervous about it.

But now Miss Snow came in and was talking to Birney Passingham, taking her by the hand then and

leading her over to the other room and the drawing room so quiet then that it seemed to treble its own size and suddenly you could hear the narrow wizened leaves of the forsythia bush chattering together outside the window.

"Plucky girl," said Ian. "Didn't bat an eye all the way over. Not like that Lizzie." A sudden rash of talking broke out in the room as if to wave away the silence.

"You know," said Paul, "I wish we were going to the same place. I mean, don't you think it would be more fun if we were?"

"I'd like it," said Ian. "As a matter of fact, I'd just as soon stay here. Great larks here, lovely. The beach is just like Paignton, that's where we go in Devon. Hard lines to sort of say goodbye to everyone at once and go off on your own."

"Yes, I know. Too bad we never got the swim this morning. Probably we'll never see the beach again. To think that it's right there under the cliff and we'll never see it again. All the exciting part's over really; because things are sort of ordinary now, school and things."

"Did you see my people," asked Ian, "Mr. and Mrs. Barratt? They're really frightfully nice, terribly jolly and gave me a penknife and everything. But rather duffers about some things. Do you know he'd never even heard of rugger. I mean, you'd have thought he'd've heard of it even if they don't play it over here. Still, I expect I'll get on. I say, do you know I think they're coming out. Yes, there they are, see them wave; you would think they'd come over instead of all that silly waving."

But Mrs. McCall came over instead, a quick swoop across the room, it seemed to Paul. They called just to say they can't take Ian today, he thought. That's why they came out so quickly. They'll pick him up tomorrow, perhaps this afternoon even. But they're too busy this morning, they haven't any time to pick him up now.

Already, though, he heard through the gauze of his own thoughts, Mrs. McCall talking to Ian; that his suitcase had been put into the car, not to forget his mac on the way out. Paul felt an intruder;;he shouldn't be listening, she was talking to Ian, not to him. For the first time since they had met, they were not both following the same directions. If you took a loop of twine and threaded a metal disk midway between the ends

of that loop, you could then twist the two strands of twine so that when you pulled the ends of the loop the disc spun fast and dazzling. You could move your hands so that the disc would dance along the string, humming and shining. But only until the strings were untwisted; after that the disc would be still, its spinning magic would leave it.

Too suddenly he heard himself saying goodbye, felt the lump rising in his throat, the quick spasm of panic. Ian was going first and leaving him here.

"Goodbye, old man," said Ian. "I expect we'll see each other soon. After all, we're both in Boston, can't be so very far away."

"Goodbye," said Paul.

One by one the children were being sorted out now and shepherded across the room to their foster parents. Paul didn't see Mrs. Richter. She was not coming, he thought; they would send him back to England. Could they send him back? No. She would come and take him away with her to Boston. No one spoke; there was the feeling of imminent departure, the still disconnection of the drawing room from the bustle and clatter that was going on in the foyer.

He was one of the last to leave. Mrs. Richter came into the room, her heels echoing on the parquet. "I didn't know it was so late," she said. "We'll have to run to make it home for lunch. Austin's so excited about your coming. He was all set to stay home instead of going to his grandmother's for the day, but I thought maybe you'd sort of like to get settled in before you two met." She put her hand on his shoulder and he saw the long, lacquered nails and drew back from her. Then with some strange instinct, he tried to turn this withdrawal into a movement, so that he turned to face her.

"Thank you very much," he said. They walked briskly and silently out to the car and he noticed that his bag was already in the back seat. This frightened him, the sudden appearance of his own suitcase in someone else's car. And then as he was getting into the car he remembered his raincoat. "My mac," he cried, and ran from her into the hotel. Mrs. McCall met him in the foyer, carrying his coat.

"Nearly forgot it, didn't you. I was just coming out." She slipped on the coat for him and he fumbled for the armholes to grasp a few more seconds before he would have to return to the car. "Goodbye, Paul," said Mrs. McCall. "I'll come and see you when I

get back from England next time. I know you're going to do perfectly splendidly and we'll have a long talk when I get back. All right?" He nodded, he believed her. She really would come. She bent over and kissed him on the forehead. "Hurry on, now," she said. "Mrs. Richter is waiting."

. . . . . .

"Push in the lighter for me, would you, Paul," she said. They were driving along a very broad road to Boston. He, looking at the speedometer, found they were going sixty miles an hour but the car was so big and the road so smooth that he could not feel the speed coursing through him as he had done in the other big car that had belonged to Andy's mother. Mrs. Richter reminded him of Andy's mother because she was going to smoke, because she drove a big car, and because she asked him to push in the lighter for her. He blushed; the dash board was covered with knobs. "The top one on the right," she said, and he pushed it in. But he blushed also because he had not seen many women smoke; Mrs. McTurk and once an older cousin who had come to tea. It seemed repulsive to him to see the smoke coming from their mouths, that such a masculine thing as tobacco should ever mingle with the perfume and softness of women. And he felt in his revul-

sion, in the sweet pastel aroma of the cigarette, that Mrs. Richter lived in a different world than his had been, a world where there was not such an absolute sense of man and woman. His father had always done certain things; he had driven the car, he had smoked a pipe, he had taken the dog out, he had earned the money. And his mother poured tea, arranged the flowers in their vases and played the piano sometimes on Sunday evenings. His mother's grace was that she was there always, you were aware of it if you were sick or suddenly lonely but she did not have to do things like smoke or wear the full red lips that Mrs. Richter had on.

However, he did not know whether Mrs. Richter was wrong to smoke; it was simply that it made him uneasy and the smell of the cigarette bothered him, that he would be living in the same house with this woman and that he could not try to understand her in the same way as he understood certain qualities in his mother.

The highway was very straight. Mrs. Richter said little to him and he gazed out at the amazing succession of billboards that lined the highway, their huge white wooden frames and their gay colours. He saw a lighted ice-cream cone that flashed on and off and a soft drink stand shaped like an orange, an endless chain of

stores, restaurants and garages that followed the road and seemed to exist just because it was there. And the flat brown countryside was behind them, sometimes a field of stubble, sometimes a lot full of old and rusting trucks. It was unlike anything he had ever seen; there seemed to be no hills and no towns for where there was a cluster of houses there would be no walls between them, no hedges. Front lawns melted into one another. You did not suddenly turn a bend and come upon a town but the houses and buildings clung to the edges of this great rushing roadway and behind that built-up ribbon there was nothing but the flat plain.

"Not far to go now," said Mrs. Richter. "There's Boston ahead of us." He looked forward at the dark mass of the city but by now he was numb with new things and with his fears that were so various. Almost sleepily he said to her,

"I'm awfully hungry." She glanced over at him and smiled.

"You know something, so am I. You just hold your horses. We'll be home soon."

. . . . . .

The Richters had a large brick house in Cambridge. It was a pleasant house and seemed a very tall one for there were nine windows in the front of the house, four on the ground floor, four on the second and one window under the eaves of the roof. Each window, Paul noticed, had green shutters on each side of it and he wondered if these were closed when there was a storm. The house was set well apart from the houses on either side of it but for all that it didn't have much of a garden. A rather bare and browning lawn, two flower beds on either side of the front door, and a small ornamental tree, and again he noticed the absence of hedges and walls. The Richters' lawn was separated from the next lawn only by the driveway which ran between them. There was a car parked in the driveway and they turned in and parked behind it. "Well, Paul," she said, "Here it is and that's my mother's car so it looks as though you're going to meet everybody at once. If Austin hasn't eaten yet, you and he can have lunch in the nook and get to know each other right away. How about that?"

"Yes," he said. "All right, Mrs. Richter." But he wondered, even while he was steeling himself for the coming meeting, where Mrs. Richter was going to eat. Was it possible that the children ate in a different place from the grown-ups, as he had done when he was

small and had eaten dinner with his four-year-old cousin in the nursery?

"We must agree on what you're going to call me and Mr.Richter," she said. "After all this is your home now, at least for a little while, and it would be kind of strange if you went on calling us Mr. and Mrs. Richter."

"But I can't call you Mummy and Daddy," he said quickly, "because that isn't true." He, looking up at her, was surprised to see how her smile had vanished and her eyes became somehow intensely grey and then the smile was back again so quickly that he was not sure.

"Well, we'd like to have you think of us at least as distant relatives," she said. (The smile was full again, showing the great white even teeth.) "Why don't we make a start right now and you shall call me Aunt Marion and Mr. Richter shall be Uncle Franz. How's that?"

"All right," he said, wishing that she would not always say "how's that" because it meant that he had to say something.

"All right what?" she coaxed.

"All right, Aunt Marion."

"That's better. Now, out you get quick like a bunny and we'll go and scare up something to eat."

But first, he knew, were all the people in the house that he would have to meet. And there was the first of them coming out of the side door, wearing a cap and a long black coat.

"Oh, Harold," said Mrs. Richter, "I didn't want to leave the car in the street, but I guess you'll have to back it out before you can get away."

"That's okay, Mrs. Richter. I'll change them around right now. Mrs. Daniels said she'd just stay to see the boy and then go back into town." Allthhe time the man seemed to be looking at him. There all of them were inside waiting to look at him. He felt the same way he had once felt at school when he had lobbed a cricket ball through somebody's window and then had to go and apologize.

But then the man said, "Hi there, son," and winked at him and Paul, in the first pleasure of the day said, "Hello," and grinned and blushed and turned away to polish the chromium door handle of the car with his sleeve. So it would not be too bad, just think in ten minutes it would all be over and he would hate met everyone and they would never have to look at him again in the way that they would look because he was new and they had never seen him before. Mrs. Richter took him by the hand this time and led him up to the front door. But before she could find her keys, the other boy opened the door. "Eeeeooow," said the other boy. "I've got you in my sights, mother, and I'm gonna blow you out of the sky." He held a small silver plane in his hand which he swooped and looped and at last banked into the arm of his mother's coat. "Poooorch," he said. "Mother, you've just gone up in flames. Bail out, bail out quick before you go into a spin."

She ruffled his hair. "I'll bail you out," she said. "Come on in, Paul. Austin, this is Paul. You'll have to ask him all about English planes. Did you eat yet?"

"No, Grandma brought me home to eat with Paul," said Austin. "Hi, Paul. Come upstairs and get a plane and we can have a dogfight in the bedroom. You're gonna

sleep in my room, did you know, and Harold just showed me how to make a telephone out of two cans and some string and some wax so maybe we can make it after lunch if you want to and then even in the middle of the night we can pick up the telephone, zooop, and talk to each other and nobody can hear except the two of us."

"Calm down, Austin, for goodness sakes. You don't let Paul get a word in edgeways," said Mrs. Richter. "Be a good boy and go and ask Harold if he would mind bringing in Paul's bag. And don't be fresh about it," she finished. But he was already out the door and across the lawn. "If he gets fresh with you," she said to Paul, "you just snap right back at him."

"All that way to come with only one bag," said a grey-haired woman as she came into the hall.

"Nobody had more than one," said Paul, "because we weren't allowed it." A small kindly lady with tightly curled grey hair and dark grey crescents of fatigue beneath her eyes.

"You know, I was in England once," she said, "although it was a long time ago and there were still carriages in the streets of London. That was where I

first had afternoon tea. And, do you know, I still have it every day. That nice Spode china and I sit in my apartment and have it all on a tray, good English tea and a few cakes." She had put her hand on his shoulder and led him into the living room. "You must come over one afternoon and take tea with me," she said. "Just you and I and we'll talk about England. I'm quite an old lady and like to have young men calling in the afternoon."

"Mother --" said Mrs. Richter. "He hasn't even taken his coat off and already you have him in the living room. The closet's in the hall, Paul, just on the right of the mirror." He found out by looking what a closet was and he hung up his macintosh. In the closet was a smell of mothballs, a great number of coats, galoshes and hatboxes. He looked into the darkness of it for a moment and then he looked at himself in the full-length mirror on the closet door. He would have liked to shut the closet door on himself just then and remained, if only for a few moments in the friendly smelling darkness.

"You know something," said Austin coming in from outside, "there <u>is</u> a light," and he pressed a button and a light went on in the closet. This was an amazing

house where all the light switches were little buttons that had the sheen of mother of pearl and there were lights in small rooms built specially for hanging your coats in.

"You don't say very much, do you?" asked Austin. Paul looked at him. He had big teeth like his mother, a round head cropped almost to the skull, short stocky arms. He grinned now.

"I don't know you very well yet," said Paul. "I just met you a few minutes ago." Then as they went together into the living room, a tall, gaunt woman pushed open a swing door and said that the boys' lunch was ready.

"Aw mother," said Austin, "do we have to eat right now? I want to show Paul the Erector set. I'm not hungry, why do we have to eat so soon?"

"You can show him later on," she said. "Right now the food's on the table. Besides, Paul hasn't eaten for a long time. He told me he was hungry, right, Paul?" Yes, he was hungry. But even if he hadn't been, he felt that he would have said yes for he was the guest and it was impolite to refuse food. And yet he sensed the other side of this conflict; that he was being asked to support

Mrs. Richter against Austin. Not to do so would be wrong, impolite again, and then to do so with any strength was being pretty much of a sneak to Austin. The old code of the playground was that if a master was coming somebody always yelled "cave" and if that master asked who had been fighting, nobody knew anything about a fight. Everything's all right, sir. Percer just fell off the horse. You stuck with your kind, though, and Austin would just have to be his kind and not Mrs. Richter, certainly.

"Hamburgers again," said Austin. "I suppose you <u>like</u> hamburgers.

"I haven't had one before," said Paul. "We don't have them at home."

"Well, you sure are lucky. We have them all the time. I just throw ketchup on them so I can't taste them. Mary," he shouted then, "no Hershey's."

She looked in from the kitchen. "And you won't be getting any from me, until you ask for it better than that."

"Please, Mary, may I have the Hershey's chocolate syrup." He mimicked politeness. She sighed and went to get the can out of the cupboard.

In the living room Mrs. Richter and her mother were saying goodbye, and the old lady poked her head round the swing door and said goodbye to Austin and Paul. "And you must come over to see me soon," she said to Paul, "and we'll have a talk." Paul heard the two women go to the door and then Mrs. Richter went upstairs. The nook was quiet; the sun streamed in on the long green table, on the green benches with the high straight backs, on the silence of the two boys sitting eating opposite one another. Paul carefully thought out a question before he broke the silence.

"Doesn't Aunt Marion eat here?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"Aunt Marion, doesn't she eat in the nook?"

"She isn't your aunt."

"No, but she said since I'd be staying here for quite a while that that'd be the friendliest thing to call her. She said so in the car today. Besides don't you have people you call aunts that aren't really aunts at all?"

"Yeah. . .I guess." Austin furrowed his brow, he stirred his milk violently with a long spoon so that

the chocolate came thick and rich to the surface. "Everybody eats breakfast here," he said finally. "But mother doesn't get up for breakfast and she eats dinner with my father in the dining room. I eat here most always and I guess you, I wouldn't know." He drank down his milk in long gulps, and stood up. "C'mon let's go. You don't want any more of that stuff, do you?"

"No," said Paul quickly and agreeably. He had only just started the second hamburger but he swigged down the rest of his milk and got out from behind the table. However, Mary came through with a vase of flowers for the living room.

"You can both sit down again," she said, "and get up when you're finished. I'm not going to have all that good food just thrown away into the garbage."

"For gosh sakes," said Austin, "Hamburger." But he sat down. And Paul, glad of the chance to finish, bit into the toasted butter goodness of his second bun.

"Your son," they heard Mary complaining to Mrs. Richter who had come into the kitchen, "is as finicky as a fine lady."

"His grandmother probably gave him candy," she answered. "Austin, I'm going over to pick up your father at the lab. It's much too good a Sunday to be working. And I want you boys outside at least part of the afternoon, do y@u understand?"

"Awright," he said. "We'll play some football." But they went upstairs first and Paul found that though it was a large house, larger even than his own, there were so many parts that you weren't allowed in. You weren't supposed to go into the den downstairs except once in the evening to say hello to Mr. Richter. Nor were you allowed in the nursery where the baby was; in fact there was a gate across the doorway to stop you; nor in Mr. Richter's dressing room; nor in their bedroom. He and Austin had the attic room to themselves for a playroom and for sleeping. There was a bathroom next door to it and nothing else on the third floor except storage space. There were brightly coloured Indian blankets on their beds, long book-cases around the walls, toys all over the floor. Paul felt very keenly that none of these things were his and wanted to unpack right away. But there was the Erector set to play with and then football and then Sunday dinner, the two of them again in the nook, for Mrs. Richter had phoned to say they would not be in for dinner until later on.

. . . . . .q. . . . . .

Paul had met the nurse, Elizabeth, and she had unpacked for him and he had by his bedside now, the small blue leather writing case that his parents had given him before he left, together with the large raw chunk of shrapnel that had once fallen in the garden at home. But he had still not met Mr. Richter and only when he had would he know that this long day would end somehow and he would be alone in sleep. Austin was prancing over the beds. "You're not supposed to just lie there," he said to Paul. "You're supposed to be in ambush." Oh, shut up, Paul thought. Just shut up and be quiet. He turned his head away from Austin to look out of the window but there was nothing but darkness there, no street light, no moon, just the occasional purr of cars turning the bend in the road and the screech of a tree's branches against the glass of the window pane. A lump of longing for home came to his throat. He watched the curtains swim in the tears that had come to his eyes and he hurried into the bathroom so that Austin should not notice. He locked the door, he ran the water in the sink and he buried his head in the thick canvas shower curtain and sobbed. Then, when he was through, finding that the tears had brought only a flush to his face and a tightness across his forehead, he dunked his head under the running tap and felt

the cold rush over the soreness of his face until it was numb. The outburst was over; he looked at himself in the mirror and saw that the eyes were only a little red. No one would notice.

"Hey, Paul. I want to brush my teeth. What are you doing in there, taking a bath?"

"No," he said, suddenly angry. "I'm sitting on the toilet. You'll have to wait."

"Well, hurry up. I got to go to the bathroom."

"Go downstairs, why don't you. There are plenty of bathrooms downstairs."

"Hey, Elizabeth. Paul won't get out of the bathroom. He's been in there for hours and he won't come out. Elizabeth. Come up and tell him he's gotta get out of there." A sound of grumbling from below and then slowly Elizabeth, who was a big woman, lumbered up the stairs. Paul decided he had better come out and opened the door.

"As if I hadn't got enough to do at this hour of the night," began Elizabeth, but then she noticed the red eyes. She and Paul looked at each other for a

moment before he knew that she wasn't going to say anything in front of Austin.

"You make it snappy and do what you have to do, Master Austin," she said. "Your parents just came back and they're waiting to say good night to you and Paul." After Austin came out they went down with Elizabeth to the den. Paul shook hands with Mr. Richter, who was a tall man with thick, horn-rimmed glasses, very young looking really, he thought. Mrs. Richter seemed much older to him. Mr. Richter had a German sounding accent and was apt to tease, Paul found. He pinched Austin's cheek and feinted at him with a fist and when Austin went in to the attack he cried,

"Enough, A. T., I concede, I concede." He hoped that Paul would like living with them and said that he would see him most evenings and sometimes in the mornings if Paul got up early enough. And this last was a joke which everyone laughed at, though Paul couldn't see why it was so funny. Paul called him "sir" and this delighted him especially. He called it true courtesy and wished that American children were so polite. Indeed, he made such a fuss about it that Paul thought he would not call him sir again, and he noticed that Mrs. Richter was not pleased, that she turned away from them silently and went over to

the sideboard to pour herself a drink. But for all the strangeness of the man, Paul liked him. He liked the tallness, the austerity of the short hair and the thick glasses; then the sudden dissolution of this stern appearance with a ready boyish smile and a stumbling grown-up attempt at play. But he was glad when at last the two of them were sent off to bed. As Elizabeth tucked him in she said that he would not be starting school until Tuesday.

"But mind you are up for breakfast with Master Austin," she said, "for Mary won't want to cook two separate breakfasts. There now, are you comfy?"

"Yes," he said.

"Good night, honey," she said and leaned over and kissed him on the forehead.

"Good night," he said, loving her clean smell of starched linen, her gentleness.

. . . . . .

He awoke in the morning because of a pillow thrown at his head and had to remember quickly where he

was and then throw the pillow back. They fought all over the room and onto the landing and over the beds. The mattresses sang in their springs; thwack went the pillows, heavy and soft and blinding, the Erector set windmill went crashing to the floor, they rocked and raged, tussled and smote and at last fell panting back onto their beds.

"Boy, you woke up pretty fast," said Austin.

"You didn't think I was just going to lie there," he said, panting for breath. "You didn't think I was just going to lie there and take it." Yes, he was awake now, the blood racing in his limbs and it was the first morning in this place. The sun shone in through the window, brilliant sunlight, crisp and defined and there were branches of reddened maple leaves outside the window. Soon, he remembered, Austin would be going to school and he would be alone to do what he liked. This rag with the pillows now, it wasn't really a rag at all, but Austin. A rag started either when there were a lot of you or, if there were only two, when both of you had fooled around long enough for the rag to break out. This one-sided business sort of forced it on you whether you wanted to rag or not and yet he supposed it was a rag, that is for fun, and not a scrap.

Oh, well, he didn't care. For it was a good day, he had slept and furthermore he had shown Austin. Not that he had won, because nobody won a rag, but he had more than held his own.

"Go ahead and have the bathroom," he said. "You've got to go to school."

"Lucky bum," said Austin, getting up from the bed. As he went towards the door he hurled a pillow.

"Missed," said Paul.

"Next time!"

And so to breakfast and then to being alone. Having won his solitude, he found that he did not know what to do with it. For one thing, Elizabeth told him at breakfast that Mrs. Richter was to take him shopping at eleven so he could not wander far from the house. He went outside onto the front lawn and watched two small girls roller-skating down the hill at the end of the block wishing he could go down the hill and see what lay beyond, for he had for the first time the sense of being free and by himself in America.

Everything seemed fast at the Richters. If you were not eating, then you were playing hard and intensely, or sleeping, fighting or washing your face. Austin was an American boy. Were all American boys like Austin? Should he, Paul, become an American boy because he was here and among them? He tried to imitate the way Austin spoke. "Yayah," he said to himself. "Ya," he said, getting it better, "I know it," he said, "Sure," he said out loud. But the laundry man who was carrying a large white bundle from the next house did not even stop and look at him. He turned from the lawn, went up the gravel driveway and in the kitchen door. Mary was ironing. A huge basket of whites stood on the kitchen floor and the red-faced Mary bent over the ironing board, sprinkled water on a shirt from a glass jar with holes in the lid. As she applied the iron, a great cloud of sweet steam, smelling of the linen rose to the ceiling and as she finished the shirt she folded it quickly and expertly and added it to the growing pile that was waiting for Elizabeth to take upstairs. At home he had never been allowed to stay in the kitchen much for Jennie had been very firm. She did not like children under her feet and that was all there was to it, she had said. At home the kitchen was Jennie's and his mother's, mostly Jennie's. Here anyone belonged in it. Mary got him a tall glass of milk and some cookies and sat him down at the table.

"Well, I suppose we must thank the good Lord that there's only one washday a week," she said, putting the next shirt in position, "for we'd never see anything but the heat and the steam of life."

"Do you always have this much?" he asked, eager for a talk. "It seems an awful lot."

"And more," she said. "Elizabeth and me, we get through it. She comes down to help me when Mrs. R. isn't around. She's not supposed to, see. Her job's with the baby, says Mrs. R. You should be in the nursery, Elizabeth, she says, in case Hansie should cry. If you should want anything just ring down to Mary. Now, can you see it? Two Irish, one waiting on the other hand and foot. Elizabeth likes her cup of coffee in the morning, so she comes down and gets it, see? Her ladyship ain't up yet anyway. And we talk, pass the time of day, maybe listen to the soap opera and then, if it should be wash day, she irons me the sheets. I mean, I'd do the same for her. I do diapers, she does sheets. Fair, fair."

"Um," he said. "Do you think I could have another. . .cookie?"

"In the jar," said Mary, surprised. "Up to eleven you grab, after eleven uh-uh. You spoil your lunch."

"Thank you very much."

"Listen, kiddo, a word of advice," she said, leaning confidentially across the ironing board. "In this household you grab, see? All right, you can be polite afterwards, you got your cookie. If there was only one cookie in that jar and you wanted it and Knickers wanted it, do you know who'd get it, I'll bet? Austin Theodore Richter, Teddy Bear himself. And do you know why? Because you'd be still sitting around wondering whether his feelings'd be hurt if you took the last one. You wanna live? It's the law of the jungle in this household, I'm telling you." A buzzer sounded and a light went on over the door. "That'll be Mrs. R.," she said, "wanting her orange juice and coffee." She went to the ice-box and took out the glass, she poured coffee into a large cup, put both glass and cup on a small tray and started for the door. The buzzer went again. "Awright, I'm coming," she said. "You remember what I said, Paul," she said, turning to him, "and don't go blabbing to Austin about it. That kid knows more than's good for him most of the time!"

When she was halfway up the stairs, the buzzer went a third time. "All right," he said to the light above the door, "she's coming."

. . . . . .

Mrs. Richter bought him new clothes to go to school in and his new grey flannel suit was put away in the closet. She explained to him that shorts were too cold for autumn in America and that grey flannel was too hot once you got inside the house. He was not surprised; a new school always seemed to mean new clothes and though he noticed that there was no school uniform at this latest school, he also saw that nobody wore shorts, but only knickerbockers and long trousers. So he did not mind the change. One had, after all, to fit into school. It didn't do to go around looking different. But he looked so different in these clothes and with his hair cut short like Austin's that he began to wonder if they were trying to shape him into something else, somebody American that he was not. Then he would be part of the Richters, another Richter and when he left them to go home again, he would be nothing at all.

Each new letter from home, the small blue envelope with the dramatic seal of censorship upon it, would impress him with the fear that he was, in some imperceptible fashion, growing away from his parents. He wrote long letters back, trying to explain to them every new thing that he was doing, things which they had never

come across like twenty-seven different kinds of ice-cream, like going to school in a wooden building, like American bicycles with their heavy, brightly painted frames and their enormous tires. For it bothered him considerably that they should not understand all that was happening to him and that their advice, whether it was about helping all he could around the house or wearing his long woollies, seemed often so tentative and unsure. However, he did not tell them how he had come to hate the evenings or how glad he was that Austin and he were not going to the same school.

The Robert Branch School which he attended was a white frame building a few hundred yards from the Charles River. It was only ten minutes' walk from the house, down the hill and across a long field that had been turned into a football ground for one of the local high schools. On his first day Mrs. Richter had driven him there and had left him with his new room teacher. "I guess there'll be quite a difference in curricula," she said, smiling at the man, "and, of course, Paul's missed quite a lot of school what with the air raids and evacuations and things."

"Air raids don't stop you from going to school," Paul said, resenting her talking about them, "because they're usually at night and if you get one in school, you just go down to the shelter for a bit."

"I know, dear," she said, "but think of the time you've lost travelling."

"You said air raids." She smiled at him and turned to the teacher.

"I'd be very glad if you could help him along where he's behind," she said. "It's a big readjustment to make."

"Sure," said Mr. Augustine, "he'll do very well, I'm certain of it."

Paul assured himself, at this point, that he would do better than Austin. He likedMMr. Augustine and he liked the school from the beginning; the informality of both astonished him, the low, white building and the haphazard way it occupied one corner of the long field as though it had sprung up like a mushroom in the night, the chair desks with their wide arms for writing that could be moved around the classroom and were not screwed to the floor like the desks at home. And the small classes in which Mr. Augustine called everybody by his first name. But more than anything else he was fascinated by the number of lessons which seemed nothing more than a game. For Ancient History they built a relief map of Rome, for English

there were quizzes and spelling bees, there were three periods a week in the carpentry shop and in class you used many different kinds of crayon. He found it easy, with, pleasant work but he also developed a kind of contempt for it. If you stuck up your hand too often at home, you got a reputation for being a swot and sometimes had it taken out of you at recess. Here everyone seemed eager to answer but the questions were so easy most of the time. However, he put his hand up often now, and always had the right answer before he did so. It was a fine feeling to come near to the top of the class at the end of the first month, because they set more store by it here and there was a "ladder of achievement" to the right of the blackboard. He put himself, after that first month, in overt competition with a nimble, sandy-haired boy named Jimmy Warlock, who had led the class for the term so far. Whenever Jimmy's hand went up, so did Paul's, and if occasionally he caught himself and wondered in the old terms if he wasn't being something of a swot, the desire to top, to show them, to show Austin, to show Mrs. Richter pushed everything else into the background.

Except games. These he must play, although they were not compulsory, for if he did not, then he would have to go home every afternoon at three. He began to play soccer, which he had played at Budleigh, rather than this

strange American Football which required a helmet and shoulder pads and a sweat shirt. He did not want to ask the Richters for these things, did not want to ask them for anything. And he was good at soccer; soon he was playing centre forward.

The afternoons were, perhaps, the best times for him. He was the best dribbler on the team, he soon realized. Americans weren't taught to dribble the ball, but to kick it. They kicked wildly, forcefully forward and sometimes the two teams would engage in long range kicking battles which would last for ten minutes. But they didn't know how to dribble the ball and they didn't know how to stop him either. He could go right up the field quite often, dribbling past player after player, juggling the ball deftly and exasperatingly between his feet, recognizing no opposition as worthy of him. He was well liked as a player, too, for he was always careful to pass the ball along the forward line to his teammates when it seemed advantageous to do so. Still, it was he who had the control; they would pass the ball back to him for the final attack on the goal-posts.

Autumn was different in America and did not bring the dour grey rain to mat the leaves in the gutters into a sodden pulp or, as it did in England, to bring in

so slowly and so inexorably the damp chills of the long winter, the stony purples of the early winter sky. The afternoons were crisp on the playing fields, the ground became firm, harder and gradually harder beneath your feet. Rain there was and wind, but these came together and with such violence that the leaves fell quickly from the trees. Then the dry cold came back again with bright sunshine and there were frosts of white ermine along the banks of the Charles, a vigour and tang to the air and the gruff and thunderous shouts of the football crowds from Harvard Stadium.

Paul loved the open area of country on the edge of the town. His playing field was at one end and the neat curve of the red-brick Harvard dormitories at the other. He could hear remotely along Mt. Auburn Street the rattle of the tram-cars and he could see along its edge the black outlines of the trees that marked the limits of Cambridge. And through the middle of this great flat oval ran the Charles, winding its way to Boston. The afternoons grew shorter and shorter as the autumn ran on and soccer would end, not at five o'clock, but when the shadows were too heavy to play any longer. The ice rink had been built and in the evenings now was a blazing square of light at the end of the field. It was good to be drowsy, aching with hard play at the end

of these afternoons and to amble with team-mates over to the shower and to feel the pinpoints of hot water pouring over his back and draining away the fatique. He made three friends because of soccer; Gerry and Georgie, the Barnhart twins, and Alfie Nichol. Still, he always walked across the field and up the hill by himself for they all went along Memorial Drive towards the town.

. . . . . .

Never would he write to his parents how much he dreaded the evenings, how he dragged out the paces across the deserted playing fields and up the smooth asphalt road to the top of the hill. For the first time he and Austin had had a real scrap, he had lost badly and Austin, following up the advantage, had bruised his cheek-bones, cut his lip and blackened one eye and had not known when the fight was over, as though there was no winning point, as though he should just pound and pound. They did not shake hands afterwards, until Mrs. Richter ordered them to, and this was after Elizabeth had broken up the fight and had taken them both down before her.

"All right, who started it and why?" she asked in an infinitely patient, infinitely tired way. Silence. They both looked sullenly at her as she sat on the satin

covered stool of her dressing table. "Did you start it, Paul?"

"No," he said.

"Well, A. T., how about you?"

"Uh-uh."

"Well, somebody's going to tell me what happened, if I have to keep you standing here till dinner," she said. She reached for a package of cigarettes, lit one, and sat appraising them through the smoke.

"I got sick of the way he talks," said Austin. "He's such a sissy, the way he talks. So I said that he should say 'were'. He says 'where' like 'where are you'. He said 'Wheren't we going to play football' so I said that was the wrong way to say it. He said it was the right way. We never say it that way, do we mother?"

"That has nothing to do with it, Austin," she said. "Do you mean to say you two boobies messed each other up over that? That's a disgrace, I'm ashamed of both of you. Now come on and shake hands." They did so, hardly looking at each other as they crossed the carpet.

"Okay, have done," she said. "Paul, you'd better go down and have Mary put some beef steak on that eye. Do you want to say anything in addition to what Austin said?"

"Yes," he said, some quick darting sense of injustice making him defiant, "I don't see why I shouldn't say 'where' if I want to. I've always said it that way. It doesn't hurt anyone, if I say it that way, does it?"

"Paul," she said with a gesture of impatience and a sigh, "it doesn't matter about that. It's totally beside the point. It was a silly thing to fight about in the first place. If you want to say 'where' instead of 'were', which is the way Americans say it, you're perfectly entitled to. But it looks as though you're gonna have to defend it. Everybody has to fight their own battles, you know. I can't say you were right and tell Austin not to argue with you about it. Any more than I can say Austin was right to give you a black eye, which he wasn't. Now go and get that eye fixed quick. You look as though a bull kicked you."

As he went down the stairs, he heard Mrs. Richter and Austin, arguing softly in the bedroom. "You have to understand," he heard her say, "that Paul's not always

used to our ways, and make allowances for it, darling."

"But mother. . ." Paul went down the stairs heavily, examining the swelling round his eye with his finger and remembering what Ian had said to him only a few weeks before. "You have a high old row, and bloody each other up a bit, and then everything's all right again." Only Ian had been wrong that time. This today hadn't cleared the air at all.

It was a season of fights; they fought more and more frequently as the year ran out towards Christmas and Austin proved himself more of a fighter than Paul. For Paul, each new defeat made the next more imminent, more desperate and his fibre of resistance had worn quite away. He accepted the fact that he would lose, he wondered if he were anything of a coward. He did not know, and yet he found it hard to believe that he was nearly such a weakling as Austin said he was and as Mrs. Richter seemed to hint. For one thing there was the puzzling difference between his sudden soaring popularity at school, and the poor esteem in which he was held by Austin and Mrs. Richter. For another thing it began to be apparent to him that Mrs. Richter and Austin were the only ones who bore him any ill. Elizabeth and Mary, he thought, much preferred him to Austin, and Mr. Richter, though he was so

seldom about the house, had shown nothing but kindness towards him.

And so some thought came to him of the apartness of all these people, of the distinct separateness of the rooms in this house so that before one passed from the hall into the kitchen, there was a boundary to be crossed, a stop to be made on the threshold so that one could shake off the sense, however vague, of other rooms. This dark November afternoon, with Mrs. Richter and Austin in New Hampshire, skiing, he had the house to himself. Only Elizabeth and the baby remained; Mary off for the afternoon, Mr. Richter not yet back from the laboratory. And having decided this day to pack and send off the Christmas presents for his parents, the ones he had secretly saved for and secretly bought, he got thick brown wrapping paper, heavy twine from the cupboard in the den and carried them up to the third floor. From his cache above the linen cupboard he brought forth the small bunch of bright felt flowers and the pipe cleaners in their cylindrical metal case, looked them over, fondled them with pride. It was well past the mailing date for parcels to England; this did not matter, they would get there, he knew; perhaps the presents that the Richters had sent home for him would get sunk on the way, the silk scarf and the round distorting shaving mirror. But these

secret presents of his own choise were the important ones; he had cherished the secret for a long time, often had risked discovery to look at them again and again.

And now he would pack them. Except that it was beginning to snow; he ran to open the window, leaned as far out as he dared, twisted his head to catch inehis mouth the tiny flakes that drifted out of the grey sky. And now, when his ears were cold and he had tired of the taste of snow, he would pack the presents. He put them back in the cardboard box, he wrapped them carefully in their tissue paper. What a smell there was in the room! A resinous smell, of wax perhaps, yet not so heavy as when Mary did the floors. Oh yes, Austin waxing skis this morning. And there was the thick tube of black, tacky wax upon the bureau. He went over and got it, sat down on the floor and picked at the wax with his nail. He drew the tube across the leg of a chair and was fascinated to find that it left a black mark. He licked his finger then and rubbed it off. But the presents, the presents. Slowly he unfoldad the rough brown paper; when the whole sheet was unfolded, he lay the cardboard box on top of it and began to try and wrap the parcel. Except that the light was too bad, he could not even find the string. Instead of turning on the light, he picked up the box and the paper, groped for the string and carried the whole

thing downstairs. He could have gone into the living room to work at it but the old taboo prevented him; Mr. Richter was not home yet. He looked into the dining room, but there the glossy sheen of the dining table, the formal positions of the furniture, the museum stillness, turned him once more away. At last he stepped over the threshold into the kitchen.

"Well here you are," said Elizabeth. "Haven't heard a word out of you all afternoon."

"I've been packing a Christmas parcel for Mummy and Daddy. Well, I haven't actually packed it yet."

"I thought you sent that a long time ago."

"Yes, but this is my present. I've been hiding it for weeks and now I thought I'd send it. You're the first person I've told about it." Suddenly she put her arm around him and hugged him to her.

"Well, you go right ahead. I've got to get Hansie his milk and strained peaches and then I'll come down and talk to you a while. Here, taste this and be glad you're not a baby." He took a mouthful of peaches.

"Ugh." He ran to the icebox. "I'm going to have some. . .some. . .Jello to take the taste away."

"You touch that whipped cream, Paul Hope, and there'll be murder," she said as she went upstairs. He was happy. The kettle was singing; it blew steam at the window. He sprawled in the chair and ate and then he wrapped up the parcel. The kitchen was the best room in the house.

That night he would never forget, he thought, as he lay by himself in the third floor bedroom. Elizabeth had taken him to the movies. Suddenly she had asked him if he would like to go and when he had said yes, she said they would have to wait until Mr. Richter went out but she knew he wouldn't be back until late. Mary would be in to look after the baby. Austin and he weren't allowed to go to the movies or to listen to the radio; Mr. Richter had put his foot down about it, and said that children should never be allowed to see such trash. Elizabeth was proposing something absolutely forbidden. Paul wondered at her daring. His heart pounded at the thought of being caught but he was thrilled, eager for the conspiracy. He and Mr. Richter ate dinner together in the dining room and Paul, beside himself with excitement, could not say a word. Surely Uncle Franz could see the whole

thing, could guess exactly what Paul was thinking, was playing along and would not really go out but wait outside to catch them in the act as they left. But Uncle Franz seemed unconcerned; he pinched Paul's cheek as he always did, he complimented Elizabeth on her cooking and said that Mary should have more afternoons off, and then having performed these small conversational duties, retired behind his Monitor until the meal was over. Then to his dressing room and after a long agonizing time, he came downstairs, said goodnight to Paul, put on his coat and left. He really left; Paul listened to the car backing out of the driveway, listened to the noise fade away into the night. They were really going. Now, they were going. Into Boston to a movie. Elizabeth then called a taxi, making sure, as she said, that it was not the same taxi company that the family used, and, quick as a flash they were off, leaving Mary hurling warnings at them from the doorway. They whirled into Boston, all lights and sparks from the streetcar wires, the taxi cab smelling of oilcloth, with a picture of the driver to their left between the windows. G. Krasnow, one two six oh three. The dark curves of the car body were about them, the upholstered roof above their heads, a little cocoon of quiet it seemed, before which the traffic swarmed, miraculously parted, then knit together again in their rear. Why did Mr. Krasnow burn

off the overhead light before they started? Because, said Elizabeth, he could not see the traffic properly when there was light inside the car. But rather, he thought, because Mr. Krasnow did not want them there with him in the cab. The darkness shut them away and Mr. Krasnow could think, letting his hands and feet on the pedals, on the wheel, steer the car through the shoals of traffic, the clusters and lines and circles of lights, and be quite alone and apart from them.

They were crossing the Common now, now they plunged into the downtown brilliance, now they turned onto Washington Street where the foyers of the cinemas showed pools of bright hard light for the length of the street and the blinking bulbs on the marquees spun necklaces of blue, yellow, red and green onto the black hulk of the buildings. They stopped, they were here, they entered beneath the marquee and after she had piled him high with candy bars, they pushed open a heavy padded door and were conducted through the purple hush to their seats by a lady wearing satin slacks. Then he never wanted it to end, the music and the dancing, the ripples of laughter that ran through the house, riding over and around him, touching him too now, sweeping him in. And Elizabeth wept sometimes, as the picture went on, till Judy Garland, wearing a top hat and tails, danced her way down an infi-

nitely spacious staircase, a man on each arm, smiled down from the screen, winked, and sang. Elizabeth smiled again. When the lights finally came up, slowly, softly as though they regretted the dispersal of the gloom and of the image, when the audience stretched, yawned a little, shuffled in its chairs and began to trickle out along the aisles, then Paul and Elizabeth also made their way towards the exit, suddenly separate again, the dream dispelled, and Elizabeth thinking now of the baby's late feeding, and whether she would be home in time. Would Mary remember, would she know what to give him? And Paul yawned and actually wanted to be back at the house with a cup of cocoa and some cookies; the lights were no longer round as he looked from the cab window. They splintered out from the circumference of their circles when he blinked like clusters of brilliant diamond tie clips magically suspended on the darkness. He narrowed his eyes, he looked through his lashes and believed that he was borne along on this blackness, that there was no ground beneath the car. They were floating on the evening, he and the lights (for these had a different quality now, no longer so polarized, so swift and darting, but soft, diffused as though through a light mist, they dipped across the Charles, they glimmered among the twigs and branches of the Cambridge trees) and as his lids grew heavier the lights floated gently before him dimmer and dimmer until he was asleep. A deep sleep,

perhaps ten minutes, not more certainly, though when Elizabeth woke him to get him out of the car, he felt that he had slept half the night, that there had been an alert and they were all going down to the shelter.

But he woke up enough with the cocoa to think what a rare evening it had been, and, without thinking of Austin too much, hoped there would be snow for skiing in New Hampshire for a good many weekends to come. Mr. Richter hadn't come home yet; Paul was left with Mary in the kitchen and dawdled so long over his cup that at last she sent him packing up the stairs to bed. "You'll have to dress up tomorrow," said Mary, sweeping him out of her kitchen, "for Mrs. Daniels phoned to say that you're invited to tea. Here, take your cocoa with you. You can drink it in bed." As he was just climbing between the sheets, he heard Mr. Richter's car turn into the driveway, heard him ten minutes later saying to Elizabeth on the floor below,

"Paul's light's still on. Has he been up this late?"

"No," she answered, her voice so warm after Mr. Richter's neat, clipped syllables, "he woke up a little while ago and I took him up some cocoa." Paul

fell asleep right after that, but he noticed that the light was not still burning in the morning and the cocoa cup had been taken downstairs.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Daniels sat at her writing desk in the drawing room of her apartment, trying to compose a letter. "Dear Lottie," she wrote, then paused, running her finger down the hinged crack in the escritoire. Dear Lottie, she thought, "Since I last gave you the news from here, so many things. . ." she wrote. But it was no good, no good at all. I write too many letters, she decided, sheathing her fountain pen, rising and going over to the window, feeling the cold pane with her fingers. Even though the radio was on, she, looking down to the almost deserted streets, felt the Sunday afternoon quiet resting over her room; the pale orange winter sunlight tesselated across her carpet by the window frames, fell at length along the bottom shelf of the bookcase. That was its track, a defined beam which depended on the width of the window to begin with and yet was further broken up by everything it touched; a chair leg, an ornament on the bookshelf, the thick Sunday newspaper lying on the carpet, all these things formed their own backwaters of shadow, without symmetry, without design and the sunlight must indulge them.

But the beam had dimension, the shadows were flat so that in spite of them the sunlight touched everything, the heavy mahogany furniture, the thick pile of the carpet, the whorls and fluting of the picture frames, the green jade Buddhas and the cream satin lampshades, touched them all with the repose of Sunday afternoon. For it is only on Sunday, she thought, that I would notice the sunlight at all except to say what a nice day it was.

She stayed in the apartment very little. Waking up about eleven, she would be brought her breakfast, together with the mail and the morning papers and there would stop in the wide, now rumpled bed, reading the news from her friends. The three or four letters that came every day; their thick substantial vellum and round, bread feminine writing immediately stirred those memories that she relied on so heavily. Ah, yes, but that is all over now, she would think, meaning the great, gay entertainments she used to give; her husband, short, greyhaired but with such fire in his eyes, such neat, quick decisive gestures as he stood by the sideboard or showed the latest piece of porcelain to the old friends (trusting only them with his delight), that she, sometimes tiring of the crowd, knew that she had only to look across at him and she would gain a new strength.

All over, all finished, those times; once in a while she would pause in her reveries. I am a foolish old woman, she would think and would push away the bed-clothes, throw the letters to one side, rise and wash and dress herself in a neat black suit, dispersing her memories with one incisive dart of swiftness, of making herself trim. She kept herself,busy. Charity bazaars, teas, the Symphony, sometimes bridge; these spurts of energy carried her through the days well enough and then in the evenings she was tired, had a light supper and went again to bed.

But Sundays she was alone. She did not go over to her daughter's then, although it was the one time in the week when she might have gone. It was too much now, that household, with the three children, the noise and the bustle. Besides, Franz did not like her, she was sure, and for her part she found him both pompous and a little naive and took care never to run over when he might be there.

No, Sundays she stayed at home and wrote to her friends, thereby assuring that the thick white letters kept coming through the week. At one-thirty Germaine, the French-Canadian maid, would set up the card table in the middle of the living room, lay over it a clean, starched table-cloth, and there Mrs. Daniels would eat her lunch.

For it was foolish to sit alone at the long dining room table and a bother for Germaine to serve her there. And in the afternoon she sometimes listened to the music on the radio and sometimes got Harold to drive her out into the country and perhaps they would stop by to visit with someone on the way back and perhaps they would not. She had no real friends in Boston, she thought. She had followed her daughter here from New York after Hansie had been born because, more than anything else, she had felt at that time a need of family. She must watch her grandchildren grow up, she must become known to them. And tangled with this was the half-realized fear that somehow this second marriage of Marion's had altered the straight, steady flow of the generations, for was not Austin more her grandson than Hansie? Although her daughter had borne them both, Mrs. Daniels felt it an aberration of her lineage, that Austin's first brother should be a half-brother. No, the truth of it was, she thought, that she didn't like Franz. And she had thought the first marriage a good one, even though she hadn't seen much of Ivan and Marion when they were out in Arizona, and she had been glad in some way that Marion had married a Jew, as she had married a Jew. Jewish men were strong, she felt, she knew. But to marry a German afterwards! She had not been as much with the Richters as she had intended when she moved away from her few remaining friends and come to this

city, feeling the strange uneasiness of this marriage and the turmoil of it, feeling the loneliness that had come upon her because she did not understand how her daughter could have married such a man. The intimacy had gone between Marion and herself, the talking, telling, confiding days were over too and yet she stayed here, she did not go back to New York but stayed nearby, searching for indices, definitions, wishing above all else to be an active grandmother, not one living off in New York that would be visited only on the odd long weekend. She felt her own constraint, however; as though they were moths, busy and fluttering around a single shaded light and she could but swoop through the light cast and off into the darkness again. The boy, Paul now: could he draw her, even ephemerally, into the brightness, into the clear definition of things? But, of course, he was a child. She would begin new interpretations, new assessments, new weighing of words. . .

She turned, sighing, from the window and Germaine was already bringing in the tea things and placing them on the low brass table.

"I told Harold to go over and get Paul in half an hour," said Germaine. "That was right, wasn't it?"

"Yes, thank you," she answered. "I hope you made the sandwiches thin, did you remember that? Because that's the way they always have them in England at tea-time. I want this to be a real English tea, I think he must miss it in the afternoon."

"Thin, thin, thin," said Germaine. "You could see through the bread, so thin."

"And the cakes?"

"Yes, they arrived, Ma'am. Everything's ready. Will you be taking your tea with lemon as usual?"

"No, with milk today," she said. She went over and switched off the radio; the Haydn symphony was silenced, the quiet drew in around her and she went to her bedroom to change.

. . . . . .

"Well," said Mrs. Daniels, as she poured him a cup of tea, "so they left you on your own this weekend." He smiled at her, bashful but no longer stiff. For, having eaten a dozen cucumber sandwiches, two scones with jam, and an innumerable quantity of small round confections dotted

with chocolate spangles, having admired a brilliant stuffed macaw under a bell-jar and a wreath made of fragile golden hair, having listened to her talking softly to him about England for at least half an hour, he was almost completely at his ease; this was the first thing she had said that required him to answer her.

Not that her England resembled his by any stretch of the fancy; as gleaming and as warm as a chestnut, it seemed to him, with much about garden parties, parasols, punting and the wide green lawns that ran down to the Thames in those days. (And perhaps they still did. He had been to London only once and had sprained his ankle then on Hampstead Heath.) Yet, in her manner of telling it, she made him believe that she had just come from there. As he listened some sense of his country drifted back to him, nothing more definite than the heady smell of grass on the cricket field and the quiet "tock" of the cricket ball as a stroke was made.

Yes, he like her, he warmed to her. "Yes," he said in answer to her question, "but I don't really mind. I guess it takes a long time to learn to ski."

"Not that long when you're young," she said, smiling, "but I think that if they had only a weekend,

they probably want to spend it all on the slopes and not on the practice hill with you. Maybe you'll all go up for a week at Easter and then you'll have time to learn properly."

"Um," he said, not anxious to ski,q"I don't have any skis and things. Anyway, I'd just as soon knock around by myself. I don't mind doing that. I like it rather a lot." The maid came in then and started to clear away the tea things.

"Do you want that last bonbon," she asked, "before it disappears?" He took it; at this stage in the feast he nibbled it slowly. "You know, Austin's been skiing since he was five. His father used to take him up into the Rocky Mountains and they'd ski all day, so he really got his training on the big slopes." Yes, he knew Austin had been out West; that was where the Indian blankets had come from.

"He'd be too good for me. Aunt Marion says he's awfully good."

"Well, he's not that good that you couldn't beat him, if you tried. You have to show Austin, you know that by now, don't you, Paul. As soon as he knows

you can do something really well that he can't do, that's when he begins to like you. He likes Harold an awful lot and shall I tell you when that started? It was when we were all up at my cottage on Lake Winnipesaukee and Harold knocked a tin can off a rock with the first shot of his air pistol. Austin was thrilled and ever since they've been very good friends. But that was when it began." She reached over to a cigarette box, took from it a cigarette and a black cigarette holder, fixed the cigarette in the holder, lit it and began to smoke. Somehow, he did not mind; there was a certain flair, a certain poise and femininity in that holder. "What do you do best," she asked, "what are you interested in? Here I've been talking my head off like a silly old chicken and never given you a chance to say anything atsall."

He liked the way she asked him the question, talking all the time she was lighting the cigarette, and then looking quickly, alertly at him across the tea table. Suddenly with a spurt of pride, he felt manly; at that moment he was all ready to take her to one of those garden parties himself. She would take his arm and he would lead her across the smooth green lawns, amid the chattering throngs, perhaps he would hold her parasol, lest the sun beat too fiercely on her cheek. A man he felt himself suddenly, because of the way she looked at him across the tea table.

"I'm quite good at soccer," he said, "because I used to play it in England. And I like reading a lot." It was a hard question to answer; what he had said sounded pretty lame. It was like being asked what your hobbies were. You weren't interested in things, not like that; they didn't get put away in their little cubby holes so easily. He did not say ever "now I will go off and play soccer because that is something I enjoy doing" and, by so doing, reconcile himself for having done something he disliked. It was breaking up the succession of things to think that way. He did not like soccer every time, never in quite the same degree. If his boots chafed, if it began to rain, if he missed making a particularly easy goal, if he was expecting to fight with Austin in the evening, then the afternoon lasted longer, the time spun out, his pleasure was not so great. It was only when he was doing something, not before and not after, that he knew how much he liked it.

Some thought of this made him say, to his own surprise, "I like talking to you very much," not with any idea of flattery, of pleasing her, but because of the immediate delight of this Sunday afternoon. She did not understand; she smiled at him sadly. The smile, the very forced slowness of the smile, and the turning of her head away from him for a moment; he felt a boy again, the

smallest of boys and she infinitely old and wise and distant.

He blushed; but he did like the whole afternoon and yet he could not say so. Why should she smile that way, why this sudden heavy, prolonging thump of the silent seconds? He began to talk then for the first time, trying to recover what he sensed he had lost by that one sentence. The pause, the hiatus was now, the present was stock still and the day no longer ran softly by. So he began to talk about fives. "I like fives," he said, "which is a game we played at school." But there were two kinds of fives games and one came from Eton and the other from Rugby and the Eton one, which was the one he had played, was played in a more elaborate court. "You see, in a corner of the Eton chapel," he said, "there were little ledges sticking out from the building. On the outside, that is. And if you threw a ball into that corner you were never quite sure where the ball would go. So you had two teams and one threw the ball up and the other had to get it back on the wall by hitting it with the palm of the hand and the thing was to get it to bounce on one of the ledges so that the other team did not know what part of the court it would land in. Well, we had a concrete court at school but really, it was just like the corner of the Eton chapel except that the court was longer." He remembered it; the

smell of concrete dust came back to him; that burning sensation on the soles of his feet that came from playing in crepe soled shoes; the lines that appeared on his hands and the swelling round the thumb, the hastily swallowed lunch, the sweet waxy smell of warm milk from the tuck shop. He was no longer talking to her, but to himself, dreaming, remembering sprawling on the ground for a low shot, the grazed knee, the shrugging off of pain, the postures against the concrete wall and everywhere dust; dust over the discarded luncheon bags, over the blazers piled deep at the end of the court, over books scattered behind the line of play, over his own hair, over his face. He told her about Mulcahy, who could never be depended upon to make a good "pep" shot and yet could glance that ball off the back wall with such finesse, such calculated aplomb, that it would seem to stick to the wall all the way on its descent, and the opposing team would concede the point right away, for they could not get near the ball to make the stroke.

He talked very hard and she, quick to be interested in male enthusiasms (for she had always found in these some chink in the facade, some irrational zeal otherwise held in check, some touchstone of quality), was content to listen. No, she did not understand the game; occasionally she would ask a question; was the game a fast one? what was the ball made of? how many were there on a team? But she was think-

ing; he is good at sports,she thought, and yet he will not ski, or does not sound happy about it. I must speak to Marion. He should not be left at home. And then again he does not want to go. Surely boys together, an expedition. . .he cannot like Austin, it must be that. They did not get on well together, they fought, they hated each other. And she had told Marion months ago, what a risk, it would not work, temperatmental family; she embroidered around the now full-figured flower of her conclusion with the wools and stitches of new motifs. The centerpiece, suddenly completed, gave a place and design to other flowers and leaves. Marion: she sides with Austin; no, she would try to be fair at least. Franz, of course, does nothing. Oh, the poor child, oh, the poor children.

She asked him then abruptly. She said, "Tell me, Paul, now that you've been with us for a few months, how do you like Austin? Do you get on well, I mean. I'm sure you fight like tigers, but in between times do you like each other fairly well?" She gave him a full smile, inviting confidence.

He was caught up quickly, surprised by the question. "Sure," he said, looking down at the carpet, "we get on all right most of the time."

Obviously it was a lie, she thought, after Harold had taken him home, and it had been a mistake for them to have an English child, not fair on the boy at all. She drew the curtains across her window; they had talked so long that Germaine was already setting up the card table in the middle of the living room. I will speak to Marion about it, she thought. But when, there was the problem. She realized how little she saw of her daughter, the bridge evening, very occasionally at Symphony. Or, stopping by at the house, she would leave a box of Fannie Farmer. None of these times good for talking about this. Perhaps in a little while the old feeling between them would come back and that would be a better time to speak. Turning then to Germaine she said, "I think just some cinnamon toast tonight and some soup. I'm feeling rather tired."

. . . . . .

The skiing was so good that winter that Marion Richter began to urge her husband to buy some property that was fairly close to the ski slopes and which they could use as a summer cottage when the weather became too hot in Cambridge. At first he thought the expense too great, the upkeep too considerable. He pleaded that he was too busy, that he would never get up there himself,

that he did not want to be deserted by the whole family during the long summer months. And when he saw that this argument did not dissuade her, then he begged more time to think about it. He conceded the battle only to himself, hoping then to prolong the final decision until the following year. By then I will have broken the back of this research, he thought, and can more properly go into these questions.

But she recognized his delaying tactics and went quietly ahead on her own; the weekends in New Hampshire became more and more frequent, even after the best of the snow had dwindled away. She saw the real estate agents, she visited farms, cottages, areas of land suitable for building, poured over assessments, plans and photographs with unrelenting enthusiasm. And then, when she had at last chosen what she wanted, she drove him up to the country one weekend and showed him the farm.

It was an old but sturdy clapboard building overlooking a small lake and set back about half a mile from the main road. A tall house, white, with a long porch running round two sides of the building and, adjoining it, a great fat barn with a weather-cock. It commanded a magnificent, if somewhat austere position on the rim of the valley; below it close-set pine forests ran down to

the lake which was hidden by the trees except from the third story windows; before it rolling fields, now rank and overgrown, ran down to the road. There were none of the crazy-quilt outbuildings or haphazard additions that often give a kind of soft charm to New England farmhouses. This building stood strong above the fields with one broad tree beside it for shade, the barn on its other flank and the land falling away behind it.

Mrs. Richter got out of the car, opened the gate and drove up the dark red rutted lane to the front door. The grass around the house had grown long; it was now thick and matted close to the earth, as soft and green as moss. She drove the car over the grass right up to the front door; she stopped the car, she turned to him and said, "This is what I brought you up to see," and said no more then but got out of the car and opened the front door with the key that the agent had given her. He followed her into the house, followed her through room after room. She threw open closet doors, she drew him over to windows to admire the view, she pointed to the solid oak floors, the plumbing, the lightness of the stair well, the good brick fireplace in the **living room with the heavy copper catch-all** above it, showed him the barn, the old stables and the hayloft, and when she had done, led him back to the car. She lit a cigarette.

"All right," she said, "do you like the place?"

"It's a beautiful farm," he said. "But you see, Marion, we'd never be able. . ."

"I will give you half the purchase price," she said. "It is selling for twelve thousand dollars including the land. The farm can be in your name, I don't care. But I want it and I'll tell you why; first of all the lake is far enough away so that we don't have to worry about the children all the time; secondly it's only half an hour in the car to mother's cottage; thirdly it'll be cool up here in the summer; fourthly there's plenty of land all the way round the property so we don't have to get chummy with the neighbors if they turn out to be a sticky bunch." She went on, an overwhelming list of virtues.

The following month they bought the house. It meant for Paul that as soon as school was out in June, he and Austin would be together for all of the day. Aunt Marion, he and Austin, Hansie and Elizabeth were all to be up in New Hampshire for the whole summer. And there was to be a counselor for the two of them, a medical student from Duke University. He realized that he and Austin would wake up in the morning together, they would eat

together, they would play together while the sun was up, and then the darkness would keep them together within the new farmhouse, and he did not want the summer to come.

Already, green pot-holes of lawn showed through the snow in the front yard. Paul discarded his mackinaw and snow pants and went to school in a leather jacket. The evenings grew lighter; the pinks of sunsets glowed in the dining room at suppertime and sometimes the sun stabbed fiercely across the front of the house in its last dying moments. They would pull down the blind and it was beautiful to see then how the pale blind was so swiftly saturated with rich stains of ochre from the sunlight, how these softened with the failing of the light until the blind was the soft honey colour of parchment. Spring was on the way; you could smell the warmth in the wind; in the gutters streams of water undercut the strange amorphous ribbons of ice and melted them slowly away. A man came round to sharpen lawn-mowers and the long-haired dogs of the neighborhood were suddenly clipped and tailored for the balmy weather.

Paul was amazed at how quickly the winter had flown away, for Austin's contest with him had grown until he could do little but long for the weekends when he would be free from all the bullying. Yet he learned not to

dread the evenings; dread, fear, terror, any of those apprehensive states of mind cannot be long maintained for the same object, for the same situation, if it recurs. The fights with Austin came nearly every day in some degree, whether slight or bloody, and now he did not make any effort at combat. He shielded himself, he defended as well as he could but he did not strike out, he did not try to match wound for wound.

A gradual strength of his own, an independent spirit grew. There was an awful row shortly after Christmas. Paul had gone over to the Barnharts' after school and had stayed long enough so that Mrs. Barnhart had phoned Mrs. Richter to ask if it would be all right if Paul stayed to dinner. She would see that he got home by eight o'clock, she said. Her husband would drive him home. He returned at eight, came in through the kitchen door and heard the loud arguing voices from upstairs. And he heard crying, a sobbing and a yelling and knew in a moment that it was Austin. Incredible! He felt a pang of pure pleasure, intense and immediate which then passed off a little and remained only to colour his excitement and his curiosity. He looked up at Mary, puzzled.

"A mess," she said. "It's a good thing you weren't around. Mr. Richter caught him smoking a cigarette.

A mess, I'm telling you. Now, if it had been her, it wouldn't have been so bad. Anyway you weren't around or maybe you'd have been smoking too. Kids," she said laconically, "always something. Maybe you'd better stay down here till they're all through."

"No," he said, "it's all right, Mary. I'll go right up to the bedroom." He ran from her quickly into the hall and up the stairs. He wanted to <u>see</u>, he wanted to hear everything. Halfway up the stairs he checked himself and began to walk slowly, casually round the curve in the stairs. He moved just fast enough so that if anyone saw him they would think he was just going up to his room. The noise was coming from the dressing room and nobody was shouting, nobody was arguing any longer. Austin was sobbing still, however. Paul could hear how the sobs took shape; they puled along, low, yet rising a little. Then Mr. Richter would say something (he could not hear what they were saying through the door) and the sobbing would break out loud and wild and furious. And then through the weeping came words, yelling again, and he listened. "Why should you hit me," came the sobbing through the door, louder this time, high-pitched. Paul passed the door on tiptoe and started slowly up the second flight of stairs. "I don't want you to touch me. He shouldn't hit me, mother. Tell him he's not going to

touch me ever." There was more soft adult talk in the dressing room. Paul could hear only the rhythms of it from the top of the second story stairs. "Oh, why don't you tell him, mother. I'm not even going to talk to him. I hate him, I'm glad he's not my father. I want my POP." A deep heaving wail and silence. Paul, thinking that they might be coming out, moved on to the third floor landing, leaned over the bannister rail well concealed by the shadows. He realized that he still had his outdoor clothes on; they would want to know why he had come upstairs with his rubbers on. He took them off, he hoped he had not made tracks on the rug. He took off his jacket and scarf and put everything into the bedroom closet so that he could sneak it down later on.

Just as he was about to go back to the stair well, he heard them coming out. Aunt Marion said, "Why don't you go upstairs and wash your face, dear? You'll feel a little better then." Trudging footsteps on the stairs. Paul turned the bed light on quickly, picked a book out of the shelf and lay down on his bed as though he had been reading. But Austin wasn't surprised to see him,

"Hi," he said, gruffly. He went over to the bureau, got a Kleenex and blew his nose. His eyes were red, his cheeks were puffed. Paul could hear him swallow.

"I heard about it," said Paul tentatively. "I'm sorry you got caught." Austin seemed to think about this for a minute as he looked at himself in the mirror, as he wiped his eyes with the Kleenex and ran his tongue over his lips. Then he turned and went out to the bathroom. When he came back he had washed and he had brushed his hair down hard, as flat as it would ever go.

"Aw, don't worry about <u>that</u>," said Austin. Scorn on the lower lip, funny toughness in the straight, square body, the moment over for tears, the hair brushed back, defiant. "I just felt like a smoke. We smoke all the time at school. We go into the can and smoke. Just because <u>he</u> found out." But they got on very well for the rest of that evening. Paul told him about the time he had seen a dogfight between a Heinkel and a Hurricane over the Cotswolds and they dogfought all over the bedroom until they were sent to bed. Aunt Marion came up herself to kiss them goodnight and whispered something in Austin's ear. When she kissed Paul, he felt the touch of the lipstick on his cheek. "Goodnight, dea," she said and went downstairs.

They talked for an hour after the lights went out; of the summer and what camps they might be going to, if there wasn't a country house by then; of the bits that had been cut out of Paul's letters from England and whether they had been about the bombing; of a horse Austin had had

out West. "What was your real father like?" Paul asked casually, as though he had known all along. He had remembered over that evening a series of small puzzles that were suddenly explained now that he knew that Uncle Franz wasn't Austin's father. He remembered once finding a book with Austin's signature on the inside flap, Austin Theodore Kern; he remembered the talk with Mrs. Daniels, the business about skiing out West that had bothered him. Now he wanted to be sure that it was right, what he had heard from the top of the stairs. And yet he felt the same way about asking as he would have done if Austin's father had been dead. Like forgetting to take your cap off when a funeral went by.

"He was okay," said Austin, "first-rate as a matter of fact." And then he gave a yawn that Paul could tell was not a yawn. "I guess I'll go to sleep," he said. "I'm pretty sleepy."

. . . . . .

If you once feel sorry for someone you'd hated rather much before, it changes everything and you can never feel the same way again. Paul felt guilty at first, when he thought of how he had sneaked around listening, how excited he had been and not sorry at all the Austin

was getting a licking. But he forgot about it, it wore away. That evening, he found, did not make things any easier; they still fought as often and as hard. However, Austin was an outsider now; in fact Aunt Marion did not belong here either but with the other man who was her husband. In fact, nobody belonged here except Uncle Franz. It wasn't a family at all.

Time spun a cocoon for Paul; the winter passed quickly. The present inched along, the bad moments stretched out and yet, when they passed into memory they were short, swift, barely thought of, the warp of the loom only. And the threads of brightly coloured pleasures, so short when they happened because of their very delight, were woven across these other sombre strands and came out strong in the fabric of whatever he remembered. Fierce, active days; he worked at school, he played hard and learned baseball in the spring. Anxious he was to win, to beat all, to make a place.

The definition of the days was sharp and then at night Paul withdrew into his own soft cloister. Often he did not even hear what they said to him. Aunt Marion repeated things impatiently. "You're too quiet, young man," she said, "too broody by far." She thought the summer would do him good. There would be swimming and a

boat and a rest from books. But he did not look forward to the end of school. He was top of his class by the end of March; he played short-stop on the third team and could remember now to throw down his bat before he ran to first. All this, it seemed, would dwindle away from him over the long summer months.

. . . . . .

Walter Chark had answered Austin's call for a drink of water. That would be the end of it for the day, he thought as he came down the stairs, another day gone by, four weeks of the summer passed. It seemed no longer than a week since he had left Durham and tomorrow was the fourth of July. Yet, he thought, looking into the mirror at the bottom of the stairs, there is a whole summer's tan already. He stopped to examine this reward of four weeks' afternoons upon the swimming raft; yes, the bridge of the nose was almost black and the span across his forehead. A line of white running from above his ear to his cheekbone showed that he had been wearing sun-glasses and the area around his eyes was curiously pink. No peeling yet; he had done well, he thought, to take it easy when he first got out there.

He was dark; black curly hair, heavy beard, thick looming eyebrows and he tanned well and knew it and set

great store by his autumn duskiness. Nothing looked better, he knew, than a deep tan above his tuxedo at the fall proms. He hated his body to turn, over the long months of study, the same unhealthy, flabby white of the cadavers he worked on in the dissecting rooms. You have to be healthy to be a doctor, he maintained, you have to work from health, if you are dealing with people who are diseased. He worked at it, worked to be strong; he threw the discus until the muscles of his upper arms and shoulders stood out firm and powerful, he swam, he rowed, he cut out cigarettes and took to smoking cigars, five a day. And in the summer he never took an indoor job.

He was tall, over six feet, broad shouldered and broad in the face, a powerful man at twenty-four. And his clear and round grey eyes, the heavy bones of his face and his constant obsession with sport, often led people to underestimate his intelligence. A football scholar, they thought, a fraternity boy with an influential father. It amused him in some way to keep up the illusion; he talked the part, he dressed for it. Right now he was wearing a good plaid shirt, chino pants, thick white socks in folds around his ankles and a loose and blackened pair of moccassins. People liked him that way, he found, lumbering and uncomplicated. Mrs. R., for example, wanted

a good athlete, particularly a good swimmer for this job. Somebody the kids would look up to, an extrovert, a good guy, not a brain. He got the job; yet he could have had any number of hospital jobs for the summer for he stood fifth in his class. No, he did not want to work indoors, he turned them down.

Now he would go out on the porch and smoke the last cigar of the day. He would wait for Mrs. Richter to return and would help her put the car into the barn. Then he would go to his room, write letter number forty-four to Jeanette and go to bed.

"What do you know," he said, poking his head round the kitchen door. Elizabeth, busy setting the table for breakfast, looked up and smiled.

"Nearly through," she said. "Six o'clock this morning I started, and what is it now, half-past nine?" He grinned.

"Slaving all day over a hot stove? Life is real tough. Seems to me I saw you down at the lake for at least half the afternoon."

"Sure and whatever time I went down, I'd be certain to see you there," she said, "sleeping on that

raft, no doubt, where no one can see you."

"Not trud," he said. "This morning I weeded five rows of radishes, seven rows of corn, put in a new pole for the horseshoes, went to town and got the mail, and dried the lunch dishes for you. Not true at all, I'm the hardest worker around here, let me tell you." He reached into his shirt pocket for a cigar and lit it with a large wooden kitchen match.

"Say, boy," said Elizabeth, "out of here with that thing. Mrs. R.'ll smell it and you'll lose your head." He wasn't allowed to smoke in the downstairs rooms because the smoke drifted about and the smell remained in the curtains, she said.

"I'll be out on the porch," he said. "Come on out when you're through."

It was still twilight and the uncut fields beyond the pasture were silvery in the half-light; they crooned softly with crickets and yet for all the hum, for all the softness of the dusk, the low and undulating landscape which ran down to the main road seemed in definition more distinct than at any other time of day. The heat haze had gone away; if a car had come along the sandy farmhouse

lane, Walter Chark from his position on the porch swing would have seen no longer the giddy white whirls of dust flying behind the wheels, would have seen perhaps nothing but the moving bulk of the car itself above the rows of corn. Or perhaps a trail of black above the lane, slowly sifting back to the earth. As much as the day had been muddled (with the scents of hot grass, with the drones of bees and horse-flies, with the confused dippings of butterflies and the sudden furtive scurrying of the fieldmice through their avenues of green), so was the evening clear and still, waiting for the moon. All scents mingled, all busy sound subsided. He rocked himself slowly in the swing, he drew on the cigar, he held it out in front of him and blew smoke at it, watching the red ash brighten. A crow flew over the house, wheeled once around and settled heavily among the branches of the tall elm tree. When I was a boy, he thought, I would have shot that crow. He would not have wheeled so devil-may-care above that tree. He remembered the smooth feel of his slingshot cut from the fork of a hickory branch and the sling from an old but still elastic inner tube. When I was a boy, I would have dropped him with a stone. Whether it was the calm of the evening, the rocking of the swing (the rheumatic creak of its metal joints), or the fact that he was by himself, this felt to him a long time ago, when he was a boy. The evening clothed him with the quietness to

consider. At what point, for example, did the muscles of manhood shape and swell into hardness, the tendons toughen, at what point did one no longer pull the sling-shot back, except maybe to show a boy the way to do it?

The moon was up; it edged over the horizon east of the far pine trees and the sky now showed striations of cloud, thin black ribbons that had been hidden by the dusk. He got up from the swing, tired of the creaking and leaned then over the porch rail. When I was a boy, he thought. . .and his reflections (inspired by who knows what? the moon, the sudden flying away of the crow, his movement to the railing) leaped to their most profound plane. When I was a boy, he considered, I was myself and the sum of my experience was to develop that self until it matured enough to look back (like now) and say "I was different then". You could not say that one night you became a man (like losing your virginity). Paul and Austin; they would become men at different times and because of completely different reasons. Paul would be one first because he had more grit. Now, he asked himself, did that make any sense at all? He felt then quite incompetent to take in hand these vague, inconclusive tendrils of his imagination. In self-disgust he threw the cigar butt over the edge of the porch. And of course remembered that the grass was dry from so much sun so

that he had to go out onto the lawn and stub it properly. As he came back up the steps, he found Elizabeth coming out of the living room with two tall pilsener glasses of beer. She noticed the frown, the lines in the forehead that quickly straightened themselves into a smile.

"Thinking about Jeanette?" she asked, handing him a glass. She brought a small table nearer to the swing and they both sat down.

"No," he said. "As a matter of fact I was thinking about Paul, how unhappy the kid is."

"Oh, I know it," she sighed. "I've known it for an awful long time."

"Well, we ought to do something about it. There ought to be someone we can see. He's not getting a fair deal here at all."

"There's this committee. They're the ones that arranged everything and they've sent people to see him a couple of times, but the family's always been around so of course he didn't say anything to them."

"You want to work on it with me, see if we can work it?"

"Sure," she said, "sure thing. Anything I can do at all."

"We can't do a goddam thing until the fall. But I'll go and see them then if you'll back me up."

"Sure I will," she said. "All the way. My family want me to leave this place anyway." They talked about it for a bit, they sipped the beer. By the time Mrs. Richter came back, the moon was well up; she hardly needed the headlights, it was so clear that night. But she kept them on, for the ruts in the driveway were narrow.

. . . . . .

Independence Day was not at all like Guy Fawkes'. There was more eating to it and you set off your firecrackers all the day long. There was bunting and flags in the streets when they went to the village that morning to spend their fifty cents. A pie-eating contest, rosettes in policemen's buttonholes and watermelon for lunch back at the farm. It was a summery celebration that lasted the whole day. Now Guy Fawkes', Paul remembered, waited for the evening. All the daylight long you hovered and fidgeted around the preparations. Home from school in the early afternoon, he would watch his father build the guy; the trussing of the [illegible]

yellow straw into arms and legs, a head then and a painted mask, an old hat, a gardening jacket for his back, some worn and faded trousers, a roman candle in his mouth and catherine wheels for eyes. From the kitchen the smell of baking, and then the lavish tea, and friends in to help him eat it all and then, at last into the garden as soon as it was dark enough. And the guy strung up by now between the posts of his swing, hung so sadly that you almost said to take him down. But then the miracle of rockets led you on to say "Burn, burn him now," and the old grey hat flopped slowly down over his face and quickly he was burned and gone.

That was Guy Fawkes'. Independence Day, because it was a formal holiday, Paul supposed, sputtered out over the day. Mrs. Richter drove them into the village to meet Mr. Richter's train and as they drove down into the hollow at the end of the lake, somewhere a brass band was playing. "Now stick close by me, Paul," she said, "and you too, A. T. This crowd is something fierce." The crowds peered into the windows of closed stores, they ate hot dogs and huge spirals of pink candy floss. They piled upon the tiny lake steamer until it was so low in the water that you doubted it would ever leave the quay. Firecrackers went off, splat in the dusty streets and it was an Irish brass band, now turning up Main Street, parting

traffic, trippers, children, firecrackers all before it. And Irish in green bowler hats to a man, the slide of the trombone glistening in the sun and the thump of the heavy bass drum beneath the brass ". . .went to London, just to ride a pony," sang Mrs. Richter, steering the children into the self-service. And here it was suddenly cool and damp, smelling of sawdust and oranges and the band quickly muffled as though you were watching it on a newsreel instead of through the wide glass of the store front.

She went to the meat counter to buy the steaks for the barbecue that evening and the butcher was busy. "Stay with me, you two," she said, "we've got to make that train." But they wandered away. Paul was soon bored; he went back to watch the parade but, passing through a tall aisle of cereals, he noticed a picture of Tom Mix on the side of the box and took it down from the shelf. For only one box top and one thin dime a genuine Tom Mix neckerchief, brown red or green, just like the cowhands wear. For only one thin dime, he thought, and the next box had paper masks to cut from the cardboard and the next a shining metal compass ring engraved with your own initials. He wanted the ring, he would ask Elizabeth to buy the cereal, he would eat two, no, three bowls of cereal then afterwards he could have the neckerchief. The ring and the neckerchief would be good to have together so that you could wear the

ring as a toggle. Someday, sometime he would buy all the cereal in the store, tear off the box tops and give the rest away. Maybe people could use it for confetti at weddings, if they didn't want to eat it, or feed it to their dogs. And in the mail every day great cartons full of shining rings and neckerchiefs all addressed to--

"Paul," she shouted angrily from the end of the aisle, "I told you to stay with me." She held him by the arm and dragged him back with her to the counter. "There, now I've lost my place," she said. "Didn't you hear me tell you?"

"What about Austin?" he asked. "He went off some place too."

"I'm very angry with both of you," she said.

"I could go and get Austin and tell him to come?"

"You stay right here, young man, where I can keep my eye on you." He raged; in a sharp physical reflex he suddenly thrust his arm down deep into a wire basket filled with packages of jelly beans. He felt a package split. He brought up his hand and in it one jelly bean. He did not care, he ate it. It left a brown stain on the palm of his hand.

She had not lost her place, for now she was served with a heavy brown paper parcel full of steaks which she put into the buggy and the two of them headed for the cash. Austin was at the front of the store, nose pressed against the window. For there, plodding up the main street, decked out in red, white and blue, incredibly there was an elephant.

"Look at the elephant," Austin said, "look at the elephant, mother!" But she was impatient even of elephants on the Fourth of July.

"Austin," she said, "I told you to stay with me and both you and Paul ran off. Now, if you want your firecrackers, you'd just better behave." Austin shrugged sulkily.

The throng had thickened; it was pressed tightly now between the store fronts and the line of parked cars, it spilled children onto the hoods and mudguards and across the street, heads leaned from windows, a line of tradesmen and their families stood on the low roofs looking down at the elephant. Mrs. Richter stood for a moment irresolute, How to press through? And Austin whispered to Paul, "Come on, quick. We can see from over here." Nimbly they squirmed, pushed, elbowed away from her and climbed up onto the window sill of a small hardware store. They clung to the thin

fluting at the edges of the windows. From this perch they could see her; she had not yet seen them. They saw her miss them, they saw her look around, then over the heads of the crowd, then call and they could not hear her for the din. They giggled in rare and wicked mischief and turned then to gaze into the street.

The elephant had been delayed, for one of the clowns from the fairground was feeding him buns. The elephant with a lordly curl of his trunk reached for the bun, accepted it, almost with disdain, and with one swoop put the bun into his mouth. Another clown threw over the elephantts back a white banner with the initials G.O.P. The crowd loved it all, the gesturing mad-faced clowns and the cleverness of the huge grey beast. "I bet if he really got mad," said Austin, "he could just step on the clowns and kill them."

"He's a gentle elephant. You can tell by the way he took the buns. Because he's been with the circus so long that they've trained him tame. Anyway, he looks awfully old."

"Wrinkles don't mean they're old," said Austin. "Elephants just have wrinkles. It doesn't mean they're old." The elephant was passing up the street and the

procession was over. But the crowd had not broken rank yet. An awe at the size of the animal kept them watching it even after it had gone by, watching the great back hoofs and the flick of the tail discouraging flies. The roadway for a moment was bare, unnaturally vacant. A woman pushed between the cars on the otherside of the road, walked out, so small, so thin, so utterly alone, onto the empty dusty strip of Main Street and began to wave a purple scarf. The ranks, still massed, noticed her too, Paul and Austin noticed. The enigma of her waving held them now a moment longer and the sudden and comic discrepancy in proportion between the woman and the elephant amused them; a low current of laughter travelled through the crowd and women were heard to say, "Poor thing, she's lost the people she was with," for certainly she seemed distressed.

"But it's Miss Snow," shouted Paul, immediately sure then, that she was waving at him, immediately sure that this was Miss Snow, remembering, once the identification was made, her quick brittle walk across the hotel lobby at Meridon and her odd, square rimless glasses that were now catching the sun from the middle of Main Street. He remembered how he and Aunt Marion and Miss Snow had sat at tea those two times in Cambridge, the way he could feel the lady draw him out up to the brink of answering before Aunt Marion would answer for him. Or Aunt Marion, after

she had answered, would have him agree with her. "Austin and Paul like sharing the same room. It's chummier that way, they find, and it gives them a part of the house to themselves. You like it, don't you,Paul?" And he had said, "Yes" because the visitor would leave at the end of the afternoon. But she hadn't answered all the questions for him. When Miss Snow had asked him how he liked school, Aunt Marion had left that one alone. Once he had asked a question. Why had Mrs. McCall never come to see him? And Miss Snow, lowering her head, said that Mrs. McCall had been hurt in an air raid and would be in the hospital for quite a while to come. She had smiled at him sadly and the huge pair of glasses made her seem like a kind and benevolent owl drawn in a cartoon with a thin stick body below the head.

Yes, it was Miss Snow. He waved, he shouted, "Hi, Miss Snow." And yet the crowd broke rank, it churned into the empty street, it licked and foamed about the line of parked cars, doors were opened and shut, a muddled sea of heads streamed down towards the fair ground and carried Miss Snow out of sight as though she were attwig. "Do you see her, do you see her?" he asked Austin. "Where did she go?" Austin had never met Miss Snow.

"Who?" he asked. "Oh, that woman." And then

Mrs. Richter found them. She pushed her way through the new loosened crowd on the sidewalk.

"Come down from there," she said, "come down right now! No firecrackers for you and no barbecue either. And when we get home, your father'll have something to say. You had me worried right out of my mind. What do you mean by just disappearing like that? What do you mean by it, tell me that?" Her face, as it always did when she was angry, became more angular, the chin seemed more pointed, the line of the jaw more pronounced, the lips thinner and tighter. But when Paul said, "Aunt Marion, I've just seen Miss Snow. She waved to me from across the street," she stopped, she looked hurriedly about her, she turned to him.

"Where?" she said sharply.

"She was across the street. I can't see her at all now." Some of the tension went out of her face then. She took them both firmly in hand and led them, propelled them up the street to the car.

"Of course you must have made a mistake, dear," she said. "Miss Snow's in Boston. You must have mistaken her for somebody else. Now hop into the car. We don't want to be late for that train." What surprised him was

the sudden change in her voice. "Dear" she said, when only a moment ago she had been most terribly angry. Nervous, hurried she was, like a spinster aunt who had once tried to talk him out of a bad dream. And the anger had dissolved right away.

"You drive, would you, darling," she said to Mr. Richter, when they had met the train. "It's been a hectic morning." As they drove back through the village, Paul was still certain that it had been Miss Snow. Why those glasses, he had never seen glasses like that on anyone else. And she had waved, too, she had waved right at him. He looked for her as they passed up the Main Street hill from the lake, his eye ranged the pavements but there was no sign of her, not even a trace of purple. Still, he was sure.

. . . . . .

"Of course, it was I," said Miss Snow, smiling at him across the table. "I made a point of visiting all my children once during the summer, and I'd just come back from seeing some of them who were at camp in Vermont. I thought it would be a good time, perhaps, for the two of us to have a little chat by ourselves. You see, I hadn't been too certain that you were happy at the Richters'.

She's always been sort of strange about letting me see you. So that day I thought I would drop in and take you for a drive." Paul watched her as she talked and nibbled at her sundae. He could not take his eyes away from her glasses. These were bifocals and while she talked and ate she looked down and then up, down, then up as if, below the table, she held a complex piece of knitting so that her glance had to fall regularly down on the purl.

But it added to his nervousness, this way she had of never being at rest. Miss Snow had twice before taken him out of school at the lunch hour so that she could talk to him without the Richters knowing. And each time he had felt a truant, each time they walked into the restaurant he looked around, sure that Mrs. Richter would be there somewhere.

"When am I going to leave for good?" he asked. "When you tell them I'm leaving do I have to go in afterwards to get my things?" For now that he knew he was to leave the Richters, he was impatient to have done with it. With the end in sight, he felt rootless, restless, unable to depend with certainty on anything or anybody; and coupled with this was an extraordinary guilty feeling. He was doing the Richters dirt, he was not being loyal. In some way it was not right, this sneaky businggs at lunch time. Twice

in the evenings he had been tempted to say "I had lunch with Miss Snow today" and then it would be out in the open.

½ Miss Snow had told him, though, that he was not to say anything. Elizabeth might lose her job, said Miss Snow, if they found out that it was she who had gone to the committee.

"Why couldn't I just leave," he asked, "I mean today. If I'm going to leave, why does it take such a long time?"

"Soon, dear," she said, scooping the last spoonful of syrup from her dish. "You'll just have to be patient for a little while longer till we get everything all fixed up. Then you can come and stay with me for a bit. And meet my five cats."

Could he trust Miss Snow? Yes, he liked her. But he looked away towards the soda fountain and on the wall behind it was a huge circular mirror. He saw his own face just peeping over the lower edge. Above his face were all the other faces; there was not a face so low as his. He saw the profile of Miss Snow and she too was above him. So that for one frightened instant his reflection seemed the pivot of a fan of faces laid out

across the surface of the mirror like a pack of cards. Mercury-blue, smooth, flat physiognomies all leaned down over him, looked, smiled their bland, superior smiles in crescents of wide white teeth like cunning German marionettes. He felt for that instant that to turn his head, to shrink under the table, to do anything that rubbed away his image from the glass would be to cease to exist at all, to die, to be snuffed out; and yet the faces smiled, unctuous and inviting, waiting for him along the ribs of the fan. That way he could not go either.

". . .and two absolutely coal-black kittens. We called them Thais and Alexander, although why, I don't know. Just good catty names, I guess." He saw her lips moving in the mirror, heard the words, the comments on the cats and somehow then he had the strength, by some supreme effort of will, to look away. The fan folded up, the faces fled away.

"Gracious, we must run," she said. "I mustn't make you late for school. Mr. Augustus has been so good about this. Perhaps next time, dear, I'll have something more definite to tell you. Anyway, it won't be long now." She fished in her handbag for change.

. . . . . .

But it was the end of November before he finally left the Richters. The autumn eked out and Paul had not the stamina to bear with the family, to accept them now that there was an alternative offered him. But neither did release come and what was the good of doing anything at all, anything, he felt when he was soon to leave. In his new home room at school the ladder of achievement from last term went up and hewwas at the top of it. But sedond in October. What was the use, and what did it really matter if you were top or second? It was only a few points, only three points this month and he would have been top. What was the difference there? A pasty round-eyed boy named Gerald Schwab was top but he knew he was smarter than that slob. So the ladder didn't show anything, why bother?

"What a slob that Gerald Schwab is," he said to someone on the field. "Have you ever seen him with a tie on, I mean, ever? Just the same dirty old jacket. Do you know what he's making in shop? A sewing basket for his mother. That's our boy Gerald. Schwab the slob." And because Paul was popular and was now the assistant captain of the soccer team, the namercaught on especially with the new boys. Schwab the slob. Gerald Schwab heard it sung at him from the end of corridors, his own classmatas passed notes and slipped them onto his desk, little

drawings of Gerald, fat and pasty, hair straggling down over his forehead. Once he found drawn in the sawdust on his carpentry bench two words: "The Slob". Paul rejoiced. What a fathead, Schwab.

And after all, assistant captain. But now, he thought, I will never be captain. I ought to have been captain this year. Centre forward is the best position on the team; therefore I should have been captain. Yes, I am the best player on the team. He dribbled the ball all the way to the goal far more often now; the wings noticed that he would never pass it on to them and they held him in less esteem for it.

He felt the current of time catch at him, sweep him away. He could no longer check it if he wished; he felt himself groping along a stream bed with his feet and the pebbles slippery with ooze so that he stumbled, his feet pinched between the stones. He would hold out his arm, examine the crease at the elbow, the white, flat underside of the forearm, the lines and hollows of the palm. This is my arm and this is my hand. See, if I ask it, it will move. This is my arm, a part of me. Strange aberrations of sight possessed him. In a magazine in the dentist's office he read, "Sperro, the new wonder scourer." There was a picture of a housewife scrubbing a saucepan

with a steel wool pad. But the word "scourer" as he looked at it on the page could suddenly mean nothing at all to him; it was in a foreign language. He knew what it meant, it was the pad. But he found that if he looked at part of the word or threw his glance beyond the page so that the word was slightly out of focus then it no longer meant the pad.

He moved through a new twilight world where the familiar was transformed into the alien and yet he moved with a queer indolent sensation of satiety. Nothing surprised him. If he imagined the leaves that drifted on the wind were letters, the sky an upturned mailbag, then soon he would believe this. Over the autumn the letters fell softly down in their brown envelopes. He moved through the realities (meals, fights, soccer, a new music school, the dentist, lunches with Miss Snow) as he would have moved through the shell of a building; he paused for a moment at the transoms, gave them recognition, saw the square of girders framing him for a moment, giving him, in that instant, flatness; then he passed on into dimensions of air, feeling the full facility of having no walls about him.

He did not have to see Mrs. Richter on the day when he finally left. This had been his fear; that somehow Mrs. Richter could stop him leaving, could at any rate

wound him with her anger. Miss Snow managed it, though; he never knew how. The only persons he saw were Austin and Elizabeth; they were both in the third floor bedroom when he went up to get his things. So he could not thank Elizabeth, except to smile and in the way he said goodbye. But Austin said to him almost with sadness,

"I didn't know you were unhappy. Why were you unhappy? You ought to have told me." Paul twisted around and looked into the bureau drawer, ashamed in some way, blushing, confused.

"Oh, I don't know. I just was, I guess."

"How come you're leaving so soon? I mean, tonight's sort of sudden. Mother told me you were going. She said you were unhappy. I didn't know you were, believe me, I didn't know." Paul smiled. He took some shirts out of a drawer and put them into his suitcase.

"That's about all there is," said Elizabeth. "You'd better go down, honey. Miss Snow is waiting for you. Goodbye, dear. Have a good time for me, will you?" She hugged him. He kissed her on the cheek. He was about to go downstairs with his grip when Austin stopped him.

"Here," he said. "I want you to have this for a goodbye present." Paul looked at what he had in his hand. It was a large lump of petrified wood, dark red stone with veins of the hardened wood running through it. On it was a label: WOOD FROM THE PETRIFIED FOREST, ARIZONA, U.S.A. and Paul had heard Austin say that his father had given it to him.

"But you can't give me that," he said. "Your father gave it to you."

"Oh, he won't mind. I'll write him and tell him I gave it to you." Paul stopped for a minute on the landing. He rummaged in his pockets, finally brought out the little penknife he had been given before he first went to prep school.

"If I give you this," he said, "then we'll both have something for a souvenir."

"Okay, it's a fair trade." They did not want to say goodbye. They gazed at each other in the semi-darkness of the hall. They shook hands very formally. "I'll take your bag down," said Austin, and with that the sudden current of feeling that had run between them for the first time in departure was broken. Now the break was made; it

was as though Paul were a guest leaving after the weekend. Miss Snow waited for him in the hall. Oh, God how good! She was alone. Every step that Paul took down the last flight of stairs he expected Mrs. Richter to appear from the living room or the kitchen. Surely he could not get away without seeing her at all. Miss Snow stood purposefully there; she was wearing a navy blue hat with a broad brim and a dark overcoat. She looked, Paul thought, rather like a Scout mistress.

"All ready?" she asked, brusquely. "My catties'll be wanting their evening meal." He nodded, he took his bag from Austin. "Goodbyy," he said.

"Goodbye, Paul." He and Miss Snow let themselves out of the front door.

When they were in the car, when Paul had looked back at the house for the last time and they had joined the main stream of traffic on Mount Auburn Street, she spoke to him, still watching the road, jiggling the wheel with her hands.

"I'm sorry if I seemed short with you, dear," she said. "I wasn't quite sure whether Mrs. Richter would come back into the hall and I knew you didn't want to see

her." She looked so small behind the great black wheel, he thought. She had a cushion beneath her so that she would be high enough to see out through the windscreen. Yet she steered confidently through the light evening drizzle that was falling. He felt the strength in her as she wrestled with the wheel and soon they were out of Cambridge. Out and away! He could not quite believe it; he glanced into the driving mirror and saw his suitcase on the back seat. Never to go back!

"Well, that's all over," she said softly, as though she had read his thoughts. "I have a nice little room for you, the one my nephew uses when he comes to stay, only now it will be your room, just as long as you're with me. Now, all we have to do is stop off at the supermarket. You shall choose what you'd like for dinner and then we'll go right back home and you can get settled." She parked the car deftly between the diagonal parking lines and they got out.

. . . . . .

Miss Snow lived in a neat white Cape Cod cottage which stood on an area of land not serviced by the city of Newton. What this meant, explained Miss Snow, was that none of the citizens within the area paid taxes to the city,

and the city in turn left the roads unpaved. The cottage stood in a glen of trees between the river and the highlands which rose steeply from the plain, and Miss Snow's neighbors came round every afternoon to turn on the garage light and the lights on either side of the front door. For it was dark under the trees and hard to guide the car along the rocky lane.

Some days Miss Snow would not have to go into the Boston office at all, but when she did, she took Paul with her. "This is my special boy," she would say, introducing him to the office staff, "and it's a delight to have him staying with me." He was quite content to stay in the office during the morning; he was the centre of attention, the secretaries vied with each other for his favour. They found him an old typewriter and a table of his own and clean white paper to draw or type on. And men from the inside offices as they passed through ruffled his hair, said, "Hello, Paul," so that he felt he had known all of them for a long time, felt that he, too, had a place in the vast and complex machinery of the office. When he tired of his typing and drawing then he would go to the window and watch the people hurrying up Beacon Hill. Ladies walked their scottie dogs, stern upright business men in their dark upright clothing walked with canes to their long dark cars. These were the slow and hallowed and among them

hurried mailmen, secretaries going to lunch, office boys. The top of Mt. Vernon Street was active with people; but then below he could see the glint of bottle glass windows catching the sun, quiet houses of soft grey stone, railings enclosing tiny plots of green, the cobbles and narrow pavements of the residential section. And over all, above him even, the great golden dome of the State House.

But Miss Snow was never long, never more than an hour and a half. For this length of time he was happy enough in the office. Then they would go to lunch, often to a smorgasbord across the common where there were tier upon tier of salads and cold cuts and you could eat as much as you wanted. After lunch she took him places; to the Gardner Museum, the zoo at Franklin Park, around the old North Church. She was always surprised that he hadn't seen these places before. "My gracious," she said, "They didn't take you about much."

"Well, we were away all summer," he said, "and there was school and things." Somehow he felt disposed to defend the Richters now that he had left. On the book-case of his new room was the lump of dark red rock, that odd last bond between him and Austin.

But oh, the joy of having his own room again. "Now, if you don't have space for your things," Miss Snow had said to him when he had first arrived, "if you want to move out some of these books and toys of Reggie's, just let me know and we can put them down in the basement." He had plenty of room, he liked the room the way it was. He liked the white counterpane with its tufts of chenille covering the high bed and the bedposts of curling oak and the woodcut of a cat hunched to leap and the big mahogany mirror and the bookcases running round. He like to be able to shut the door and know Miss Snow would knock; she would leave him alone as long as he wanted to be alone. But he liked to be with her, he liked to talk. He sat on the high stool in the kitchen while she made dinner, then would sneak round to the dining room and lay the table. A beautiful oval table; he delighted in its shape, its strong nut-brown lustre. He placed two silver candle sticks on either side of the centrepiece, laid the doilies down, the coasters, the goblets for milk and water, the heavy gleaming silver. And she would never fail to be surprised to find the table suddenly set. "Fancy," she said, "I wondered where you'd gone." Even though there were only the two of them there was the ritual of the meal, eaten by candle light, each vegetable in its own ivory casserole, the silver platter for the meat, and on Symphony evenings the music drifting through to them from the living

room radio. An enormous peace came over him; his black moods of the autumn vanished away into the past as quickly as they had first come upon him. The cottage, when they came to it at the end of the day, was a warm snug place, its lights shining out along the lane out of the darkness of the trees.

Miss Snow had her desk in the corner of the living room and often in the evening while he was listening to the radio or playing with the cats on the rug, she sat writing to the parents of her evacuees. She paused often, she turned to him.

"Now here's a little Czech girl, Irene," she said to him. "You should have seen her when she first came over, Paul. So small and terribly bewildered, I'm afraid, by all of us over here and by not having her parents with her. Her father's with the Czech government in exile so he had to stay in England. But you should have seen her, Paul. Do you know, she'd never had her hair cut and it was all in one beautiful braid right down her back. But when she started school over here, she got so teased about it that her foster mother phoned me and asked if I thought they ought to cut it off. So I said I didn't know and it really depended on Irene; it seemed a pity to cut it off, I thought and I didn't think they ought to do it if

Irene didn't want them to. And then I talked to Irene one day and she told me that the only reason she wanted to keep it now was that she was afraid her parents wouldn't recognize her when she went back. But really, she told me she wanted to have it cut like the other little girls at school. What we finally did was to cut it off and keep it so that she could take it back with her to prove to her parents that it was really she. I'm afraid I still thought it was an awful pity to snip off all that hair but that was what she wanted, I guess." She talked about many of her children, she would break off from her writing with some new anecdote, some new problem, she would ask his advice; why were school ties so important to the English boys? She had a boy whose foster mother had thrown away his old school tie because it was frayed and dirty, and there had been a scene.

He came in this way to know that he was not alone; indeed, it seemed to him that half the children in England were scattered about this city, watched over, looked out for by Miss Snow. "But then," she would say, "you're my special boy, the one that's actually come to stay with me and keep me company." However much he squirmed at these overt outbursts of affection, still he loved to hear them, loved to feel that of all the children, he, yes, <u>he</u> was the privileged one, the special object of her regard.

And yet he knew that his stay with her was not permanent, that she was trying to find him another foster family. "For you see, Paul dear, no matter how much I'd like to have you stay with me until it's time for you to go back to England, still you must go to school and I am home so little of the time especially when I'm visiting my other children that I can't possibly look after you properly, as I would like to." She was in close correspondence with his parents. "Such a nice letter from your mother this morning," she said. "Shall I read it to you? Won't it be nice when all this war business is over and you can go back to them and I can, I hope, go over and meet them some summer. Your mother tells me they have a cat now, a stray that they found in the coal shed one night. You didn't have any animals before, did you?" She often drew out of him the images of home; he struggled with memory now to remember how his parents looked. What were their faces like? He looked at the one photograph he had of them taken in Wales by a promenade photographer. No, this wasn't how they looked. How did they look really. He could not conjure it up. Strong came forth not looks but the smell of his father's tobacco and the colour and softness of his mother's pink flannel housecoat (about this, somehow, the scent of wintergreen) and the iciness of cold linen when he climbed into bed, his own. . .at home, feeling with his feet for the stone hot water bottle,

drawing it up beneath his legs and putting his feet flat upon the warm patch where it had lain. And porridge and treacle, nights in the shelter, the peculiar sound which the door to the corner cupboard made when you closed it. These memories, eclipsed so long, came back to him as he talked with Miss Snow. If he did not tell her precisely these things, if he said only that at home they, too, drank coffee in the morning, still the mere dry fact would bring these images back in their full force. He believed then that he would go back to his home, that Miss Snow would somehow manage it as she had managed Mrs. Richter.

Pearl Harbor was that December and America joined the war. "Well," said Miss Snow, "I guess it had to be something pretty sudden and shocking to put some sense into us. We should have been in this, helping England, a long time ago." Again Paul had the sense that nothing had changed, that after the drama of the declarations, it took a while before you could see any difference between the peace and the war. But this new phase of the grand and universal and utterly distant struggle had a more direct effect upon him and a more immediate one than the English declaration had had. For Miss Snow could no longer find him a foster family. "Dear Dr. and Mrs. Hope," she wrote to his parents,

> How glad you must be after these long years of war to be no longer alone! Whereas I was shocked

and deeply troubled by Pearl Harbor (it seems somehow totally inconceivable to be attacked by an oriental power) still I rejoiced to feel that at last we were in the fight with you and shall be giving something more than sympathy and Lend-Lease. We of course will never have to suffer the privations and dangers that you are going through on the home front, but now I feel that our two countries are drawn closer together both in spirit and in purpose.

Your own son, who is well and much happier and saner here with me (I feel the utmost personal guilt about the whole unfortunate situation at the Richters') is, although he does not know it yet, going to be affected more than he realizes by our entry into the war. This is what I would ask your advice about: our domestic scene is, as you can imagine, chaotic at the moment; husbands leaving for the services, split-up homes, general uncertainty. And I have found it very difficult to find a suitable foster home for Paul. There are several homes that offered to take an English child but none of these I felt were entirely suitable. It is necessary to be so much more careful since he has had this first bad experience. So I have thought, subject to your approval, that I would send him to a good private boarding school in New Hampshire; he always got on well, Mr. Augustus tells me, at the Robert Branch School, there was never anything wrong with the adjustment that he had to make. But I think he will never, after the let-down of the Richters, accept easily a substitute for the love you bear him, for the security of his real home. He can make his home with me for the holidays, except for the long summer vacation when I have to do a lot of traveling and during this period I thought he would probably be happier in a good summer camp. Do let me know your views on my scheme. I would hesitate to go ahead without some word from you. I think a private school would also have the advantage of keeping him closer to the syllabus he would have followed had he remained in England and will make the academic adjustment easier for him when he returns.

Sincerely,

Esther Harcourt Snow.

And Paul's father answered back that they were grateful beyond measure for her care of Paul and would, of

course, trust her judgment all the way along. But he did think, said Dr. Hope, that the closer the academic syllabus to the English one, the better. It did not do for Paul to get too far behind, so that for that reason alone he thought the boarding school idea was a good one.

By the time this letter arrived, Miss Snow had decided on a school and had arranged with the principal that Paul be allowed to arrive there when and if his parents approved. After the letter had come she took him into Boston and bought him a new grey overcoat, a blue suit and a brown fedora for Sunday church.

She told him that he would still come home to her for the holidays. "After all," she said, "it isn't right that I should keep you all for myself. You should be with some boys of your own age. After all," she said slowly, as though considering whether to tell him this, "After all, if you don't like it at Boscage, then you can write me a letter and I'll take you away. There's no need for you to stay, if you're not happy. But I think you'll like it very much." But Paul was greatly relieved, for he had dreaded the idea of going into another family. School, well, school was something he knew about. Everybody else was in the same boat at school; their parents weren't around. Just as his weren't around. He even

looked forward to going up to New Hampshire, for he was beginning to find time hanging heavy; there wasn't enough to do at Newton, that was the trouble.

It snowed hard for the three days before he was due to leave for school and when Miss Snow drove him up, the snow banks grew higher and higher at the sides of the roads as they drove farther north. The car ran soundlessly over the packed surface through a canyon of white. He could see nothing beyond the banks but the soft undulations of the hills in the distance.

. . . . . .

On the day that Paul arrived at Boscage, another boy left. The other boy's name was Brian Peat and he had run away for the second time. It was not a big school; there were three main buildings, the upper floors of which served as dormitories and the ground levels as classrooms; there was one smaller building which housed showers and a small assembly room and a study hall. All the buildings were colonial clapboard, tall and white with green shutters around the windows. About fifty boys went to Boscage, a small enough number so that the runaway was quickly noticed and the news spread like brushfire. "Peat's done it again." "Flower's gone over the hill." "Back to Momma for Flower.

Spenser knew all along. Flower sold his radio to Spenser so that he'd have the cash." "Peat gone done a retreat."

Why had he run away this time? Rumours, opinions, fabrications, out and out impossibilities rose with the steam of the locker room. Boys in adjacent showers poked their heads round the shower curtains, shouted over the topw of cubicles. Small naked groups congregated by the lockers absently drying themselves, listening to the most eminent of their orators who stood on benches above them, Romanesque, toga'd with a towel, venting their theories on the mob. Final condemnations of Flower were emphasized with the slamming of metal locker doors. The boys drifted out from the building slowly; they made their way now to one of the three dorms; they had half an hour's leisure before afternoon Study Hall.

"Nuts, just plain nuts, I'm telling you, crazy as a bedbug," said Gallagher, combing his wet hair slickly back as he walked. "D'jou ever see his room? Well, I mean no wonder they had to give the guy a single. No war posters, no Varga, not even a lousy pennant, nothing on the walls except a painting by this Italian joe. A crucifixion, for Cri'sake. Flower's not even a Catholic. Crazy as a coot. You think old Harris'll take him back again?"

"Oh, probably," said Brennan, shrugging. "What does it matter anyway. Honest to God, the uproar! Just because some creepy character. . .More small-town every day this place gets. So what. He's done it before. Why the confusion? He'll come back." Both boys leaned over now on the porch of Harris House to take off their overshoes. Then they went upstairs to the room which they shared on the second floor. They both lay back on their beds and thought about Flower. The crazy bastard. But neither would speak of him now. Gallagher did not want Brennan to think he had a small-town mentality and Brennan, having taken a sophisticated pose could not back down. Instead Brennan went to the window, scooped a snowball from the sill and threw it at a small figure standing irresolute between Study Hall and the dorm. The snowball found its mark; the small figure whirled round, he looked about him. But Brennan did not move away from the window and at last the small figure saw him there smiling insolently down upon him. Then Brennan turned back casually to Gallagher. "We've got time to sample the brew," he said.

"Before the cocktail hour? Naughty."

"It's a cold day," said Brennan. "I could do with a snort."

"Can't drink alone, boy, can't drink alone." Solemnly they reached for their VERRI-TAS steins (bequeathed by elder brothers) which they kept on the shelf above their beds and Gallagher went to the closet then and brought out the gallon of cider which they had fermented with the syrup from a bottle of maraschino cherries and which had now, they believed, the kick of sixteen Army mules. They filled mugs half full.

"Cheers," said Gallagher.

"Down the hatch," said Brannan.

. . . . . .

Paul and Miss Snow had been taken round the school quite hurriedly by Mr. Harris. He had seemed flustered, a little rushed, mumbled something about it being a confusing day. But he had shown Paul the room he was to share with one other boy in Harris House. "You won't have to go to Study Hall this afternoon," he said. "You may as well get unpacked and find your bearings. Your room-mate should be up from Sports in a little while. I'll leave you two to introduce each other." Paul set his bag down on the floor. This was obviously the time when he was meant to say goodbye to Miss Snow.

"I think you're taller than me," she said, kissing him on the cheek. "Now, you'll find out and let me know if you're allowed a weekend before Easter. And write to me anyway and let me know how things are going. Goodbye, dear."

"Goodbye," he said. Left alone, he could hear the sounds of the boys coming back from Sports. Left alone, he sensed that there was an odd kind of privilege in the fact that he was here, in the dorm at this time of the afternoon. He felt that time would henceforth be pretty scheduled; somehow the way Mr. Harris said SPORTS and STUDY HALL made him realize that these must have their definite hours in every day. How good, he thought, if the room-mate never came; and then knew that the wish came only because the room-mate mattered so much. Supposing they didn't get on, could you change room-mates? Or were you forever stuck with a dud? He didn't even know the guy's name. Did the guy know he was coming? Yes, surely, for there on the second bed were clean sheets, a new pillow and a pile of blankets.

He looked about the room, trying to assess from it something of the nature of his room-mate. Well, he has the best bed, he thought. The room was L-shaped, the window at the short arm of the L. Room-mate had drawn up his bed

at right-angles to the window, had obviously when he was living in the room alone tried to make the effect of a suite. The window part of the L was the bedroom and the long, broader, darker part of the room a sitting room of sorts. Paul could see along the wall where his own bed lay, a line where heads had rested against the wallpaper. And the phonograph and radio were placed at either end of Paul's bed as though it had been used as a couch. He saw on the radio a piece of adhesive tape with the owner's name. "Brian Otis Peat" it said. So there you were. Brian Otis Peat was his room-mate. Peat had decorated his room with pennants. Bates, read Paul, Harvard, Michigan State, Ohio, Amherst, Princeton, Exeter. Up above Paul's bed was a circle of pennants and a line of them ran round to the window. On Peat's bed was a felt pillow, maroon with a white letter B on it. Above the bed with an area of wall to itself a maroon pennant saying Boscage.

Well, he thought, I'm not going to have my bed there at all. I want to have <u>some</u> light at least. I'll move it over to the corner. However, something stopped him from doing this right away. Perhaps it would be better to talk it over with Peat. At the same time he decided, I will not make the bed. There was something final about making the bed, as though afterward one could not change its position. No, he could not unpack, or arrange until

Peat came back. He listened; there was no more shouting from outside, the throng of boys had disappeared somewhere. He would leave this room, he decided, and go and look around. He couldn't just sit on the bed in the empty room, in the silent house.

As he went down the stairs, boys were coming into the house; they swarmed up the stairs, staring at him as he went by. When he reached the porch, he turned away from the stream of boys that was emerging from the shower building and walked by himself down the driveway towards the front of the house. He walked right round the house, through the deep snow piled on the lawn until he came to face the Study Hall once more. And then stood watching the last boys leave. One of these utterly strange faces was that of his room-mate, Brian Otis Peat. He stood on the periphery of a great curling field of snow which ran from the main road to a small copse of pines which landscaped the tennis courts. He stood slightly above the emerging students, looking down on them, feeling in some way that he had trekked across unending reaches of barren snow and in a fold of land had discovered the warm lights of a little village; there it was so near, and yet because he had trekked. . .The snowball hit him on the back, and he whirled quickly around, the snow coming in over his snowboots. He looked up at the dormitory above him; there at a lighted

window a boy gazed down, he rubbed his hands together, he smiled with complete indifference to Paul, he closed the window, he moved calmly away, acting as though it were his custom every day at exactly half-past four to throw a snowball at someone from his window. Paul saw the line along the sill where the snow had been scooped.

. . . . . .

"God, no," said Paul's room-mate. "God, no, Flower? Where did you get that idea?"

"From the radio," said Paul. "It had the name Brian Peat on it so I thought that you were Brian Peat."

"I'm Steve Spenser," said the boy. "I bought the radio from Flower, Brian Peat that is, so that he would have the money to run away. At least he didn't tell me that's what he wanted it for, but every time he's run away before he's sold his radio to me for ten dollars and then when he comes back he buys it from me again for fifteen. It's a cinch; for three days he stays home and then he's sent back here, his Ma always gives him some extra cash." He flopped onto the bed. "You're Paul Hope, aren't you. Old Meg came round and told me you were coming."

"Um. Well, I guess I'd better unpack." He began to open the large, now battered suitcase that he had brought from England, saw Spenser gazing at it, then gazed at Spenser. Their eyes met and they both looked away quickly. Paul noticed Spenser's dark calf Gladstone lying under the closet curtain with the initials S.G.S. in gold, was first ashamed of his own fibre luggage, then suddenly disliked Spenser intensely. He had taken off his shoes and was glancing idly through a copy of Time magazine. Paul could see in profile the pale face, spotted with freckles around the cheekbones, heavy around the jowls, the long blond hair brushed back behind his ears, kept firmly in place with hair cream. He wore a pair of tan gabardine trousers and a brown tweed jacket with a large houndstooth check. No, Paul thought, he's being nice enough so far. But he distrusted the large, uneven mouth, the thin adult lines of shrewdness that had appeared when he had talked of the radio.

"Why did Peat run away?" Paul asked, making an effort to be pleasant.

"Flower, you mean. Nobody calls him Peat. Flower? Who knows? How would I know? He didn't find a home at Boscage. He's a creep, that's why. Nobody, I mean <u>nobody</u> would associate with a creep like that. Like the

time he locked himself in the can for three hours. The only can on the whole floor, for Cri'sake, and we had prunes for dessert. Finally old Bradbury (he's the house master) had to break down the door and there was Flower standing looking out of the window." But Spenser told the story, Paul thought, as though he learned it by heart from somebody else and had told it many times before. And now he was eating chocolates from a half-empty box on the bureau. Munch, munch, the jaws slack and heavy. Paul had nothing to say; he put underwear and socks into the old green bureau that was obviously meant for him. The second drawer was warped and would not slide properly. When he tugged hard at it, it came right out and he tumbled to the floor.

"That bureau," said Spenser, "is undoubtedly a piece of crap. I know, believe me, I know. I had it for two months before the last guy moved out." In the hall a bell rang. "Study Hall," said Spenser, "come on, let's go."

"Mr. Harris said I didn't have to go today," said Paul, "not till I get my bearings."

"Lucky old you." Spenser moved to the mirror to comb his hair. He had a way of walking with his shoulders; as each leg moved the corresponding shoulder moved

with it as though he were trying to wade quickly across the shallow end of a swimming pool. He straightened his tie. And then in through the door burst Gallagher and Brennan.

"Stevie-weevie," they chorused, clapping him on the back, roughing his hair. "You don't know how we missed you, Stevie. Where'd you go, Stevie, weren't on the slopes today, where'd you go, picking snow-drops?"

"Stupe," said Gallagher, "the only asset you've got to your crummy name. On our toboggan we need weight and Christ you're fat, Stevie boy. So where are you today for the long downhill. Off in the woods for a ramble in the snow."

"And a right to the body and a left to the head and he's sagging on the ropes and he's riding with the count." Brennan prodded Spenser with his open hand.

"Aw, lay off, you guys. Cut it out." Stevie, all aplomb gone, floundered like an ageing turtle over to the closet and put on his macinaw.

"Who'd your friend," said Gallagher.

"New boy."

"Oh, you can do better than that, Stevie boy."

"Why don't you ask him yourself," said Spenser with a certain pouting dignity.

"Paul Hope," said Paul quickly. "I just came this afternoon." He and Brennan were looking each other straight in the eye. Brennan gave that same slow, lazy smile.

"I never saw anyone move as. . .slowly as you do, Stevie, old pal. Come on, Stevie, Study Hall. Mustn't be late or Stevie will get a demerit." They bundled him into his macinaw, pulled the ear flaps of his cap down over his ears and strong-armed him out of the door. But before they got out the door Paul had time to say,

"Stevie, I'm moving my bed over into the L while you're away. I haven't got any light over here at all."

The first week was the hardest, the first month was the longest. By the end of the first month Paul found life very pleasant. Classes were only in the morning; all classes except the very largest were held in small glassed-

in porches which had been built onto the side of the dormitories. Most classes had not more than ten boys and they all sat in chairs with wide arms for writing and the sun streamed in the morning long. Paul was immensely surprised to find himself in the same class with Brennan and Gallagher, for they were at least three years older than he. And Spenser, although this was his second year at Boscage, was one form below Paul. They had forms instead of grades; that was like England. And the subjects were more like Budleigh too, although you took only four each year. Paul took English, French, Latin and Social Science.

In the afternoons Sports took place on the slopes beyond the orchard. Sleds and toboggans lacerated the expanse of white hillside with smooth, wide weals, the scar-tissue of toboggan tracks and with the thin, sharp runner tracks of the sleds that flexed more freely over the half-mile incline. Paul, having no sled, had to be content to make up crew for a toboggan where he could. This late in the season the teams were fairly fixed; often he had to stand at the top of the hill watching everyone else go down, or else hitch a precarious ride on the back of someone else's sled. But he had never known such a thrill; down you raced towards the narrow gap in the trees, through, over the bumps beyond, finally if the snow was fast enough that day, on to the icy bed of a stream. And once having

gained the ice, you careened faster, ever faster through corridors of brush, over dim, forgotten lagoons almost to the river itself. And the wind in your lungs like a sword, your knees taking the strain on the bumps, your body leaning into the curves, your cheeks on fire!

Brennan met him once at the bottom of the hill. "Tow it up," he said, indicating the toboggan, "and you can ride down this trip." Paul took the rope willingly. "You know, kid," said Brennan ponderously, "I've been watching you. You lean not too bad, not too bad at all. Your timing's good, you got a good feel for the ground. If you had a little more weight now, you could maybe take over Spenser's place. The trouble with Spenser is he's dead weight; he doesn't know how to shift it. How much do you weigh, kid?"

"A hundred and forty," said Paul, adding only five pounds.

"Not enough by about twenty," said Brennan. "We need weight like mad. Listen, I'll tell you what we'll do. If you want to do this, okay, you're in. In the gym room they got a whole pile of lead weights they use for ballast inside the jumping horse. I guess they weight about ten pounds apiece. Borrow a couple of those when no one's

looking. They're small enough to fit in your macinaw pockets. Then we'll bring them up here and stow them in the pines up there. Then you can weight yourself up before you go down. What do you say?"

Paul nodded. "Sure, it'd be terrific."

"You don't even have to steal the weights. I'll ask Joe Pulaski. He's not going to say 'No'. I'm his number one pitcher." They had reached the top of the hill. "Come on down now for a trial work-out," said Brennan. "Hold on. We have to wait for Gallagher."

In this way Paul quickly superceded his roommate. Not that Spenser seemed to mind, indeed he didn't seem to care about anything very strongly. He lived, Paul discovered, in a plethora of candy bars and lotions, talcs and hair creams; he always had plenty of clean shirts, good sports coats, neatly pressed slacks, but he rarely changed his socks. Paul had never lived so close to anyone before; even when he and Austin were sharing, still they didn't have to look after themselfes, as the kids did at Boscage. But the room had altered noticeably in the month that Paul had been there. Pennants were now confined to the wall above Spenser's bed; Spenser's bureau had been moved from the short arm of the L and was replaced by Paul's bed.

Paul with areas of bare wall that he was now responsible for, asked Brennan what he should do. Brennan pointed to the array of huge war posters that decorated his own room. "We sent to Washington for these," he said. "We said we were a current affairs club and we needed some posters for display. It was our original idea. But so many guys sent in after us, they got wise. They're not sending them any more. I'll tell you, though. We got one we didn't have room for." He went over to the bureau and pulled out the heavy paper poster. "You can have that if you want."

Paul opened up the poster. It was nearly as tall as he was; on it was a picture of a young and earnest surgeon straight from the operating room with his rubber gloves on, his mask obviously just cast aside. And in big red letters: GIVE BLOOD NOW. Well, it wasn't the Marines or the Army Air Corps but it was a poster. And it was a gift from Brennan and Gallagher. He thanked them and rushed to put it up in his own room. He put it on the wall facing the door.

These were the circumstances which led to the nickname which he kept all the time he was at Boscage. He was called from then on "The Vampire" or "Vampire" or simply "Vamp". He did not mind the name; it wasn't like

"Flower". And under the initial sponsorship of Gallagher and Brennan, the paternal protection they gave him, he found it no trouble to be popular. He was far enough away from the two of them in age and in the way he went about things so that even their enemies like him. "He's a good kid, Hope," said the enemies of Gallagher and Brennan. "Too bad he got in with those guys." Gallagher and Brennan had a repubation for wild deeds; they drank like fiends, it was said, they smoked, not in the woods like most of the kids, but right in the dorm and old Bradbury knew about it and was too scared to do anything. Once they had a black magic ritual and sacrificed a white mouse. But the most heinous sin of all was that neither of them had any other friends. The two of them stayed quite aloof; they did not give a good god-damn what anybody else thought about them, masters or boys.

But Paul was English, the only Englishman in the school. People would no longer have noticed this; the accent showed itself only at times, in slow deliberation or when he was puzzled. And he had out-grown all his English clothes. Mr. Harris, however, let nobody forget it. "And what does our English friend say to this proposition?" he would say in class. Or "I understand your country makes the best marmalade in the world, Paul. What do you think about American marmalade?" Paul would have hidden his Englishness if

he could have; he did not want to stand out, to be regarded differently because of it, would have gladly strangled Mr. Harris on each of these occasions. Curiously enough it worked in his favour, for Gallagher and Brennan were Irish. Nobody could see the Irish and English making a go of things for very long, least of all the other Irish in the school. Thus he did not share with the other two the general distrust with which they were viewed by the school. Also Paul was two years ahead in class; it didn't do to be too brainy at Boscage but in some way he was excused this too. You could be brainy, ran the code, if you were English. It was too bad but you couldn't help it; it was a national characteristic.

He didn't have any time to think about whether he liked Boscage or not, but he knew he was completely at ease and he had friends in all three of the dorms. By the end of term Mr. Harris gave him the chance to earn some money delivering papers to subscribers in the school, both masters and boys, before breakfast. It was a prestige job and paid fifteen dollars a month. With his first fifteen dollar advance he bought Peat's radio from Spenser. It was the first object he had ever earned by working. Peat had never come back; there were rumours that he had been sent to another school, and Spenser, who already had a radio, was sore that he would not make his usual profit. He was glad to sell it.

. . . . . .

But Flower came back the following term. With the effrontery of an outlaw he presented himself at twelve midnight on the first day of term and explained that his uncle had driven him up and that his uncle hadn't been able to leave the office until late afternoon. Nor did he come to breakfast the following morning. But everyone knew he was back. Gallagher and Brennan knew because they had the room next door to him, heard the door of his room open late at night and saw the crack of light fall across the hallway. "Flower's back," said everyone at breakfast; they speculated on how long it would be for this time.

Paul, ever since the first day when he thought that Flower was his room-mate, had felt a curious connection between himself and the other boy, as though some slip, some aberration of fate had given him Spenser instead of Peat. And as he listened to the wild tales told about Flower, the universal contempt in which he was held, Paul felt that no one could be so weak and so reckless, so monastic and so apron-strung, so gutless and so naive as Flower was made out to be. He was fascinated with the idea of a person who could inspire so many degrees and shades of dislike from so many people. He had not heard a good word said for Flower by anyone. "But there must be something good

about him," he had said to Gallagher. "I mean, he must have some friends."

"He's a creep, that's all. Nobody likes him. Do you think there's anybody who'd stay in that room of his five minutes with that crazy picture on the wall? Leave him alone, Vamp, just leave him be. He doesn't belong in this school and the sooner he finds out the better."

He first saw Flower in Latin class. Everyone looked up when he came in. He was a short boy, who wore a dark brown tweed jacket and had light brown hair brushed straight back with no parting. The eyes were brown also, flecked noticeably with yellow, eyes that were never still, wandering over the small group of boys, never looking downwards, always at people, but never maintaining a level gaze; eyes not furtive but intense, alert, moving, like those of a nervous starling.

There were many more chairs in that room than there were students. Mr. Merriman, the Latin teacher, liked his class in the first two rows, not scattered diffusely all over the room, so that the class always sat in a small knot at the front. Flower went straight to the back of the room, sat down in the last row, unzipped his loose-leaf

and looked down at the blank page in front of him. Paul could see why he was called "Flower". It was the flush in his cheeks, the peculiar natural red that splotched forth in round, defined patches below his cheekbones that looked like the bloom upon a petal. The name suited him; he was not an attractive looking specimen. He walked, Paul noticed, in gauche, over-large steps, his neck thrust forward, uncompromising, as though daring someone to hit his unprotected chin. He said nothing; the class said nothing to him. A mute enmity, a definite tension was present between the knot of boys and Flower at the back of the room. The class chatter was inhibited by his very appearance; the talk was low now, too low for him to overhear; nobody turned around to look at him. A series of side-long glances, up and down the two rows, a phalanx of slyly grinning faces. Nobody said a word.

And even, Paul thought, even Mr. Merriman seemed to dislike Flower. He asked him curtly to kindly move up to the front of the room with the rest of the students. "No, the second row, not the third, if you please, Peat,"

said Mr. Merriman. Not fair, thought Paul, not fair at all. I'd run away too if everyone treated me like this.

Peat sat down beside him. Mr. Merriman started to read the roll. From this point on they were not allowed to talk unless they were called upon. Mr. Merriman was strict and it wasn't worth a demerit to be caught talkigg. But here beside Paul was this strange and lonely boy. Paul took a sheet from his notebook. "THIS IS WHERE WE GOT TO AT THE END OF LAST TERM," he wrote, showed Flower the note, pointed to a line about the Helvetii. Flower looked at him with a new interest, startled that anyone would help. He scribbled something on the corner of his Latin book.

"THANK YOU. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HERE VERY LONG, HAVE YOU?"

"THE MIDDLE OF LAST TERM." Paul smiled at him.

"Hic, haec, hoc," said Mr. Merriman. "Declension please f-r-r-o-m-m" (he looked down the attendance sheet) "Peat," he said crisply.

"Hic, haec, hoc, huius, huius, huius, hŭic, huic, huic. . ." He stopped for a moment, troubled.

"Hunc, hanc, hoc, hoc, hac, hoc," whispered Paul. Gallagher and Brennan both turned slowly from the front row and sneered at him.

"Hunc, hanc, hoc, hec, hac, hoc," said Flower.

"Two demerits, Hope," said Mr. Merriman, "one for talking and one for prompting. The plural, if you please, Peat, this time unaided."

Paul saw Flower again that evening. At supper they sat at different tables but then after evening study hall, Flower came along to Paul's room.

"Oh, you've moved in here," he said.

"Yes, I room with Steve Spenser."

"He's not here, huh?"

"No, he went to take a shower."

"Oh. . .well what I wanted to see him about was my radio, but it'll do later on."

"Oh," said Paul. "What actually happened was

that Spenser thought you weren't coming back so he sold the radio to me. You wanted to buy it back from him, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Flower, "sort of. I mean, I always have. But I guess if you've bought it you want to hold onto it." Paul thought a minute.

"Maybe you should have it back," he said. "I don't need it that much. It's kind of silly to have two radios in one room. I mean you can't have them both on at once. And anyway I can always talk Spenser into changing the station."

"You can?"

"Sure. Why not? Stevie's sort of dead weight. You don't have to argue with him. You just say what you want and then he whines a bit and the end of it all is that you do what you wanted to do in the first place. I don't need your radio. Probably you ought to have it back. I mean you were only pawning it sort of, anyway."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Well, thanks a lot. Here's the money then." He handed Paul a ten dollar bill and a heap of ones.

"But you sold it for only ten," said Paul. "And I only bought it for ten." He lied not quite easily about this last point, too conscious of being kind. But still he thought it a great humiliation for this awkward creature who stood before him that Stevie, Stevie of all people should be able to dun him down. He handed Flower the small bills.

"I've always paid Spenser fifteen for it," he said.

"Well, I'm selling it to you for ten."

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

"I'm Paul Hope."

"My name's Brian Peat. I guess you've heard all about me anyway." A queer expression of pride passed across his face, as though in some degree he valued his notoriety.

"Just what people have told me. I don't pay much attention to that."

"Oh. . .well I guess I'd better go. It's nearly time for evening Hall. Thanks again." And he was off.

The friendship developed slowly. There was some proud and thoroughbred strain in Brian which would dart to the surface, make him turn away, not admit help or comfort from any quarter. There were days when Paul would go down to his room, knock on the door, and hear Brian calling from the inside,

"Go away, Paul, I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to see anyone. I just want to be left on my own." Irritated, Paul would stomp down the corridor.

"All right, sulk, be on your own. Go on and sulk, be a <u>child</u> by all means. See if I care." Into Brennan and Gallagher he would go.

"God, what a creep, that Flower. I don't see how he gets that way. Can you see him, I mean really?"

"The way you're going, Vamp, the way you're going, you're gonna be as bad as he is soon. What d'ya wanta hang around with a guy like that all the time for? What do you bet in an hour you'll be all buddy-buddy again?

We got no time for that kid at all. You know what I told you. Leave him alone. He's got no business in a school like this. You're gonna drag yourself right down with him. You're a popular kid. What do you need him for" But he paid little heed to this. His welcome from the two of them grew more remote. Occasionally when Brian was having one of his moods, when Paul could no longer talk easily to Gallagher and Brennan then he felt suddenly that Brennan was right, that the friendship wasn't worth these moments of being alone, without friends. He too would brood and sulk upon his bed.

But as the friendship deepened, he found the satisfaction, the warmth, the closeness of it comparable only to his old friendship with Andy McTurk. And something more. For now he was the strength, how he was the one to make decisions, to console; that sense of command, of control, he felt for the first time. Brian Peat made two or three friends that term, all of them through Paul. Because Paul was willing to stick up for him, the attitude of the whole school changed, however imperceptibly. No, he was still disliked pretty generally. But some few would talk to him now. When the tennis courts were lined, the net mended and erected, Brian Peat did not find it too hard to get a game. He was a good player for his age; he gave you a good fast game.

Gallagher and Brennan did not change; for the first time they had admitted someone to their circle; Paul Hope. Someone to protect, someone younger to father, someone to deify them. And they resented the way that Flower had destroyed all this. They looked for a chance to get even and found it.

There had been an epidemic of tennis ball stealing. Several boys had lost whole boxes but usually only single balls were taken. No amount of heavy initialing, it seemed, stopped the thief from rubbing out the initials or altering them so that they were his own. Brennan and Gallagher met Flower and Hope coming up from the courts, carrying their rackets. Flower was carrying the string bag full of tennis balls.

"I was just coming up," began Flower. But Gallagher, strutting down the slope from the Study Hall cut him off.

"Look, Brennan, look in the bag," he said. There bulging out of the side of the string bag was a tennis ball with the initials R.A.B. plainly marked in purple ink.

"You dirty little worm," shouted Brennan, "you crummy no-good bastard." He went slowly up to Flower,

drew back his arm and slapped him full in the face. Flower stood for what seemed like minutes, the shock of it draining his cheeks. Then he hit Brennan, a hard unexpected blow which glanced off his chin. Rage. Brennan went for him then, charged with high anger. Flower was pinned against the side of the Study Hall, now doing nothing but ward off what blows he could. And Paul, now suddenly leaping on Brennan's back, pulling him back, away, covering his eyes, dragging him back and down with the tenacity of a leech. Gallagher, now took on Flower but the latter had had time to get away from the wall. He fought around now, he played for the ground until he had Gallagher lower on the slope. Then he held his own, fighting with a quick deft science that Gallagher had not expected.

Paul and Brennan now tangled, struggled, rolled and wrestled down the green bank of the slope. And having reached the bottom of the incline, they scraped and slipped among the loose pine needles, until they were standing once more. And Paul backed up, gave ground until he was pinned against the trunk of a tree, felt himself slipping then, a red mist before his eyes, the churning relentless fists, the roughness of the bark through his shirt. And summoning up some last store of ferocity, struck blindly out. And heard the scream, and felt a surge of joy. The blows no longer fell. He slid to the ground, he saw through his

daze, Brennan, his mouth running red, leaning against a tree spitting, gazing down at his hand, gazing in disbelief at the tooth that Paul had knocked out.

. . . . . .

EPILOGUE

He lay in his bedroom in the dark and the tick of the grandfather clock came to him as he lay. Since the charwoman had screamed, great fathoms of silence, great oceans of time had flowed along and by. Everything had been so still; the intensity of the single piercing scream had drowned all other sound, as though his eardrums had shattered, he would no longer hear.

Except for the tick of the clock. And he could see the ship still overturned above the numeral six. Yet surely it was midnight, nine o'clock at least. Only half-past four, only half an hour since last he moved from the bed, since he put on his tennis shoes and climbed through the window. How long ago since he had crawled from beneath his grandmother's bed and lay down here again. Not more than minutes. He could not have slept. He felt the daze of shock lifting, dissipating like a slow morning mist. He found himself waiting, as he always had, for the sound of his father's first footsteps on the stair, the jingle of the keys and change in his pockets, the final step, the creaks of boards along the landing. Inevitably it would come. His father would come to him.

He came; the sharp clack of his footsteps on the tiles of the hall, then stair footsteps, slow, weighted with fatigue, then creaks upon the landing, then his father

here in the room with him, the smell of the pipe smoke, his father saying to him,

"We have decided that perhaps you should stay here after all. Perhaps your grandmother would have liked you to be there."