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HELL-LOZ

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Helicon Staff 1957

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The staff of the Helicon dedicates this volume to

Doctor Vincent Aloia

and

Doctor Herbert Perluck

who have established as their goals the awakening and the stimulation of thought within the student body. They will be well remembered by those who have studied with them, for they have presented an intellectual challenge to all. Those who have been willing to accept this challenge realize that these men are truly master teachers.

"I'm called away by particular business.
But I leave my character behind me."

Richard Sheridan

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**"The Self is the goal of knowledge.
Know him and go beyond death."**

The Upanishads: *Prasna*

DARK AWAKENING

By HAROLD SIPPLES

John was trying to read, but the printed words were clouded by the intensity of sounds that issued from his mother. She was talking, talking...never seeming to stop, never seeming to need a breath of air to sustain her chattering. She kept asking him to go to his uncle's house for the evening, but her plea had been made too many times to have significance. Her words were now almost a blur, sounds that floated into an area beyond his comprehension.

Suddenly his mother realized that her words were isolated from his thoughts. She stood a moment, allowing the realization to grip her, to change her into a person who was no longer capable of pleading; she became restless and demanded an answer. She spoke again, but her voice had found a new sharpness. She raised her pitch until she spoke in a semi-shout.

"Are you listening to me?"

"I always listen, Ma."

"Will you change your mind and come with us to your uncle's house? It's a shame the way you coop yourself up in this house and never want to go anywhere. It's a wonder you haven't gone blind the way you read morning, noon, and night. There isn't a bit of color in your face."

...And on, and on...until again she had lost her son. John sat staring at the wallpaper patterned with large pink ugly flowers that had once been gaudy, before the sun had drawn most of the color from the paper. His eyes passed to the large pink flowers on the faded rug. They were roses. Then he looked at the picture of a vase of flowers painted on a dull green background, the nice work of a man without talent. He turned his eyes to the only pleasing sight in the room, a bookcase filled with new books. The bookcase was lovely, but it was out of place in the room; it was an intruder that had set its mark but was capable of leaving only a minor impression.

Not being part of the sights and sounds around him, John waited for nothingness, hoping to return soon to his reading. The sounds stopped.

John realized that his mother was nervously waiting for an answer. He took a quick look into her eyes and saw determination mixed with hatred, but not toward him, only toward the silence. His mother could wait no longer; she spoke.

"Why don't you answer me?"

"I told you already that I don't want to go, and I won't change my mind."

"Frank, where are you? Frank? Will you come in here for a minute? Frank."

"Pa won't change my mind, either. After I get a little peace and quiet, I'll just sit here and read. I thought you were in a hurry to leave? What are you waiting for?"

"If you had any respect for me, you wouldn't force me to beg you like this. Come with us to your uncle's as a favor to me. Please say you'll come."

"I'm going out for a while."

"You'll do no such thing. Frank, will you come in here? Your father will straighten you out. You're getting a little too big for your britches."

"What do you want?" His father had entered the room.

"I've asked John to go to Ted's with us, but he won't even listen to me. He has no respect for his own mother."

"Won't listen to your mother, eh? Maybe I can pound a little respect into you."

The blow landed on John's face, but he did not try to pull away. Everything was unreal; only the pain that came later had any meaning; the pain was the first thing that broke through his armor. A tenseness began to surge through his body until he was incapable of controlling his feelings. He had to get away before the decaying pink flowers and the endless conversation became more than he could cope with. John ran from the room, slammed the door, and stood in the cool night air, too filled with emotion to realize that he was in his shirt sleeves. But he had not completely escaped. His father's God-awful voice shouted from the doorway. He stopped to listen.

"Come back here. I'll tear you apart if you don't get back in this

house. This is your last chance. Are you coming in? He's gone. Did you hear that, Ma? He wouldn't come in when I told him to."

Suddenly his mother's voice came from inside the house. She sounded apologetic.

"It's my fault. I got him excited by trying to get him to go out with us. I guess he's getting a little too old to handle. Let's forget about the whole thing. We'll go to Ted's and ..."

"I'm not going anywhere until that book-reading little sissy comes home. I'll break his neck. I'll lie on the bed until he gets scared and comes home. You better wake me up as soon as he comes in."

"All right, dear. But don't be too hard on the boy."

"Oh, go to hell."

John had heard enough. He ran for two minutes without stopping. Then he stood with the cold air circling his body. He tried to think of a solution, but nothing came. The answers he sought were in none of the books he had read. He knew that much. He had to make a decision, but he was afraid of losing the little identity he had. He feared the future almost as much as the stagnant past. He needed to live in a world where people lived, felt, and died. That kind of life was real. It was good to know that someday he would die. It made him feel alive. He was not ready to go home, not yet, not ever, though he had to go home, if only to say goodbye. But what if he were afraid again, forced to live in that room again, and listen again and again and again to the time-consuming chatter of his mother? He had to think. John needed all the reasons he could find so that he would be strong enough to return...

His mother called from the kitchen that supper was ready. John pulled himself out of bed and headed for the bathroom to wash.

"Are you two getting up or do you want a cold supper? I shouldn't waste my time cooking around this house. Nobody appreciates anything around here."

"I'm ready to eat, Ma."

"Where's your lazy father?"

"On the couch."

"Well, if he doesn't want to eat let him go hungry."

John began to eat; still his father did not come.

"Are you coming out here before I throw this supper in the swill?"

"I'm coming, just leave me alone."

His father started to cut an onion for his potatoes.

"By the time you fry that onion, the supper will be cold."

"When I want advice from a freak I'll ask for it."

"Look who's calling someone a freak. You don't see me with a stomach that hides my shoes."

"Shut your stupid mouth."

"Just remember when you weigh three hundred pounds that I warned you."

The plate of food crashed against the floor.

"I can't even enjoy my supper without listening to your stinking mouth. Someday I'm going to put my fist right through your face and enjoy going to jail for doing it."

"I hope you don't think I'm going to pick up that mess."

The palm of his father's hand hit against her face.

"What did I ever do to deserve being married to a lunatic?"

John was afraid to open his mouth. His mother was still crying when his father slammed the kitchen door as he left.

Someone prodded John awake the next morning. He opened his eyes and stared at his mother.

"Get out of bed and ask your father if he's going to church. I don't want to talk to him after last night."

"Is he awake yet?"

"He's pretending that he's asleep but he isn't."

"I don't want to."

"You get out of bed and do as I say."

"All right. But I'll ask only once. If he says no I'll walk to church."

"If he doesn't go he'll have two sins on his soul. He knows that I

can't walk to church. He has enough sins on his soul already without adding more."

John washed and dressed. His mother was watching him so that he could not leave without seeing his father. John entered the bedroom.

"Are you awake, Pa?"

No answer, only a heavy breathing.

"Ma wants to know if you're taking us to church."

He waited a while before turning to leave.

"You can tell your mother that I'd rather go to hell than listen to her rotten mouth all the way to church. If she wants to go bad enough, she can walk."

His mother was waiting for him.

"I heard what he said. You get to church. If anyone wants to know where your mother and father are, tell them your father wouldn't get out of bed to take me to church. Tell everyone whose fault it is."

John went to church, without realizing that they were not Christians....

The house was in darkness when John got home hours later. He opened the front door and lit the parlor light. His mother was asleep with the Bible on her lap. He stared at her for a moment. Then he looked at the Bible. He felt sick. His mother stirred, opened her eyes, and stared at him, not speaking.

"I'm leaving. I never want to see you or Pa again. But I want you to know exactly how I feel. Give me the Bible. I want you to think about what I'm going to do. Maybe someday you'll understand."

She watched him, horror-stricken, as he deliberately tore pages from the Bible and threw them on the floor.

THY WILL BE DONE

BY JOHN BRAY

The clanging bell woke him at 5:30 that morning. He shivered in the cold and turned over to get some more sleep, but it didn't do him any good. This wasn't the morning for sleeping.

He rolled back on his side and studied the long black robe hanging on the door opposite him. The curling white starched collar and the dusty little black calotte still lay on the table where he had put them with his crucifix and his rosary beads the night before, and his suitcase still stood up against the back wall of his cell.

He jumped out of bed, pulled on his slippers, and hurried down the long corridor of cubicles to his wash stand. Already, faint, timid stirrings could be heard in the other cells as the brothers prepared themselves for the day's activities. He splashed some cold water on his face to get the rest of the sleepiness out of his eyes, and then he hurried back to get ready for what lay ahead.

Kissing the crucifix, he dropped it around his neck and reached for his robe. He pressed his lips to the rough black wool and started to slip it over his head when he suddenly realized just what was going to happen.

This was the last time that Brother Asquinas Robert would feel the weight of a robe on his shoulders; the last time that he would fasten the white rabato around his neck. He would never tip his calotte in greeting again. Never again would he feel the reassuring slap of the robe against his ankles as he hurried from chapel to class or to meditation.

He didn't go to his appointed place in chapel. Instead, he climbed the stairs to the choir loft and slid onto one of the benches along the wall. There below him, in row after row of black-clad solitude, knelt his brothers. Never before had he felt so remote or so awed by the presence of peace. He reached into his pocket for his prayer book and struggled to bring his mind out of its whirlwind and into the business at hand.

"In aeternum nostrum, omnis terra...."

As silently as he had entered, he slipped out through the chapel door into the morning air. Beyond the land that stretched before him lay the Hudson River. The sun's rays bounced off the water and sent streams of warmth over the fields. In spite of the heat he shivered.

As he started back to the cell, he slowly unhooked the robe. He was crying.

LOSS OF THE MORNING SUN

BY ROBERT FRAPPIER

The metal is cold against my neck. I press against it hard, but it doesn't do any good. It is still cold. The leather straps feel strange, not tight, but with the hair shaved off, things feel strange against the skin.—They have to shave in just the right places. They have a doctor do it. He spoke little and when he did his words were quick and sharp. He put his razor away with meticulous care. He was a dedicated man. When they started to go, I played with the idea of charging after them before the gate closed—I'd get in front of them, stop them, scream at them, and pound their dull faces, and make them know it was a mistake—then the bars slid into place with a whine and a clatter, and I was left staring after them. There were muttered words in the corridor, a rasping laugh, the scrape of leather on the steel stairs, and the staccato echo of the cellblock door as it closed itself. The moment of expectation was gone. I was released. I looked at my hands and they were white and cramped from gripping the edge of the bunk too long, too tightly. There was a fluid silence, the silence of the living, and I could hear playing cards slide on a hardwood table and the nasal breathing of the guard. I moved quickly around my cell. I felt draft on my neck. I put the collar of the prison shirt up, but the coarse cloth felt peculiar on the bare spot. I put the collar down and covered the spot with my hand, but that felt strange, too. I did not try any more. The bareness no longer bothered me. The only light came from a dim bulb caged in the ceiling. My cell, like the others in the block, had no window and I could not look out on the morning world. Then I wanted a window badly. I thought how, outside, the sun would be shining warmly, and the white clouds would be forming dark moving patterns on the water—the blue water, restless, white capped blue, self-contained motion. The spray would be visible on the mainland. It would fly up, released, and then fall cascading over the rocks, defining elements it had not been able to wear away. The city's buildings would stand out bone-white against the blue of the world. The city of gold bleached. Then I knew I was thinking wrong. I looked around my cell. It wasn't mine any more. It never was, really. It just helped to think so. The satin smooth walls and the green bars were without relief, and without the identity of the men whom they had restrained.

(I left nothing behind but people relieved to have me sentenced because a little, weasel-faced man pointed at me in court and said, "That's the man." The court room responded well. I had an eloquent lawyer, but Pointed-face said all the louder, "That's the man." And the court room took a common breath; and so, he rose and leaned forward, pointed and said again, "That's the man." That's what they remembered. The jury sat there, secure in the seat of judgement, and it was quite an adventure for them.) I wanted to scratch my initials on the walls or on the bars but I had nothing to scratch with—They are very careful—They take everything away from you that you can scratch with. They don't want you doing their job. It is not punishment unless they pull the switch; or maybe they consider the pre-deaths as part of the punishment: That is when you stand and wait. When someone else has gone, and you stand against the bars watching your little shadow, and you wait for the lights to dim, (They dim three times: in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and there is no amen because you are dead long before. They are just giving the charge needed to switch you over to a higher frequency of things,) and your stomach heaves up to your throat, and your blood pounds warm in your ears. That's the way it is when they come for you, but once you start walking, everything settles down, and you don't have to keep swallowing hard. Then you finally understand why they go so slow. They make a ceremony of it. It feels good to go if you don't think too far ahead. If you do, you panic: I only panicked once. I misstepped in the procession and I knew they wouldn't make me go quietly—I'd scream, I'd cry, I'd struggle, and they'd pity me. I knew they'd feel good pitying and forgiving. Then I was all right again. I was walking in step and I could hear their leather heels on the floor, but my prison shoes didn't make any noise. Then I was in the room. I couldn't see the witnesses very well. They were all in shadows. I was in the strong light and it was hard to see into the shadows. I wanted to think of something clever to say, something to make them doubt, but I couldn't. Then the priest was talking. I am sure they all had a deep feeling for what he was saying. I hoped I'd make a horrible face, maybe that would do it. Then they pulled a little black cloth across my face—Yes, they are very careful.

I think I'll just count.

GENESIS

By J. R. LaVigne

In the beginning there was mud. That there could have been anything else other than mud Rom couldn't know, because mud was all he saw. As a matter of fact, at the very first he didn't even see the mud. He was inside a shell, and the lining of the shell was a smooth pearly gray. Still, Rom could feel that everything outside the shell was green-gray brown.

Rom was restless inside his shell. He was curled up in a ball, his knees under his chin and his arms hanging limply so that his fingertips touched his toes. He wanted to move but he couldn't: the shell was too small.

He had a mind, but it, too, seemed as inhibited as his body. He had a vague notion that his mind was not confined to the shell as his body was, that it could move; but he wasn't sure he knew how to make it move. He put forth all the effort he could muster, straining and toiling until he was so overcome with fatigue that it seemed as if he no longer existed. Then, as soon as he had regained his strength, he would try again. With each successive effort he seemed to be making progress, but the progress wasn't fast enough for Rom and sometimes he would cease making his effort for long periods of time, feeling lost, stultified.

Then one day it happened. As Rom was straining his will to the utmost, he felt his mind break through the shell and go soaring over the inchoate world. At first the wandering was aimless meandering in the new-found joy of liberty. But soon Rom found himself looking for something. He wasn't quite sure just what it was he was looking for, but he knew that he would know it when he found it. He travelled far, but all he saw was the vast unbroken sea of mud and the green-gray brown color of the world. There was nothing else. Then one day Rom returned his mind to the shell and just stayed there. He never again left his shell. He was disappointed in the world.

He remained inside the shell for centuries. To be sure, he was still restless at times, but he knew now there was no cure for his restlessness. He was resigned to an existence of having all his faculties thwarted.

Then one day Rom felt, or heard, a tapping on the shell. His first thought was to send his mind out to investigate, but he was afraid. He knew that this was what his mind had been looking for, but now that it was here, he was afraid.

But his fear was to no avail. Slowly the shell opened. Rom hunched himself up as small as he could. He tried to withdraw still further into his shell, as if that were possible in such cramped quarters. He closed his eyes and refused to look. Through the slowly widening slit in the shell a warmth crept in and warmed his body. His curiosity overcame his fear, and he finally opened his eyes.

The bright glare that confronted him made his eyes smart. He closed them; then he began to reopen them slowly, cautiously. As his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he became aware of a figure in the spot where the light was brightest. He could distinguish a form outlined in light and shadow. Somehow, he couldn't say how, the form was familiar to him. Then he realized why: the form was very similar to his own. This similarity, however, was quite general.

The new figure was long and slim and rounded. Its skin was not hairy like his own, but firm and smooth and sleek, a little like the pearly lining of his shell. There was an air of refinement, of grace, of holiness about the figure. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

As he gazed at the apparition, Rom suddenly became aware of strange, beautiful sounds in the air. It began with one sweet lingering sound, small and frail and lonely, and presently other sounds joined in and merged with the first, dancing above and below each other, forming figures and dissolving them, rising and then falling away again, filling the air with music.

Odors joined these sounds and played with them on the breeze. Cool, fresh, balmy, sweet scents, dancing along with the sounds, quite overwhelmed Rom's poor naked senses.

Almost imperceptibly the apparition began to speak. At first Rom didn't know it was speaking because the words blended so intimately with the music of the air that they were lost in the symphony of the whole. At length, however, he began to distinguish the words, to understand their meaning:

"... Woman is my name,
Sent to you from God above,
The self-same God who placed you here.

" 'In the mire and muck of Earth,' He said,
'I have placed a man inside a shell,
Given him the gifts of thought and dream,
Then stifled their expression, by design,
In order that he may know My Grace.

" 'He has proved his mettle.
Go to him.
Bring into his life
Love and Beauty.
I love him much,
And you will be the means
Whereby he'll know My Love.

" 'Tend to him. Nurse his spirit.
He has been created to endure.
I will give you strength he does not have,
And he will have the sinews that you lack.
Both together,
You may have dominion over all the earth.

" 'Go now, Woman. He has suffered
Long enough to merit Love.' "

Rom, or Man, as he was now called, crept from his shell and kissed the feet of Woman. His restlessness, his yearning, his fear, were gone. He now felt all-powerful. He was filled with warmth on the inside and clothed in it on the outside. He understood now the value of confinement, of frustration.

He noticed for the first time that there were other living things about. There were small furry beasts running along the ground, and graceful, feathery ones sweeping through the air. The beautiful sounds he had heard had come from them. And there were other living things, slender and brightly colored, that did not move but seemed anchored to the ground. The sweet odors, he realized, had come from them. In a way, he envied all these other living things, but in another way, he felt immeasurably superior to them.

He raised his head and looked into the face of Woman. A light shone from her face as she smiled. He smiled back.

"God told me," she said, "that I might find you ugly. I don't. You are beautiful."

For the first time in his life he heard his own voice. Its sound was muffled as it echoed her last word:

"Beautiful."

The Six Steps . . .

Slap!
Unfold,
Breathe, behold.
Mummy mummy
Teeter step.

Brothers sisters
Minutes to days
Blackboards pianos
Marbles ballets.

The incubator steeped in love
Find it elsewhere, expand, grow, shove.
Seek to find that fitting glove
Wait for the battle, never the dove.

"Girl of my dreams I love you so,"

The earth or the farmer, a seed to grow.

The end to the glove and a wagon to tow,

Money, a TV, WHERE IS THAT RAINBOW?

Grow! Grow? Begin to sink.

Money? Land? Rest. Think.

Watch the crops, save the link

The empty rooms begin to shrink.

Reach — — — — grab.

Stretch — — — — — hold.

Reach, s-t-r-e-t-c-h — — — — — mummy mummy.

Stretch, r-e-a-c-h — — — — — STRETCH! — — —

. . . and God.

JOHN STAKNIS

AN EXPERIMENT IN SUSPENSION: POEM 3

The sun remained unrisen,
And the stillborn morn
Lay prostrate before us.
There was no beauty in the day.

We crushed the frail, fallen flower petals
As we wandered from the gravel path.

Your shoes became wet
And you sat on my coat
While I slipped them off.

You stepped into the cool touch of the lawn
As I took your hand and helped you up.
Then you pulled away from the warmth in our palms.
And there was solitude in the sound of geese in the hollow.

When we walked on, you had grass green on your skirt,
And you were needlessly concerned.

I would have held hands
But you were carrying your shoes.
I would have talked of the fog-obscured orchard scent,
But you were saying something of the Rhineland and spring.
And we walked on alone.

ROBERT FRAPPIER.

NAISSANCE

Veiled in dark and wrapped in flesh,
Clothed in peace, curled in rest.
Lights, shapes, warmth of air,
Struggle for freedom: promise of despair.

BARBARA WEST.

REMNANT

Dead leaves cover the broad lawn;
Dried magnolias twist through rusty poles;
The brown-chipped mansion stands alone;
And a dusty tree shades a warped soul.

BARBARA WEST.

SILENCE THE SOFT VOICE

"'A little learning is a dangerous thing.'
"But wait," a soft voice answers, full of doubt.
"True happiness by wisdom is impaired,
"For love and hope are distant, feeble dreams.
"Enlightenment disjoins the *I* from *We*—
"And lonesomeness is sweet as Satan's kiss."
"But 'the majority is always right'!"
The soft voice dies beneath a storm of sounds.

Harold Sipples

A YOUNG CHINESE PHILOSOPHER

ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD

The world is out of whack;
Yang and Yin are at odds;
All that man will do is done
To set them to rights again.

Yang should be to its fullest plus
For the golden pin was used;
But even though this was done,
The black bile still flows free.

The negative a true negative should be,
For the silver pin is in;
But this too is made false
By a feeble heart beating fainter still.

They used to rub Ho Ti's tummy,
But now he has an ulcer
And is in an evil humor.
"What shall we do now?" they ask.

Well, like a pat on Ho Ti's tummy,
Gold and silver never made a cure.
There is no true remedy
Wrought of human hope and fear.

ROBERT FRAPPIER.

Yang and Yin: The positive and negative forces of balance in nature.
Ho Ti: Chinese God of good luck.

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

By JOHN STAKNIS

The sun rose slowly over the tops of the silent Southern Pines. In the small clearing among the pines the chimney of the cabin curled a lazy string of smoke into the blueness of the peaceful heavens. A sprinkling of dew rested on the bulging cloth at the side of the cabin where the cloth had been stuffed to close up a ragged hole in the black, tar paper wall.

The yellow beams of sunlight entered through one of the glassless windows. The rays poked gently at things inside the room, landing softly on the pile of rags lying on the makeshift bed. The pile of rags exploded. A small oval face and large, white eyes appeared among the rags. Two small hands came up, bunched into fists, and pressed against the haze over the eyes. Suddenly the fists lowered a few inches and the large eyes of the boy twinkled like dancing imps. The eyes were directed toward the floor of the cabin, past the spot where the large, tan colored dog was lying. The boy's body flew into motion. Out of the bed he leaped, over the dog, hardly even feeling the chill of the cool September morning. The boy stooped over the book lying on the floor, picked it up and scooted out of the room, clutching the book closely to his naked chest.

The heavy, sonorous voice of the woman made him blink as he entered the kitchen. "Boy, you git right back thyar and git some clothes on." The boy disappeared into the bedroom. A few seconds later his voice flew into the kitchen. "Maw," he squeaked excitedly, "Where is they? Where is they?"

The floor creaked under her as she moved toward the opening that served as a door between the bedroom and the kitchen. She stopped at the opening, looked inside and pointed a fat, steady finger to the stacked pieces of wood in the room that served as a chair. The boy, bouncing expectantly about the room, followed the line drawn by the finger and whizzed over to the chair. One of his hands released the clutching hold on the book and began caressing the collar of the blue jacket which lay on top of the chair.

The woman in the doorway smiled slowly to herself. The tan dog,

standing behind her and looking at the boy, swung his tail from side to side. Then the woman turned back toward the kitchen and the dog followed her.

She was bending over the pan of water, doing some dishes, when she heard a slight shuffling behind her. She broke away from the task and her whole face became a big, wide smile. "Oh, Willey, Willey," she said. The boy stood proudly before her, his back straight, the book hanging at his side as if he were an old scholar. Then they were in each other's arms, the mother hugging the boy and the boy hugging back. With both her heavy hands resting gently on his shoulders, she pushed him away. "You is a man, Willey. My great, big man."

She pulled the small body to her and hugged him again and the tan mongrel lying on the floor under the table made thumping noises with his tail against the wood.

Willey sat down at the table before a plate of grits. He began to eat. "Paw been gone long?" he asked.

"Before the sun came over the pines," the woman said.

Willey knew that his father had left already but he wanted his mother to confirm it. Now that it was definite, a slight feeling of emptiness went through his body. All summer they had gone to the cotton fields together. Willey wondered if they would ever go together again as he looked into the distance through the partly opened door. "Hurry up, boy," the woman said, "you don't wanna be late the first day."

The boy's head jerked and he began to eat the grits in front of him. He washed the grits down with a weak mixture of cocoa from a tin cup, rose from the table, picked up his red book and stood before his mother.

She sat on a chair and looked down toward her only son. Her hand came up slowly and her finger became stiff, began to shake back and forth. "Now you listen heah, boy," she said. "You mind what I been tellin' you. When Missy Janice say somethin' to you, you say 'Yes'm', understand? And ah don't want you scratchin' yo haid in front of her—no matter how bad you gotta scratch it."

The boy hesitated a moment and went to his mother. He kissed her on the cheek and said "G'bye," very quickly. He went out into the sunshine. He didn't turn around as he began walking up the path because he didn't want his mother to see the tears trying to force their way

out of his eyes. He tried to think of happy things. The first day of school. His new jacket. The new book in his hand. He tried to smile but only ended up kicking the dust in front of him. His mother's voice turned him.

"Bed-bug," she was calling, "come back heah. Dog, you git right back heah!"

The dog looked up shyly at the boy, wagged his tail and playfully lay down on his stomach. "Go 'way, Bed-bug," the boy said. "Go home. I's goin' to school and you cain't come. I's gotta go alone."

The dog stood up, curled his tail between his legs and sadly started toward the shack. The boy watched the dog go and the boy's shoulders sagged.

By the time he reached the sight of the small settlement, his joy of the morning had returned. The new adventure before him was too much to make him regret the fact that he was alone. His tiny footsteps quickened as he saw the small, whitewashed building. He noticed that he was the only one coming from this direction. The rest of the children were coming from town.

He came to the gate leading through the picket fence. The school was now right before him. His head held high, he began through the gate. His path was blocked. He kept on walking, straight into the crowd, saying "Excuse me, please." The group did not break up. They moved in a mass toward him and he had to back up.

"You ain't a goin' nowhere," a voice from the group said. "Yeah," another voice sliced in, "ain't no Niggers goin' t' dirty up our school."

"But my mammy said I gotta go to school," the squeaking voice said. The boy saw the small break in the mass of bodies before him and past that he saw the security of the school room. He dashed through the opening. He stumbled, fell against the cement. Many hands were grabbing at him and he felt himself being lifted from the cement. He began to swing back and forth and somebody yelled, "Heave!" The boy bounced on the unpaved street, sprawled out on it like a crippled frog than can no longer stand up. He lay face down, staring at the torn sleeve of his new jacket, shaking his head, trying to understand.

