

PREVIEW



F R SCOTT P K PAGE BRUCE RUDDICK PATRICK ANDERSON NEUFVILLE SHAW

JULY 1942 #15

AGONY COLUMN

Granted our daily pardon by the clock
We checked the paper hunger of machines.
Took down our hats and sought the thronging streets
Echoed the elevator boy's "Good-night."
And walked home, blind, to bathe our sweating feet.

After having dutifully read the news,
The daily and the weekly histories--
The price of silk and steel, men and prunes--
We learned (Ah Wonder!) that Padukah's Zoo
Has bred a baby python on tomato juice.

We listened, faithful, to the lyric casts
Reel out the serial lives through glycerine tears;
The funnymen castrate themselves for laughs;
Suggestions for the blackout and the blight
Descending on intestine and on pate.

Consulted British Israelites' decree,
Nostradamus--other certainties.
Put out the light and democratically
Consigned our vote, by proxy, to the Lord;
Followed explosive sign posts of a dream.

Bedclothes, like skin exclude or hold a world.

BRUCE RUDDICK

VARIATION ON A THEME

I.

Enamort have I been of bleaseful Death,
Knelled him soft names in manes a muted rhymn;
Or, vault-face, trumpeted my herald breath
Into Gold Gotha echoes of his fame:
The Lord of Ghosts; the Imperor of Bearse;
Rex Tumulus; great Sherasod the Prince;
Menhir von Wrinkle mop; Barrow de Hearse;
Le Comte de Funct; von Waggoner, C.G.; Sire Mintz.

II.

Mr. O. Topsy-Turf, of Cher Noel House;
The Mausolem, Sir Koph-Ag, L.A.G.:
That Mandarin Chap Suey Seid; the Russ
Ne-colei Hell-ytch; Ripper R.I.P.;
Sven Swansong: Harry Carey, Samurai;
Nick Ropoulos; Regratter Abie Taff;
The Cryptic Patriark; Chief Wenanwei;
Allover Cromlech; Rotter Doestenasher, graph.

III.

O I have skald his eili-aces rite,
And conjoured him in alles shapes and garbs,-
As heirold in black ossuary dight,
As Abbot Ware, as Cooped haeming barbs,
As Myster Wynken brinken nods; I've seen
Hymn in his cere-monies and costumes, yea
As houriental djinn, of yestern mien,
As mielancholy Dane, and aye as Francheman gai.

IV.

His gags, his joker-knots, his escapades,
His bower, his mite, they monsternate me not.
I know his tryx, the way-pence of his trades,-
He has been sybilled blacker than he wrot.
I do not fear him, and it may well be
That I aspyre his embrass, would cry:
"Acain my brooder, comes to call for me,
And more than ever, mortal, it seems rich to die!"

A. M. KLEIN

HOME FRONT

"They've come, Pop," Beverley said.

McAllister stood up and yawned, uncurling his fat arms till they stretched out taut like the short wooden bar of a cross. His head on its side, his large mouth open and his awkward legs turned in at the knees, he was like a ridiculous clumsy doll.

He went to the window and looked out. The long wall of semi-detached houses with similar verandahs and stairways and the road, a rigid black moat. Almost in the centre of the picture, a large van was vomiting from its dark interior a pell mell of glistening brittle furniture onto the sidewalk. A short fat man looked complacently at the struggling movers directing their effort and, from time to time, tapping a large black cigar.

"That's him, Pop," Beverley pointed his skinny finger at the little man.

"Hmm, perhaps they'll be all right," McAllister considered.

"But they're French," Beverley widened his eyes in amazement.

"How can they be all right?"

"Micks too huh?" thought McAllister. He saw the fat man twisting his fawning body before a silent painted idol surrounded by sharp yellow tongues of candlelight. "Molly," he shouted, "The new neighbours have come. French pea soups!" His thin hungry looking wife came in from the kitchen. She walked quickly and precisely over to the window.

"They shouldn't bother us, Charlie," she said.

"Well, I dunnow."

A boy of about sixteen ran down the pavement, turned abruptly and pointed to the McAllister's window. His father took off his hat and waved.

"Quick! Get back!" McAllister's voice was a sudden growl. He pulled Beverley down and added, "They're looking at us!"

A month later McAllister came back from the plant. He climbed laboriously from his dusty black car and heard a rustle in the great maple tree which shaded the front of his house. He looked up into the cloud and saw the new boy with narrow sharp eyes and prison cropped hair squatting on a branch and looking down at him. He smiled while McAllister, his massive head up ended, stared sullenly at him. "Get down out of there," he said. "Go climb your own tree if you want to."

"I like dis tree, mister," the boy answered placidly. "It's strung It won't break."

"Come on, now. Get down."

"Can' ya let anyone have no fun, Mister? I'm not hurting notin'!"

"Get down and none of your damn lip," McAllister cannoned his large heavy words into the shivering evening air.

The boy climbed down disengaging himself reluctantly from the satiny limbs of the maple tree. He walked away slowly--obstinately--while McAllister, his hands on his hips, stared cruelly at him daring him to some sudden evert protest. He reached his doorsteps and, turning, chanted, "Stingy, Stingy. Ya English miser."

McAllister, suddenly deaf, went into his house.

A few weeks later, when the street was furred with snow, McAllister found a mess of smashed bottles in his yard.

"Beverley," he called. "Molly, get Beverley."

His son came running swiftly, his thin excited words rushing before him." Andre did it. Honest. The whole street knows. He's been collecting those bottles for days. Scouts' honour he has."

"Why didn't you tell me before," McAllister became firm with rage. His body shook and he moved a hand jerkily and with great difficulty towards the door.

"Well, I didn't know," Beverley's tenuous whine twisted into the cold air." He said he was collecting them for the salvage."

"All right! All right!" his father shouted. With sudden heavy purpose, his vengeance tightening in his body, he stamped towards the telephone." Goddam it. I'll show them. If anybody annoys me, I'll--" He reached the phone and called the police. Then took out his watch and waited.

The radio police arrived in exactly six minutes, two wooden men like gigantic penguins who stared at him patiently, awaiting the usual torrent of complaint.

"Look at this," McAllister roared pointing at the bottles, "These damn neighbours. They deliberately smashed them in my yard. I suppose they hope we'll cut ourselves on them. Go over and tell them to clean it up."

Obediently the two uniformed men, their heavy feet in slow rhythmic time, walked through the yard, into the alley, through the neighbour's gate and up to the adjoining balcony. McAllister watched them triumphantly. The little fat man, cigar in mouth, came to the door. His bland face assumed an immediate seriousness when he saw the two policemen. He began talking quickly and anxiously in French. The police interjected a few disinterested questions, then turned and, in slow procession, returned to a position a few feet in front of McAllister.

"He says that his boy didn't do it," one of them said.

"God!" shouted McAllister. He ran down the stairs and up to the fence. Seizing the slate grey boards he called up to the little man, who, leaning on his gallery railing, regarded him curiously like some caged and raging animal. "You know damn well he did it. The whole street knows. Get him down here at once and make him clean it up." He turned to the police. "Make him do it. Hasn't anybody any rights here?"

The little man tapped his cigar and waited.

"Go on, make him do it," he cried to the police.

"We can't do nothing, sir," the spokesman of the pair said.

"Well, we'll see what will be done." McAllister tried to convey a threat of legal proceedings in his voice.

The police shrugged and left.

The next day when they heard the neighbour turn on his radio, McAllister reached down and switched on a sputtering arc lamp he had got out of storage purposely. The music in the other's radio metamorphosed into an angry monotonous hiss. McAllister triumphantly nodded at his admiring family. He repeated this whenever he heard the other's radio whisper through the thin walls. It was quite a minor triumph even if it did interfere with their own wireless reception.

Some weeks later he tried another tack. He brought home a stink producing fluid from the company's laboratories and, getting an old rusty pipe, he tiptoed out late at night and sprayed it over his neighbour's foundations. There was no evident reaction but their own ready imagination supplied one.

"We'll get them to move out yet, Molly," he said.

"Oh don't be too hard on them," Her worried bird like face softened.

"They're really not too bad. I nod to them when I meet them on the street"

"Well, nod if you want to. I won't. I'll just look straight ahead whenever I pass them, the bastards." He heard the low sound of a violin just audible and carefully subdued.

"Ah trying to listen," he said, "and slowly, deliciously he reached down to his arc lamp."

Soon the snow melted and the chocolate earth was made sharp with needles of fresh grass. As if in celebration the neighbours bought a dog.

It was a small spaniel the colour of weak coffee and for a time it stayed in its own yard, but after a while, it made short forays into other gardens. One day, Molly McAllister found it digging among the peonies. Later her husband saw it racing across his pansy beds. He picked

up a rock to shy at it but caution stayed him. If the dog was hurt he could be sued, he thought.

He went to see the local chief of police. "Oh heave a rock at it. Kick him in the ribs."

McAllister took about an hour to explain just why he couldn't do this.

"Well," said the captain settling his firm body in its chair and laughing, "Take out an injunction. We can't arrest a dog."

McAllister went to the S.P.C.A. They told him the same thing. Nothing could be done except by involving oneself in endless legal complications.

That evening McAllister said, "Well Molly, I guess we'll have to get out of here. Buy another house. Let's go out west. Houses are cheap there."

"Goodie, goodie," Beverley's voice was a whirlwind of sound, "Goodie Look out Montreal West here we come," he screamed. "Look out."

"But I'm not going to let them get off that easy, by God."

"McAllister went on looking rigidly at his wife. "I'm going to tell the agent to sell the house to some Jew, or even better, a Negro, providing, of course, that he can find one that has the money available. That'll leave them in a fine mess," he added and jerked the arc lamp plug out of the wall. "Turn on the radio, Molly," he shouted.

NEUFVILLE SHAW

NIGHT OUT

Where old men mumble in decrepitude
or fallen over tables lay their loose cheeks
or grained pine wet with beer that spills
and drips for them:
in taverns easy as swing doors
off the disastrous streets where grinding gas
and shouting newsboys stuff the unseen hole
of the unfillable and ultimate zero-
enter, brims snapped over coalhole eyes,
ties neatly done as counterfeit
and smoke inhaled into theater red lungs
which move the furry pectorals below
aerex pindot and stripe,
then pouted out from powerful gargoyle lips
the adult signatures deforming in the air:
pants hitched, brought forward
the tentatives and knots and pans
of hands, the shoulders hunched
to bury them on the shining wooden moon
of an evening's pleasure.

slid in the wet, glasses to grasp
or stroke reflectively
as possessed treasures in crystal houses,
whose tight-rope rims flecked with foam
summon the balled delicacy of the forefinger
while grosser bottoms reassure with winks-
the smelling glass tossed like a virgin
tips to a sailor tongue and is recessed
into the important belly happily straddled
as another more successful sex
whose intuitions climb up behind the eyes like marshlights.

By mirrors' long friendly vows
and amongst soldiers opaque with purpose
drinking gymnastically on death's edge:
in liquidities of sense
and sudden manstorming laughter with reddening eyes
the evening opens to an endless prospect
of male and easy city the Isle of Dogs
whose nagging police though there are blurred
whose estuary longings
sum and almost solve themselves.

Through epics of deserted streets
below sharp rooves soured with dawn
transformed identities:
staggering at crossroads and blown apart
down avenues emptied of love
where workers prepare their logical breakfasts.

PATRICK ANDERSON.

FROM CITY TO COUNTRY

Breath does not smear on glass
nor sweat bounce on correct pavements
but footloose in the country we kick
bone ball from the grass-green socket
and roll great stones down gradients into valleys

Negotiating the muscular lane of bull's
brute stare and through broadening streets of wind
undoing the rigid sedentary blocks
we climb until the opposite mountain wall
hangs squares of fields, a graph
where lovers' roads mark spiritual levels.

Past standing animals
jointed like furniture but tanked with blood:
where gadget bird deserts and flies
and knob shoots foliate petals
and bushes gnarled as typewriters
freshen below the rain.

PATRICK ANDERSON
SOME THERE ARE FEARLESS.

In streets where pleasure grins
and the bowing waiter
turns double somersaults to the table for two
and the music of the violin is a splinter
pricking the poultice of flesh; where glinting glass
shakes with falsetto laughter,
fear, the habitue, ignores the menu
and plays with the finger bowl at his permanent table.

Tune in the ear: in tub, in tube, in cloister,
he is the villain; underneath the bed,
bare-shanked and shaking; drunken in pubs; or teaching
geography to half a world of children.

In times like these, in streets like these, in alleys,
he is the master and they run for shelter
like ants to ant hills when he lifts his rattle.
While dreaming wishful dreams that will be real,
some there are fearless, touching a distant thing:
the ferreting sun, the enveloping shade, the attainable
spring
and the wonderful soil nameless beneath their feet.

P K PAGE
THE STENOGRAPHERS.

After the brief bivouac of Sunday
their eyes, in the forced march of Monday to Saturday
hoist the white flag, flutter in the snow storm of paper,
haul it down and crack in the midsun of temper.

In the pause between the first draft and the carbon
they glimpse the smooth hours when they were children--
the ride in the ice-cart, the iceman's name,
the end of the route, and the long walk home.

Remember the sea where floats at high tide
were sea marrows growing on the scatter-green vine
or spools of grey toffee, or wasps nests on water;
remember the sand and the leaves of the country.

Bell rings and they go and the voice draws their pencil
like a sledge across snow; when its runners are frozen
rope snaps and the voice then is pulling no burden
but runs like a dog on the winter of paper.

Their climates are winter and summer--no wind
for the kites of their hearts--no wind for a flight;
a breeze at the most, to tumble them over
and leave them like rubbish--the boy-friends of blood.

In the inch of the noon as they move they are stagnant.
The terrible calm of the noon is their anguish;
the lip of the counter, the shape of the straw
like icicles breaking their tongues are invaders.

Their beds are their oceans--salt water of weeping
the waves that they know--the tide before sleep;
and fighting to drown they assemble their sheep
in columns and watch them leap desks for their fences
and stare at them with their own mirror-worn faces.

In the felt of the morning, the calico minded,
sufficiently starched, insert papers, hit keys,
efficient and sure as their adding machines;
yet they weep in the vault, they are taut as net curtains
stretched upon frames. In their eyes I have seen
the pin-men of madness in marathon trim
race round the track of the stadium pupil.

P K PAGE

FOR A. H.

No more shall we move askance his shafting eye
Nor hear his rearing voice to thud our shaking door.
His parting was as the heavy fall of knives
And the muzzling gossip begging at our ears
Assurance only of his heart's sound beat.
The winds today tossed handfuls of his memories
And the worried lands fast thin upon his absence.

Fat are the riches of his thought,
Bloated like staring bladder fish
That startled burst when stringed
Towards the empty ringing seas,
And all his tomorrows are formed of mountain past.

Now he marches, three axes in his skull,
And wires viced about his splintered head.
His dreams are autosurgical,
Flowering jungles whose roots are cut
And whose gorgeous organs float about
His cavern eyes.....while horror
Slips the ribbon lands beneath
And cities he can't attain, and do not stop.

Oh, that he could clamber, foot on step,
Accept our offered ring of hands-
Which only snap as pith stalks do-
And stay himself in the wind's fanged rush.
But only he hears the scream of wedged-in hope
And the groan of body gauged by mind.

NEUFVILLE SHAW

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