

HELLO OUT THERE

There is a fellow in a small-town prison cell, tapping slowly on the floor with a spoon. After tapping half a minute, as if he were trying to telegraph words, he gets up and begins walking around the cell. At last he stops, stands at the center of the cell, and doesn't move for a long time. He feels his head, as if it were wounded. Then he looks around. Then he calls out dramatically, kidding the world.

YOUNG MAN. Hello—out there!
(Pause) Hello—out there! Hello—
out there! (Long pause) Nobody
out there. (Still more dramatically,
but more comically, too) Hello—
out there! Hello—out there!

(A GIRL'S VOICE is heard, very sweet
and soft.)

THE VOICE. Hello.

YOUNG MAN. Hello—out there.

THE VOICE. Hello.

YOUNG MAN. Is that you, Katey?

THE VOICE. No—this here is Emily.

YOUNG MAN. Who? (Swiftly) Hello
out there.

THE VOICE. Emily.

YOUNG MAN. Emily who? I don't
know anybody named Emily. Are
you that girl I met at Sam's in Sali-
nas about three years ago?

THE VOICE. No—I'm the girl who
cooks here. I'm the cook. I've never
been in Salinas. I don't even know
where it is.

YOUNG MAN. Hello out there. You
say you cook here?

THE VOICE. Yes.

YOUNG MAN. Well, why don't you
study up and learn to cook? How
come I don't get no jello or anything
good?

THE VOICE. I just cook what they
tell me to. (Pause) You lonesome?

YOUNG MAN. Lonesome as a coyote.
Hear me hollering? Hello out there!

THE VOICE. Who you hollering to?

YOUNG MAN. Well—nobody, I guess.
I been trying to think of somebody
to write a letter to, but I can't think
of anybody.

THE VOICE. What about Katey?

YOUNG MAN. I don't know anybody
named Katey.

THE VOICE. Then why did you say,
Is that you, Katey?

YOUNG MAN. Katey's a good name.
I always did like a name like Katey.
I never *knew* anybody named Katey,
though.

THE VOICE. I did.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? What was she
like? Tall girl, or little one?

THE VOICE. Kind of medium.

YOUNG MAN. Hello out there. What sort of a looking girl are *you*?

THE VOICE. Oh, I don't know.

YOUNG MAN. Didn't anybody ever tell you? Didn't anybody ever talk to you that way?

THE VOICE. What way?

YOUNG MAN. You know. Didn't they?

THE VOICE. No, they didn't.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, the fools—they should have. I can tell from your voice you're O.K.

THE VOICE. Maybe I am and maybe I ain't.

YOUNG MAN. I never missed yet.

THE VOICE. Yeah, I know. That's why you're in jail.

YOUNG MAN. The whole thing was a mistake.

THE VOICE. They claim it was rape.

YOUNG MAN. No—it wasn't.

THE VOICE. That's what they claim it was.

YOUNG MAN. They're a lot of fools.

THE VOICE. Well, you sure are in trouble. Are you scared?

YOUNG MAN. Scared to death. (*Suddenly*) Hello out there!

THE VOICE. What do you keep saying that for all the time?

YOUNG MAN. I'm lonesome. I'm as lonesome as a coyote. (*A long one*) Hello—out there!

(*THE GIRL appears, over to one side. She is a plain girl in plain clothes.*)
THE GIRL. I'm kind of lonesome, too.

YOUNG MAN (*turning and looking at her*). Hey— No fooling? Are you?

THE GIRL. Yeah— I'm almost as lonesome as a coyote myself.

YOUNG MAN. Who *you* lonesome for?

THE GIRL. I don't know.

YOUNG MAN. It's the same with me. The minute they put you in a place like this you remember all the girls you ever knew, and all the girls you didn't get to know, and it sure gets lonesome.

THE GIRL. I bet it does.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, it's awful. (*Pause*) You're a pretty kid, you know that?

THE GIRL. You're just talking.

YOUNG MAN. No, I'm not just talking—you *are* pretty. Any fool could see that. You're just about the prettiest kid in the whole world.

THE GIRL. I'm not—and you know it.

YOUNG MAN. No—you are. I never saw anyone prettier in all my born days, in all my travels. I knew Texas would bring me luck.

THE GIRL. Luck? You're in jail, aren't you? You've got a whole gang of people all worked up, haven't you?

YOUNG MAN. Ah, that's nothing. I'll get out of this.

THE GIRL. Maybe.

YOUNG MAN. No, I'll be all right—*now*.

THE GIRL. What do you mean—*now*?

YOUNG MAN. I mean after seeing you. I got something now. You know for a while there I didn't care one way or another. Tired. (*Pause*) Tired of trying for the best all the time and never getting it. (*Suddenly*) Hello out there!

THE GIRL. Who you calling now?

YOUNG MAN. You.

THE GIRL. Why, I'm right here.

YOUNG MAN. I know. (*Calling*) Hello out there!

THE GIRL. Hello.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, you're sweet. (*Pause*) I'm going to marry *you*. I'm going away with *you*. I'm going to take you to San Francisco or some place like that. I *am*, now. I'm going to win myself some real money, too. I'm going to study 'em real careful and pick myself some winners, and we're going to have a lot of money.

THE GIRL. Yeah?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah. Tell me your name and all that stuff.

THE GIRL. Emily.

YOUNG MAN. I know that. What's the rest of it? Where were you born? Come on, tell me the whole thing.

THE GIRL. Emily Smith.

YOUNG MAN. Honest to God?

THE GIRL. Honest. That's my name—Emily Smith.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, you're the sweetest girl in the whole world.

THE GIRL. Why?

YOUNG MAN. I don't know why, but you are, that's all. Where were you born?

THE GIRL. Matador, Texas.

YOUNG MAN. Where's that?

THE GIRL. Right here.

YOUNG MAN. Is this Matador, Texas?

THE GIRL. Yeah, it's Matador. They brought you here from Wheeling.

YOUNG MAN. Is that where I was—Wheeling?

THE GIRL. Didn't you even know what town you were in?

YOUNG MAN. All towns are alike. You don't go up and ask somebody what town you're in. It doesn't make any difference. How far away is Wheeling?

THE GIRL. Sixteen or seventeen miles. Didn't you know they moved you?

YOUNG MAN. How could I know, when I was out—cold? Somebody hit me over the head with a lead pipe or something. What'd they hit me for?

THE GIRL. Rape—that's what they *said*.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, that's a lie. (*Amazed, almost to himself*) She wanted me to give her money.

THE GIRL. Money?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah, if I'd have known she was a woman like that—well, by God, I'd have gone on down the street and stretched out in a park somewhere and gone to sleep.

THE GIRL. Is that what she wanted—money?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah. A fellow like me hopping freights all over the country, trying to break his bad luck, going from one poor little town to another, trying to get in on something good somewhere, and she asks for money. I thought she was lonesome. She *said* she was.

THE GIRL. Maybe she was.

YOUNG MAN. She was *something*.

THE GIRL. I guess I'd never see you, if it didn't happen, though.

YOUNG MAN. Oh, I don't know—maybe I'd just mosey along this way and see you in this town somewhere. I'd recognize you, too.

THE GIRL. Recognize me?

YOUNG MAN. Sure, I'd recognize you the minute I laid eyes on you.

THE GIRL. Well, who would I be?

YOUNG MAN. Mine, that's who.

THE GIRL. Honest?

YOUNG MAN. Honest to God.

THE GIRL. You just say that because you're in jail.

YOUNG MAN. No, I mean it. You just pack up and wait for me. We'll high-roll the hell out of here to Frisco.

THE GIRL. You're just lonesome.

YOUNG MAN. I been lonesome all my life—there's no cure for that—but you and me—we can have a lot of fun hanging around together. You'll bring me luck. I know it.

THE GIRL. What are you looking for luck for all the time?

YOUNG MAN. I'm a gambler. I don't work. I've *got* to have luck, or I'm a bum. I haven't had any decent luck in years. Two whole years now—one place to another. Bad luck all the time. That's why I got in trouble back there in Wheeling, too. That was no accident. That was my bad luck following me around. So here I am, with my head half busted. I guess it was her old man that did it.

THE GIRL. You mean her father?

YOUNG MAN. No, her husband. If I had an old lady like that, I'd throw her out.

THE GIRL. Do you think you'll have better luck, if I go with you?

YOUNG MAN. It's a cinch. I'm a good handicapper. All I need is somebody good like you with me. It's no good always walking around in the streets for anything that might be there at the time. You got to have somebody staying with you all the time—through winters when it's cold, and

springtime when it's pretty, and summertime when it's nice and hot and you can go swimming—through *all* the times—rain and snow and all the different kinds of weather a man's got to go through before he dies. You got to have somebody who's right. Somebody who knows you, from away back. You got to have somebody who even knows you're wrong but likes you just the same. I know I'm wrong, but I just don't want anything the hard way, working like a dog, or the *easy* way, working like a dog—working's the hard way and the easy way both. All I got to do is beat the price, always—and then I don't feel lousy and don't hate anybody. If you go along with me, I'll be the finest guy anybody ever saw. I won't be wrong any more. You know when you get enough of that money, you *can't* be wrong any more—you're right because the money says so. I'll have a lot of money and you'll be just about the prettiest, most wonderful kid in the whole world. I'll be proud walking around Frisco with you on my arm and people turning around to look at us.

THE GIRL. Do you think they will?

YOUNG MAN. Sure they will. When I get back in some decent clothes, and you're on my arm—well, Katey, they'll turn around and look, and they'll see something, too.

THE GIRL. Katey?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah—that's your name from now on. You're the first girl I ever called Katey. I've been saving it for you. O.K.?

THE GIRL. O.K.

YOUNG MAN. How long have I been here?

THE GIRL. Since last night. You didn't wake up until late this morning, though.

YOUNG MAN. What time is it now? About nine?

THE GIRL. About ten.

YOUNG MAN. Have you got the key to this lousy cell?

THE GIRL. No. They don't let me fool with any keys.

YOUNG MAN. Well, can you get it?

THE GIRL. No.

YOUNG MAN. Can you *try*?

THE GIRL. They wouldn't let me get near any keys. I cook for this jail, when they've got somebody in it. I clean up and things like that.

YOUNG MAN. Well, I want to get out of here. Don't you know the guy that runs this joint?

THE GIRL. I know him, but he wouldn't let you out. They were talking of taking you to another jail in another town.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? Why?

THE GIRL. Because they're afraid.

YOUNG MAN. What are they afraid of?

THE GIRL. They're afraid these people from Wheeling will come over in the middle of the night and break in.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? What do they want to do that for?

THE GIRL. Don't *you* know what they want to do it for?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah, I know all right.

THE GIRL. Are you scared?

YOUNG MAN. Sure I'm scared. Nothing scares a man more than ignorance. You can argue with people who ain't fools, but you can't argue with fools—they just go to work and do what they're set on doing. Get me out of here.

THE GIRL. How?

YOUNG MAN. Well, go get the guy with the key, and let me talk to him.

THE GIRL. He's gone home. Everybody's gone home.

YOUNG MAN. You mean I'm in this little jail all alone?

THE GIRL. Well—yeah—except me.

YOUNG MAN. Well, what's the big idea—doesn't anybody stay here all the time?

THE GIRL. No, they go home every night. I clean up and then I go, too. I hung around tonight.

YOUNG MAN. What made you do that?

THE GIRL. I wanted to talk to you.

YOUNG MAN. Honest? What did you want to talk about?

THE GIRL. Oh, I don't know. I took care of you last night. You were talk-

ing in your sleep. You liked me, too. I didn't think you'd like me when you woke up, though.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? Why not?

THE GIRL. I don't know.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? Well, you're wonderful, see?

THE GIRL. Nobody ever talked to me that way. All the fellows in town—
(*Pause.*)

YOUNG MAN. What about 'em?
(*Pause*) Well, what about 'em? Come on—tell me.

THE GIRL. They laugh at me.

YOUNG MAN. Laugh at *you*? They're fools. What do they know about anything? You go get your things and come back here. I'll take you with me to Frisco. How old are you?

THE GIRL. Oh, I'm of age.

YOUNG MAN. How old are you?—Don't lie to me! Sixteen?

THE GIRL. I'm seventeen.

YOUNG MAN. Well, bring your father and mother. We'll get married before we go.

THE GIRL. They wouldn't let me go.

YOUNG MAN. Why not?

THE GIRL. I don't know, but they wouldn't. I know they wouldn't.

YOUNG MAN. You go tell your father not to be a fool, see? What is he, a farmer?

THE GIRL. No—nothing. He gets a little relief from the government because he's supposed to be hurt or something—his side hurts, he says. I don't know what it is.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, he's a liar. Well, I'm taking you with me, see?

THE GIRL. He takes the money I earn, too.

YOUNG MAN. He's got no right to do that.

THE GIRL. I know it, but he does it.

YOUNG MAN (*almost to himself*). This world stinks. You shouldn't have been born in this town, anyway, and you shouldn't have had a man like that for a father, either.

THE GIRL. Sometimes I feel sorry for him.

YOUNG MAN. Never mind feeling sorry for him. (*Pointing a finger*) I'm going to talk to your father some day. I've got a few things to tell that guy.

THE GIRL. I know you have.

YOUNG MAN (*suddenly*). Hello—out there! See if you can get that fellow with the keys to come down and let me out.

THE GIRL. Oh, I couldn't.

YOUNG MAN. Why not?

THE GIRL. I'm nobody here—they give me fifty cents every day I work.

YOUNG MAN. How much?

THE GIRL. Fifty cents.

YOUNG MAN (*to the world*). You see? They ought to pay money to *look* at you. To breathe the *air* you breathe. I don't know. Sometimes I figure it never is going to make sense. Hello—out there! I'm scared. You try to get me out of here. I'm scared them fools are going to come here from Wheeling and go crazy, thinking they're heroes. Get me out of here, Katey.

THE GIRL. I don't know what to do. Maybe I could break the door down.

YOUNG MAN. No, you couldn't do that. Is there a hammer out there or anything?

THE GIRL. Only a broom. Maybe they've locked the broom up, too.

YOUNG MAN. Go see if you can find anything.

THE GIRL. All right. (*She goes.*)

YOUNG MAN. Hello—out there! Hello—out there! (*Pause*) Hello—out there! Hello—out there! (*Pause*) Putting me in jail. (*With contempt*) Rape! Rape? *They* rape everything good that was ever born. His side hurts. They laugh at her. Fifty cents a day. Little punk people. Hurting the only good thing that ever came their way. (*Suddenly*) Hello—out there!

THE GIRL (*returning*). There isn't a thing out there. They've locked everything up for the night.

YOUNG MAN. Any cigarettes?

THE GIRL. Everything's locked up—all the drawers of the desk, all the closet doors—everything.

YOUNG MAN. I ought to have a cigarette.

THE GIRL. I could get you a package maybe, somewhere. I guess the drug store's open. It's about a mile.

YOUNG MAN. A mile? I don't want to be alone that long.

THE GIRL. I could run all the way, and all the way back.

YOUNG MAN. You're the sweetest girl that ever lived.

THE GIRL. What kind do you want?

YOUNG MAN. Oh, any kind—Chesterfields or Camels or Lucky Strikes—any kind at all.

THE GIRL. I'll go get a package. *(She turns to go.)*

YOUNG MAN. What about the money?

THE GIRL. I've got some money. I've got a quarter I been saving. I'll run all the way. *(She is about to go.)*

YOUNG MAN. Come here.

THE GIRL *(going to him)*. What?

YOUNG MAN. Give me your hand. *(He takes her hand and looks at it, smiling. He lifts it and kisses it)* I'm scared to death.

THE GIRL. I am, too.

YOUNG MAN. I'm not lying—I don't care what happens to me, but I'm scared nobody will ever come out here to this God-forsaken broken-down town and find you. I'm scared you'll get used to it and not mind. I'm scared you'll never get to Frisco

and have 'em all turning around to look at you. Listen—go get me a gun, because if they come, I'll kill 'em! They don't understand. Get me a gun!

THE GIRL. I could get my father's gun. I know where he hides it.

YOUNG MAN. Go get it. Never mind the cigarettes. Run all the way. *(Pause, smiling but seriously)* Hello, Katey.

THE GIRL. Hello. What's *your* name?

YOUNG MAN. Photo-Finish is what they *call* me. My races are always photo-finish races. You don't know what that means, but it means they're very close. So close the only way they can tell which horse wins is to look at a photograph after the race is over. Well, every race I bet turns out to be a photo-finish race, and my horse never wins. It's my bad luck, all the time. That's why they call me Photo-Finish. Say it before you go.

THE GIRL. Photo-Finish.

YOUNG MAN. Come here. *(THE GIRL moves close and he kisses her)* Now, hurry. Run all the way.

THE GIRL. I'll run. *(THE GIRL turns and runs. The YOUNG MAN stands at the center of the cell a long time. THE GIRL comes running back in. Almost crying)* I'm afraid. I'm afraid I won't see you again. If I come back and you're not here, I—

YOUNG MAN. Hello—out there!

THE GIRL. It's so lonely in this town. Nothing here but the lonesome wind all the time, lifting the dirt and

blowing out to the prairie. I'll stay *here*. I won't *let* them take you away.

YOUNG MAN. Listen, Katey. Do what I tell you. Go get that gun and come back. Maybe they won't come tonight. Maybe they won't come at all. I'll hide the gun and when they let me out you can take it back and put it where you found it. And then we'll go away. But if they come, I'll kill 'em! Now, hurry—

THE GIRL. All right. (*Pause*) I want to tell you something.

YOUNG MAN. O.K.

THE GIRL (*very softly*). If you're not here when I come back, well, I'll have the gun and I'll know what to do with it.

YOUNG MAN. You know how to handle a gun?

THE GIRL. I know how.

YOUNG MAN. Don't be a fool. (*Takes off his shoe, brings out some currency*) Don't be a fool, see? Here's some money. Eighty dollars. Take it and go to Frisco. Look around and find somebody. Find somebody alive and halfway human, see? Promise me—if I'm not here when you come back, just throw the gun away and get the hell to Frisco. Look around and find somebody.

THE GIRL. I don't *want* to find anybody.

YOUNG MAN (*swiftly, desperately*). Listen, if I'm not here when you come back, how do you know I haven't gotten away? Now, do what

I tell you. I'll meet you in Frisco. I've got a couple of dollars in my other shoe. I'll see you in San Francisco.

THE GIRL (*with wonder*). San Francisco?

YOUNG MAN. That's right—San Francisco. That's where you and me belong.

THE GIRL. I've always wanted to go to *some* place like San Francisco—but how could I go alone?

YOUNG MAN. Well, you're not alone any more, see?

THE GIRL. Tell me a little what it's like.

YOUNG MAN (*very swiftly, almost impatiently at first, but gradually slower and with remembrance, smiling, and THE GIRL moving closer to him as he speaks*). Well, it's on the Pacific to begin with—ocean water all around. Cool fog and seagulls. Ships from all over the world. It's got seven hills. The little streets go up and down, around and all over. Every night the fog-horns bawl. But they won't be bawling for you and me.

THE GIRL. What else?

YOUNG MAN. That's about all, I guess.

THE GIRL. Are people different in San Francisco?

YOUNG MAN. People are the same everywhere. They're different only when they love somebody. That's the only thing that makes 'em dif-

ferent. More people in Frisco love somebody, that's all.

THE GIRL. Nobody anywhere loves anybody as much as I love you.

YOUNG MAN (*shouting, as if to the world*). You see? Hearing you say that, a man could die and still be ahead of the game. Now, hurry. And don't forget, if I'm not here when you come back, get the hell to San Francisco where you'll have a chance. Do you hear me?

(THE GIRL *stands a moment looking at him, then backs away, turns and runs. The YOUNG MAN stares after her, troubled and smiling. Then he turns away from the image of her and walks about like a lion in a cage. After a while he sits down suddenly and buries his head in his hands. From a distance the sound of several automobiles approaching is heard. He listens a moment, then ignores the implications of the sound, whatever they may be. Several automobile doors are slammed. He ignores this also. A wooden door is opened with a key and closed, and footsteps are heard in a hall. Walking easily, almost casually and yet arrogantly, a MAN comes in. The YOUNG MAN jumps up suddenly and shouts at the MAN, almost scaring him*) What the hell kind of a jail-keeper are you, anyway? Why don't you attend to your business? You get paid for it, don't you? Now, get me out of here.

THE MAN. But I'm not the jail-keeper.

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? Well, who are you, then?

THE MAN. I'm the husband.

YOUNG MAN. What husband you talking about?

THE MAN. You know what husband.

YOUNG MAN. Hey! (*Pause, looking at THE MAN*) Are you the guy that hit me over the head last night?

THE MAN. I am.

YOUNG MAN (*with righteous indignation*). What do you mean going around hitting people over the head?

THE MAN. Oh, I don't know. What do you *mean* going around—the way you do?

YOUNG MAN (*rubbing his head*). You hurt my head. You got no right to hit anybody over the head.

THE MAN (*suddenly angry, shouting*). Answer my question! What do you mean?

YOUNG MAN. Listen, you—don't be hollering at me just because I'm locked up.

THE MAN (*with contempt, slowly*). You're a dog!

YOUNG MAN. Yeah, Well, let me tell you something. You *think* you're the husband. You're the husband of nothing. (*Slowly*) What's more, your wife—if you want to call her that—is a tramp. Why don't you throw her out in the street where she belongs?

THE MAN (*draws a pistol*). Shut up!

YOUNG MAN. Yeah? Go ahead, shoot —(*Softly*) and spoil the fun.

What'll your pals think? They'll be disappointed, won't they. What's the fun hanging a man who's already dead? (THE MAN *puts the gun away*) That's right, because now you can have some fun yourself, telling me what you're going to do. That's what you came here for, isn't it? Well, you don't need to tell me. I *know* what you're going to do. I've read the papers and I know. They have fun. A mob of 'em fall on one man and beat him, don't they? They tear off his clothes and kick him, don't they? And women and little children stand around watching, don't they? Well, before you go on *this* picnic, I'm going to tell you a few things. Not that that's going to send you home with your pals—the other heroes. No. You've been outraged. A stranger has come to town and violated your women. Your pure, innocent, virtuous women. You fellows have got to set this thing right. You're men, not mice. You're home-makers, and you beat your children. (*Suddenly*) Listen, you—I didn't know she was your wife. I didn't know she was anybody's wife.

THE MAN. You're a liar!

YOUNG MAN. Sometimes—when it'll do somebody some good—but not this time. Do you want to hear about it? (THE MAN *doesn't answer*) All right, I'll tell you. I met her at a lunch counter. She came in and sat next to me. There was plenty of room, but she sat next to me. Somebody had put a nickel in the phonograph and a fellow was singing *New San Antonio Rose*. Well, she got to talking about the song. I thought she was talking to the waiter, but *he* didn't answer her, so after a while *I* answered her. That's

how I met her. I didn't think anything of it. We left the place together and started walking. The first thing I knew she said, This is where I live.

THE MAN. You're a dirty liar!

YOUNG MAN. Do you want to hear it? Or not? (THE MAN *does not answer*) O.K. She asked me to come in. Maybe she had something in mind, maybe she didn't. Didn't make any difference to me, one way or the other. If she was lonely, all right. If not, all right.

THE MAN. You're telling a lot of dirty lies!

YOUNG MAN. I'm telling the truth. Maybe your wife's out there with your pals. Well, call her in. I got nothing against her, or you—or any of you. Call her in, and ask her a few questions. Are you in love with her? (THE MAN *doesn't answer*) Well, that's too bad.

THE MAN. What do you mean, too bad?

YOUNG MAN. I mean this may not be the first time something like this has happened.

THE MAN (*swiftly*). Shut up!

YOUNG MAN. Oh, you know it. You've always known it. You're afraid of your pals, that's all. She asked me for money. That's all she wanted. I wouldn't be here now if I had given her the money.

THE MAN (*slowly*). How much did she ask for?

YOUNG MAN. I didn't ask her how much. I told her I'd made a mistake. She said she would make trouble if I didn't give her money. Well, I don't like bargaining, and I don't like being threatened, either. I told her to get the hell away from me. The next thing I knew she'd run out of the house and was hollering. (Pause) Now, why don't you go out there and tell 'em they took me to another jail—go home and pack up and leave her. You're a pretty good guy, you're just afraid of your pals. (THE MAN *draws his gun again. He is very frightened. He moves a step toward the YOUNG MAN, then fires three times. The YOUNG MAN falls to his knees. THE MAN turns and runs, horrified*) Hello—out there! (He is bent forward. THE GIRL comes running in, and halts suddenly, looking at him.)

THE GIRL. There were some people in the street, men and women and kids—so I came in through the back, through a window. I couldn't find the gun. I looked all over but I couldn't find it. What's the matter?

YOUNG MAN. Nothing—nothing. Everything's all right. Listen. Listen, kid. Get the hell out of here. Go out the same way you came in and run—run like hell—run all night. Get to another town and get on a train. Do you hear me?

THE GIRL. What's happened?

YOUNG MAN. Get away—just get away from here. Take any train that's going—you can get to Frisco later.

THE GIRL (*almost sobbing*). I don't want to go any place without you.

YOUNG MAN. I can't go. Something's happened. (He looks at her) But I'll be with you always—God damn it. Always! (He falls forward. THE GIRL stands near him, then begins to sob softly, walking away. She stands over to one side, stops sobbing, and stares out. The excitement of the mob outside increases. THE MAN, with two of his pals, comes running in. THE GIRL watches, unseen.)

THE MAN. Here's the son of a bitch!

ANOTHER MAN. O.K. Open the cell, Harry.

(The THIRD MAN goes to the cell door, unlocks it, and swings it open.)

(A WOMAN comes running in.)

THE WOMAN. Where is he? I want to see him. Is he dead? (Looking down at him, as the MEN pick him up) There he is. (Pause) Yeah, that's him. (Her husband looks at her with contempt, then at the dead man.)

THE MAN (*trying to laugh*). All right—let's get it over with.

THIRD MAN. Right you are, George. Give me a hand, Harry. (They lift the body.)

THE GIRL (*suddenly, fiercely*). Put him down!

THE MAN. What's this?

SECOND MAN. What are you doing here? Why aren't you out in the street?

THE GIRL. Put him down and go away. (She runs toward the MEN. THE WOMAN grabs her.)

THE WOMAN. Here—where do you think *you're* going?

THE GIRL. Let me go. You've no right to take him away.

THE WOMAN. Well, listen to her, will you? (*She slaps THE GIRL and*

pushes her to the floor) Listen to the little slut, will you?

(*They all go, carrying the YOUNG MAN'S body. THE GIRL gets up slowly, no longer sobbing. She looks around at everything, then looks straight out, and whispers.*)

THE GIRL. Hello—out—there! Hello —out there!

Bury the Dead

BY IRWIN SHAW

*“. . . what is this world that
you cling to it?”*

TO MY MOTHER

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CHARACTERS

PRIVATE DRISCOLL
PRIVATE MORGAN
PRIVATE LEVY
PRIVATE WEBSTER
PRIVATE SCHELLING
PRIVATE DEAN
JOAN BURKE
BESS SCHELLING
MARTHA WEBSTER
JULIA BLAKE
KATHERINE DRISCOLL
ELIZABETH DEAN

GENERALS ONE, TWO AND THREE

A CAPTAIN, A SERGEANT, AND FOUR INFANTRYMEN, *employed as a burial detail.*

A PRIEST, A RABBI, A DOCTOR

A REPORTER AND AN EDITOR

TWO WHORES

TIME—*The second year of the war that is to begin tomorrow night.*

SCENE—*The stage is in two planes—in the foreground, the bare stage, in the rear, not too far back, going the entire length of the stage, a platform about seven feet above the level of the stage proper. No properties are used to adorn the stage save for some sandbags, whole and split, lying along the edge of the raised platform and some loose dirt also on the platform. The entire platform is painted dull black. It is lighted by a strong spotlight thrown along it at hip-height from the right wing. It is the only light on the stage. The platform is to represent a torn-over battlefield, now quiet, some miles behind the present lines, where a burial detail, standing in a shallow trench dug in the platform, so that the audience sees them only from the hip up, are digging a common grave to accommodate six bodies, piled on the right of the platform, wrapped in canvas. A SERGEANT stands on the right, on the edge of the grave, smoking. . . . The SOLDIER nearest him, in the shallow trench, stops his digging. . . .*

BURY THE DEAD

FIRST SOLDIER. Say, Sergeant, they stink. . . . (*Waving his shovel at the corpses*) Let's bury them in a hurry. . . .

SERGEANT. What the hell do you think you'd smell like, after you'd been lyin' out for two days—a goddamn lily of the valley? They'll be buried soon enough. Keep digging.

SECOND SOLDIER (*scratching himself*). Dig and scratch! Dig and scratch! What a war! When you're not diggin' trenches you're diggin' graves. . . .

THIRD SOLDIER. Who's got a cigarette? I'll take opium if nobody's got a cigarette.

SECOND SOLDIER. When you're not diggin' graves you're scratchin' at fleas. By God, there're more fleas in this army than . . .

FIRST SOLDIER. That's what the war's made for—the fleas. Somebody's got to feed 'em. . . .

FOURTH SOLDIER. I used to take a shower every day. Can you imagine?

SERGEANT. All right, Mr. Lifebuoy, we'll put your picture in the *Saturday Evening Post*—in color!

SECOND SOLDIER. When you're not scratchin' at fleas, you're bein' killed. That's a helluva life for a grown man.

THIRD SOLDIER. Who's got a cigarette? I'll trade my rifle—if I can find it—for a cigarette. For Christ's sake, don't they make cigarettes no more? (*Leaning, melancholy, on his shovel*) This country's goin' to the dogs for real now. . . .

SERGEANT. Lift dirt, soldier. Come on! This ain't no vacation.

THIRD SOLDIER (*disregarding him*). I heard of guys packin' weeds and cowflop into cigarettes in this man's army. They say it has a tang. (*Reflectively*) Got to try it some day. . . .

SERGEANT. Hurry up! (*Blowing on his hands*) I'm freezin' here. I don't want to hang around all night. I can't feel my feet no more. . . .

FOURTH SOLDIER. I ain't felt my feet for two weeks. I ain't had my shoes off in two weeks. (*Leaning on his shovel*) I wonder if the toes're still connected. I wear a 8A shoe. Aristocratic foot, the salesman always said. Funny—going around not even knowin' whether you still got toes or not. . . . It's not hygienic really. . . .

SERGEANT. All right, friend, we'll make sure the next war you're in is run hygienic.

FOURTH SOLDIER. In the Spanish-American War more men died of fever than . . .

FIRST SOLDIER (*beating viciously at*