

# The Dog Days of Arthur Cane



**T. Ernesto Bethancourt**



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**T. ERNESTO BETHANCOURT**

Arthur Cane had everything: a beautiful home, a well-to-do family, floppy ears, and a long, shaggy tail! Arthur's story begins when he awakes with a splitting headache and makes the shocking discovery that he has been mysteriously transformed into a mongrel dog. Chased by dogcatchers and abused by strangers, Arthur makes his way to Greenwich Village, the Bohemian section of New York City, where he becomes the companion and Seeing Eye dog for a blind street musician. Accidentally separated from his newfound friend, Arthur is captured by a dogcatcher and condemned to death in a dog pound gas chamber. The exciting climax of his encounter with death marks one of the many offbeat incidents of this entertaining, biting believable book.

During his "dog days," Arthur discovers there's a great deal more to life than his previous experience in the suburbs. He learns the true meaning of friendship, that people are more important than property, and that dogs *do* have souls.

A HOLIDAY HOUSE BOOK

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*Jean Beriman - staff*



**The Dog Days  
of Arthur Cane**

**by T. ERNESTO BETHANCOURT**

**Holiday House · New York**

*For the Paisley girls*  
NANCY, KIMI, AND 'THEA

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SUMMARY: A teenage boy who doubts the power of witch doctors is transformed into a dog, remaining that way one entire summer.

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I • My Friend, the Witch Doctor

When I first woke up that Saturday morning, I thought something had gone wrong with my eyes. Everything was gray and black and white, Uke a movie that's not in color. My head was pounding like there was a rock concert going on inside. There was a funky smell in the air, so thick you could almost chew it. I checked my alarm radio, and the digital face said 10:30 a.m. Then I remembered the beer party the night before at Lou Greenspun's house.

It hadn't been a wild party or anything. Just me, Lou, a couple of the guys in our class at Manorsville High and an African exchange student named James N'Gaweh. And an awful lot of beer from the Greenspun refrigerator.

We were celebrating the last day of school and rapping about all we were going to do that summer. On Monday, Lou was leaving for Europe and wouldn't be back until mid-August. He always does neat things Hke that. His dad is a hotshot lawyer, and though Lou is only a bit over seventeen, he has a car of his own, a color TV in his room, dynamite clothes, and plenty of coins. His dad lets him drink beer, but only at home.

The Greenspuns live in the biggest house in Manorsville, which is on the north shore of Long Island, about

thirty minutes drive from New York City.

Years ago, Manorsville was all one family's property; they were some people who owned a steamship line. After a lot of years, they either died off or moved away, I don't know which. But their estate was broken up, and houses were built on it. All except for the big house that the steamship people lived in. Now, the Greenspuns live in it. My parents, my sister, and I live in one of the smaller houses on the edge of where the big house is.

Which isn't to say that we're poor people. We get along pretty well. My dad is an exec of some sort with Monumental Life Insurance in the city. I can't say exactly what he does there. We never talk about his job. If it comes to that, we hardly ever talk about anything anymore. He goes to the Manorsville Country Club and plays golf and tennis. Then he belongs to a couple of clubs in the city, and with business trips and all, we don't see too much of each other. It's the same with Mom. She has dance classes, pottery classes, the country club, and a women's consciousness raising group. I see as much of her as I do my sister, Sybil, who lives at school.

Lou Greenspun has about the same deal, which is why we're tight to begin with. On top of that, Lou's folks have Mary, who lives in and cooks. When you eat as many TV dinners as I do, you enjoy company at meals, and Mary is a great cook. So Lou and I kind of drifted together. After a while, I started spending more time over at Lou's than at my own house. Every now and then, when he knew that he'd have the whole house to himself, Lou would have a Friday night party. This one I'm talking about turned out to be something else.

We'd been sitting around, drinking beer, and digging a rock concert on TV. After that, we'd turned on the FM radio

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and talked. The other two guys got on the phone and promoted a couple of chicks over in Great Neck, so they split. That left just me, Lou, and James N'Gaweh. We were listening to an all black station on FM. It was getting late, and instead of the top tunes, they were playing jazz and a whole lot

of off-the-wall stuff. I forget what we were talking about then, but James stopped us and said, "Listen! That's actually authentic African music!"

Well, you couldn't have proved it by me. It sounded like a bunch of drums, a squeaky flute or two, and some people chanting, like in jungle movies. After a few minutes of that, regular instruments took over, and it turned into more jazz but based on the same melody. James sat there with a strange look on his face, like he was far away. In the low light, he looked like a carving I saw once at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the city. It occurred to me that although I'd talked with James and had some classes with him all semester, I really didn't know him at all.

James is nineteen, and at his age, he should be in college. I once asked him how come he was two years behind in school. He told me that he had an obligation to his family in Africa. He had to spend time back in his village, learning about what he called his "cultural heritage." He really talks that way. His first schools were English, and he talks with a combination English and African accent.

Another wild thing about James is that he has scars on his face. Not from zits, either. These look like they were done with a dull knife, and they're in vertical rows of three on each cheek. His skin is very black, and the scars are almost purple in color. Most of the time, when he went to classes, he wore a suit, shirt, and tie. But when the weather turned warm, he started wearing dashikis. A dashiki looks like a print dress, but there's sure nothing girlish in the way

James wears one. It makes him look real fierce.

I was sitting there in Lou's living room, lost in the music and looking at James. When the jazz part of the African melody started, James made a terrible face and said, "\*Oh. They shouldn't have done that."

"Done what?" asked Lou.

"Jazzed up the song they were playing," said James. "It's really one of the most sacred chants from my country. But then again, what can one expect from Americans?"

"I don't know what you mean, James," I said. "Isn't the group that's playing it a black group?"

He laughed. "They are American blacks, and like most Americans, they know as much about Africa as you or Louis."

"Well, what about the black studies program?" asked Lou. "We have a course at Manorsville."

"Again, laughable. You have a course which only scratches the surface of a culture that is older and wiser than many Americans dream. For instance, I'm sure that these jazz musicians have no idea of the true significance of the song that they are turning into sacrilege. It happens to be a chant used to cast out devils from a person who is possessed."

I couldn't help it. I broke out laughing. "Aw, c'mon James. You don't believe in all that stuff. Devils?"

"I saw *The Exorcist*," said Lou, "and I didn't see anything but a lot of raunchy, gory stuff" and a bunch of superstitious garbage. You could just as easily ask me to believe in vampire movies. I mean, it's fun and all, but it's just for scaring kids with."

James smiled and took a sip of his beer. "What if I were to tell you," he said, "that it's not make-believe at all, and that I have seen devils cast out of possessed people. Further, that I have been part of the ceremony?"

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That really got me. Here was this guy, sitting in Lou Greenspun's living room in Manorsville, Long Island, in 1976, talking about devils. I mean, you can sit around with the guys and b.s. all night, but when push comes to shove, who does believe in it? So I said, "If you told me that, I'd say it was a bunch of crap, James. All that stuff is superstition: witch doctors, spells. Somebody gets sick, right

away it's evil spirits. What do you do if somebody breaks a leg, sing him a chant and shake a rattle at him?"

"Of course not," said James. "We set the broken bone, using an anesthetic that my people were using long before your doctors dreamed that anesthesia even existed." He reached into a little pouch tied to his waist and took out a cigarette and lit it. He looked over at me and said, "By the way, I would appreciate it if when you refer to native African healers, you use the term shaman. It's still a western word, but at least not as offensive to me as 'witch doctor'. My father is a shaman, as was my grandfather and his father's father before him. And when my father is ready to pass on, I, too, will be shaman of my village. The only difference between us will be that by then, I'll have a western medical degree as well."

I should have taken the hint and lightened up right then and there. It was obvious that James took all this stuff very seriously. Maybe it was the beer talking, or maybe I was showing off for Lou's benefit. In any event I said, "Sorry, James. No way in the world you're gonna convince me. We've got our own witch doctors here: psychiatrists, faith healers. My dad says they're all phonies. Now if you really want to convince me, you could call up a few devils. But I'd much rather you called up a couple of chicks. There's something I can believe in."

James didn't take it well. He sat there and kind of went

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inside himself. His face got masklike again, and he didn't talk at all for a few minutes. I knew that I had offended him. I don't know why, but I couldn't back down. The silence hung heavy in the air for a few minutes, then Lou said, "All right, men. One more beer, then it's sack time for me. Sorry to lose your company, Arthur, but I have to drive James to the airport tomorrow morning. You don't mind walking home, do you?"

\*\*Nah," I said. "It's only a five minute walk. Besides, there's nobody waiting up for me. Mom and Dad are at a convention in Chicago, and Sybil is staying up in Cambridge with some friends. But give me a call tomorrow after you drop James off. Maybe we'll take in a flick, OK?"

"Sure thing. Art."

We all got up and went to the door. I shook hands with James and said I hoped he'd have a good flight to Africa and to make sure there were no devils on the plane, ha ha. He gave me a funny look and said, "There are devils in more places than you might expect, Arthur."

Then he reached into this pouch at his waist and took out some kind of powder. Before I knew it, he sprinkled some of it on me and started in to chant. I was so surprised that I just stood there. It was some weird kind of sound he made, too. Not like the chant we heard on the jazz record at all. Then he waved his hands over my head and in my face. He stopped then and smiled as though nothing unusual had happened.

"I hope you don't mind, Arthur," he said. "I know that you don't believe in such things. Perhaps my little prayer will give you some kind of understanding of other people's ways."

"That was a prayer?" I gulped.

"Yes, a prayer. It may not have entered your mind, but all the things you've been calling crap and superstition are a

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basic part of my religion. I can easily forgive your ignorance, but your arrogance on top of it offended me. To mock a man's religion is a dangerous thing to do. Read your history books. You'll find that wars have been fought, and many have died over ignorance and arrogance."

"Wait a minute," I said. "I didn't really mean to . . ."

"Offend my God?" smiled James. "Yes, I know that Arthur. But remember, when you mock one man's god, you mock them all, for He is all gods, everywhere. When your people came to my country with a sacred mission to teach us about your god, we didn't mock Him. We accepted Him and made Him part of our beliefs. You see, we have long known and believed that all gods are different faces of the One Great God." He gave me that funny smile again. "I'm sure there was no malice in what you said. I'm just as sure that once you've had time to think it over, you won't do it again." He stuck out his hand, smiled, and said, "Well, cheerio, and enjoy your summer holidays."

What can you say after something like that? I hung around for a while feeling like a fool, then split for home. It might have been the beer or James' little good-bye, but as I walked home, every shadow along the way seemed to move in a spooky fashion. It could also have been the fact that our streetlights in Manorsville aren't as many or as bright as in the city. Somehow, I felt like someone or . . . thing was following me.

I heard a rustling in the bushes behind me, then I heard a dog begin to howl. It set off a couple of others in the area, like a howling dog can do. I don't mind telling you that all this was making me very nervous. I began to walk faster between streetlights. But the sounds in the bushes and shrubs followed at the same rate. The night wasn't that warm, but I began to sweat. Then, just as I was between streetlights, it

came bursting out of the bushes! Wagging its tail. A stray mutt. I was so relieved, I didn't know whether to kiss him or kick him for scaring me so much. The question didn't really come up, though. He didn't come that close to me. Guess he saw I wasn't anyone he knew. He stopped and then trotted off. I mentally wished him luck. Manorsville has a full-time dogcatcher that patrols the streets. They picked up our springer spaniel, Bert, one time. He got out of the yard; they found him and returned him. But if he'd have been a stray, I guess they would have gassed him. I shuddered a little at the thought, then walked on home.

I suppose that whole night made more of a dent in my head than I was ready to admit, because I had some dreams.

I was deep in a jungle, with something horrible, I don't know what, chasing me. It was just behind me, out of sight in the bush. Somehow, I knew if that thing caught me, it would be all over. I ran and ran, gasping for air, my lungs burning, until I came to a clearing. The sun was hot and high overhead, and there was a village with a bunch of black people walking around. They weren't wearing outfits like you see in the Tarzan movies, though. The women were wearing bright print dresses, and most of the men wore dashikis or bush jackets with shorts. The houses were one-storied and open at the sides, except for some blinds. The roofs were either corrugated iron or made of some broad kind of leaves, all bunched together. There was a Land Rover parked outside the biggest house.

Just as I came out into the clearing, who comes out of the big house but James N'Gaweh! He was wearing a dashiki shirt and shorts. He had a gun and holster on his hip, and carried a rifle on a sling over his shoulder. I shouted to him, and he looked over my way. He gave me a big smile and waved. "Do you believe yet, Arthur?" he hollered.

"Believe what?" I hollered back.

\*"Look behind you!" he cried.

I turned, and there It was. I didn't see It too clearly at first, but then // lurched out of the bush after me. I can't describe It to you. Even now, when I think about It, my skin crawls. When It reached for me, I gagged from the incredible rotten smell that It gave off. Then I woke up in my own room at home. But the smell was still in the air.

I lay in bed for some time, thinking that I would never so much as watch a beer commercial on TV

again without being sick. I felt dirty, sweaty, hungry and above all, thirsty. I tried to sit up, but I kept flopping over on my side. My head was starting to ache with a dull, throbbing feeling. I tried to go back to sleep, but between the headache and the terrible smell in the room, it was no go. I finally decided that if I rolled out of bed and onto the floor, I could crawl as far as my bathroom and get a drink of water. My mouth was so bone dry, I felt like my tongue was hanging out six inches.

I figured that it couldn't be a hangover; I had to be very sick. I couldn't make out any colors, and my vision was all blurry. It was no use calling out; there was no one in the house to hear me, and there wouldn't be until Mrs. Clayton, the cleaning lady, came. But I had to have a drink of water.

I rolled over the side of the bed and hit the floor with a thump that made me bite my tongue. That made the headache even worse. I crawled as far as the bathroom door, which was slightly ajar. I couldn't raise a hand to open it, so I kind of pushed it aside with my aching head and sprawled out on the cool tiles of the bathroom floor. I looked up at the sink, where my glass and toothbrush were, and wished there was a way they could come to me.

The sun was shining through my bathroom window, real bright. But the goofy thing was that it all looked like a movie in black and white. The inside of my bathroom is pink and blue, but all the colors were blacks and grays. Then, just out of the corner of my eye, I thought I saw something move. Ignoring the pain in my head, I spun around and found myself face to face with an ugly mutt dog! He was laying there on the bathroom floor, looking sick. He had a big head, with a mouthful of evil-looking teeth. His fur was shaggy, where it wasn't matted, and muddy. He had floppy ears and a long, ratty tail. He seemed to be dirty-gray in color with some black spots. If he had been standing up, I'd say he was about three inches taller than Bert, our springer, and about five pounds heavier. All things considered, he was about the saddest, most raggedy-looking dog I'd ever seen. And there was I, sprawled out on the bathroom floor looking at him nose to nose.

My first impulse was to holler and scare him away, but I couldn't. I think that the noise would have hurt my head. Besides, I was too close to him. A scared dog bites, you know. I decided to look friendly and smile. It worked. His tongue lolled out, and he wagged his ratty tail, weakly. I reached out my hand, and he reached out his paw. Now we were getting some place.

I knew then that he'd been somebody's dog at one time or another. He knew about shaking hands. That was the first trick I taught to Bert when he was a pup. But when I reached over to take his paw, my hand bumped into the mirror on my bathroom door. Then it dawned on me that I was looking at my own reflection. That sadass mutt on the bathroom floor was me!

All right. I don't blame you. I didn't believe it at first, either. So I did what you'd probably do. I looked in the mirror for my own reflection. I saw nothing but the mutt. I

moved my right hand. The mutt moved his front paw. I smiled. The mutt wagged his tail. That's what clinched it for me. If you spend your whole life not having a tail, there's no describing how it feels when you wag it. You just feel it back there, wagging away. And it's the darndest thing. All you do is think smile, and there it goes. The other dumb thing is when you think smile, your mouth drops open. You see, dogs smile with their tongues and their tails.

When it sank in on me completely that I was a dog, I nearly nutted out. I knew I wasn't dreaming. The aches in my head and insides were all too real. I kept closing my eyes, then opening them, hoping each time I did, that good old Arthur Cane would be looking back at me in the mirror. No way. Each time it was the same raggedy mutt looking back.

Finally, I made it up in my mind that even if this was a dream, I was stuck with being a dog. I couldn't spend the rest of my life, or even the rest of this crazy dream, lying there on the bathroom floor looking into the mirror. I had to get up and face the world no matter what shape I was in.

I tried to stand up. The tile on the bathroom floor was too slippery for my paws, and my toenails kept sliding in between the cracks. It was then I realized that I was trying to stand up people style. All I had to do was think about getting up on my hands and knees, and there I was, standing like a dog. Walking was something else again. I started out to walk like I always did, one foot in front of the other. In a half second, I was flat on my nose with my legs all tangled up underneath me, my tail stuck in my left ear.

After a few tries, I got the hang of four-footed walking: right hand, left foot; left hand, right foot. It took some practice, but after a few minutes, I was walking all around the bathroom. I was so caught up in walking, I almost forgot about my headache, hunger, and thirst. But when I slipped on the tiles making a turn and rapped my head against the

John, it all came back in a rush. I started to say "ouch" but instead, this yelp came out of the back of my throat and echoed all over the tile of the bathroom. It kept ringing in my head for a few seconds afterwards. Out in the backyard there came an answer. Or at least, it was a bark. Bert! I'd forgotten all about him. He was my dog, he'd help me!

I tried to run out of the bathroom and get downstairs, but I forgot about my new walking technique. See, when you're a dog, you don't run the same way that you walk. When you run, you push off with both hind feet, like in a standing broad jump. You land on your hands, or front feet, while bringing up your back legs for another push-off. You really make a series of jumps when you're in a hurry.

Not knowing this at the time, I tried to take off. My hind paws slipped on the tile, my front ones gave way, and I sprawled flat on my stomach, real hard on the floor. That may sound funny to you, but if you're a male dog and you fall down hard on your stomach, it's no joke. I let out another yelp and heard some heavyweight barking from Bert out in back. I hollered, "Bert! Bert! It's me!" Except what came out was more like, "Bowf! Bowf! Roh-Roh!" All it got me was more hysterical barking from Bert.

I got out of the bathroom and was pleased to find that the carpet in my room seemed made for a dog to walk on. It felt just great on my feet, or I should say paws. I walked out the bedroom door, and there were the stairs leading down to the first floor. Talk about scary feelings! I mean, they're not steep stairs for a person, but to my dog's eyes, they looked impossible. I started getting dizzy looking over the edge. I decided that the stairs could wait until I felt better.

Thinking that a drink of water would help, I went back into the bathroom. I looked up at a sink that seemed ten feet high. I could see my glass up there, but no way to reach it. But being a good-sized dog, I could get up on my hind legs

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and get my head into the sink. After falling down a few times, I got my front paws hooked over the edge of the sink and my hind feet braced. The only problem was that the water wasn't running, and I couldn't turn it on.

Now I was really going crazy for that drink of water. I suppose it's human nature, but as soon as you know that you can't have something, you want it that much more. At that point, I wanted a cool drink of water more than anything else in the world. And try as I may, there seemed no way I was going to get it. I sat down on the tiles and howled in sheer frustration. Out in the backyard, Bert went bananas, barking hysterically. Then I noticed that the lid was up on the John. "No way!" I said to myself. But I was so thirsty. I put the thought of the water in the John out of my head and went back into my bedroom. I scrambled up onto the bed and lay down. It was then I found out what the terrible smell was. The bedclothes reeked of it. It pervaded every inch of the room, almost nauseating me. You see, I had sweated a lot in my sleep from that awful nightmare. The smell so offensive to my

dog's nose was me. Good old, lovable, white Protestant, shower-everyday. Right Guard-in-the-armpits, sixteen-year-old Arthur Cane!

I got out of the wretched-smelling bed and went back into the bathroom. My thirst was worse now, if that was possible. And there was the John, with cool water in it. But I still couldn't bring myself to drink any. I went back to the stairs. They still looked like the first dip on a roller coaster and twice as scary. If that wasn't bad enough, I started to feel the slow, insistent pressure on my bladder that told me I had to do something, and real soon.

I started walking around in tight circles, whining to myself. I was going crazy with thirst and the pressure on my bladder. Then it came to me: I was a dog! Nobody said I had to be housebroken. All I had to do was do it, but where? I

walked down the hall to my mom and dad's room. The door was open, and I went inside. Dad's closet was open.

I thought it might be funny to do it in Dad's golf shoes. He bought these fruity-looking brown and white spiked golf shoes at Abercrombie's. I looked around, but they weren't there. He probably took them to Chicago. But there, leaning against the side of the closet, was his tennis racket. I almost began to laugh, thinking what I was going to do, but my tail wagged and it only put more pressure on my bladder. So into the closet I went.

I wish that I could say that I did it right, but I didn't. When you're used to doing it in a certain way, you just don't fall into doing it while standing on four feet, then lifting up one hind leg. First of all, there's the question of which hind leg to lift. I figured that because I'm right-handed, it should be my right hind leg. But the tennis racket was leaning against the left wall of the closet. So I had to walk into the closet, turn around, then come up alongside the tennis racket and let go. After I peed all over my stomach, I decided that I still had a few things to learn about being a dog.

With the weight off my bladder, I felt a lot better. My headache was just about gone, and I was getting used to no colors. But my thirst was back with such dryness, I felt my mouth was lined with cotton. I began to get visions of cokes, pepsis, lemonades, and above all, water. Beautiful, cool, wet water. I knew that if only I had a drink of water, I could deal with those stairs and get to Lou's house. If I had a drink of water, I could whip a pack of wolves. With grave reservations, I walked into the John.

I won't lie to you about what I ended up doing. By the way, that blue stuff doesn't taste bad at all. Kind of like a raunchy Kool-Aid.

## 2 • I Bite a Burglar

I was taking the first step down the scary stairs, when I got a great idea—the telephone! I have a touch-tone phone, with push buttons instead of a dial. Maybe I could work the buttons with my nose! It was worth a try. I backed up the top step and went back to my room.

The phone was on the night table alongside my bed. Getting the receiver off the hook was no sweat, but once I did, the other part of the phone was overhead and out of my line of vision. I pushed the rest of it off and onto the floor. By that time, the phone was making those beep beep noises that it does when you leave it off the hook too long. I picked up the receiver in my mouth and replaced it.

I made a few practice calls, first. The time and the weather. It was 12:15 at the tone, beep. The temperature was 77°; today would be warm and slightly humid. I had no trouble hearing the weather lady, even though my ear wasn't close to the receiver. My hearing as a dog was a lot better than as a human.

After getting the weather report, I put the receiver back on the hook. I was almost ready for the big try. I'd call Lou and get him to come over. But wait a minute. How could I talk to him? I heard lots of

jokes about talking dogs, but this

was no joke. Vd have to practice first.

I began with "hello." It came out \*\*woh-a-oooh." Not too good. I tried to say Lou's name. All I got out was "ooooh!" and Bert started barking again. I saw that this was going to take more time than I expected. I spent the next hour trying vainly to make some sound that even approached human speech.

The best I could manage was \*\*no," which came out pretty clear, and \*'yes," which came out as "yaah." Not too bad, but it makes for a limited conversation. I had to get some help somehow. "Hey," I thought, "maybe I can say 'help!' " I practiced that for a few minutes and was able to get out a pretty good "help!" True, the 'p' on the end sounded more like an 'f, but "halff" sounded close enough for me.

Trembling with excitement, I picked up the receiver in my mouth, laid it on the floor, and punched out Lou's number with my nose. The line was busy. I could have cried. I replaced the receiver and sat down to wait. The numbers on my clock radio seemed frozen in place. After what seemed like years, five minutes passed and I tried again. After a pause it rang! And rang and rang. "C'mon," I thought. "Somebody's got to be there. Somebody. . . . Anybody!" Finally, Mary picked up the phone. I knew her voice right away.

"Greenspun residence."

"Halffl"

(pause)

"This is the Greenspun residence."

"Halffl Halffl"

(pause)

"Billy, if that's you fooling around, I don't think you're a bit funny!"

"Halffl Woh-a-OOOH! OOooh!"

"Lookit here, Billy Jackson. I already told you that I can't get personal calls on this number. You want to fool around, you call me on six-two-five-oh, like always."

"Halfln Ooooh!"

"That does it. You think I got nothing better to do than listen to your foolishness? You get some sense, you call me on my number. Good-bye!"

(CLICK!)

"Well," I thought, "back to the scary stairs." I replaced the receiver and went to the top step. "OK, Arthur, old buddy, let's go downstairs. Right hand, left foot, left hand, right fooot!"

I tumbled ass over ear down the whole flight, right into the big glass vase of dried eucalyptus leaves that Mom keeps at the foot of the landing. Broken glass, dry leaves, and shaggy mutt flew in all directions. I got up and shook myself. There didn't seem to be anything broken except for Mom's vase.

"Oh boy. Between peeing in the closet and busting vases, I'm lucky I'm a dog. I know that Arthur would sure catch it for doing even half of this," I thought. "But what of it? At least I was downstairs."

The noise had really stirred up Bert. He was barking up a storm out in back. I trotted over to the sun porch, where I could look out and see the yard. I got up on my hind legs and hooked my front paws over the sill and looked out. As I did, I found myself nose to nose with a very upset springer spaniel. If it hadn't been for the glass between us, he would have been all over me.

"Bert!" I barked. "It's me, Arthur!"

He stopped barking for a second and cocked his head to one side. I tried again to communicate. "Hey, Bert. Good boy. It's me. Don't you know me?"

Then he went completely wild, whining, barking, and jumping up against the glass. In a few

seconds, I realized that

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if I listened closely, I could actually understand what he was saying!

"Get out! Get out! My house! My house! Kill you! Kill you!"

Not too encouraging a start. I tried to soothe him. "Yaah. Your house. Your house. Me Arthur."

"Get out, Arthur! Kill you, kill you!"

I didn't feel it was much of an improvement that he learned my name so fast. Now he wanted to kill me on a first-name basis. Then I thought, "Maybe he thinks I'm a dog named Arthur in his house. He makes no connection between the mutt and Arthur Cane."

I tried again. "Nooh, nooh. Me, Arthur Cane. I live here. I fed you when you were hungry. Took you to dog groom-ers."

He stopped again and looked at me closer. I could see his nose going like crazy. Then he burst out barking once more. "No Arthur smell. Get out! Get out! Kill you!"

This wasn't getting me anywhere. I always thought that Bert was a very lovable dog, but not too bright. The last outburst convinced me of it. Leaving old dim bulb to bark, I went into the kitchen to scare up something to eat.

The refrigerator was no problem. I got the handle between my jaws, gave a little pull, and presto! The whole Cane family food supply was at my complete disposal.

I was really hungry, so I started with the quart of milk that spilled on the floor while I was nosing through the shelves. The kitchen floor was pretty clean and besides, being a dog, I might as well get used to eating off the floor. Anyhow, there was no way I could have sat down at the table. I found a half-dozen hot dogs, which tasted great, even raw. I tried the Jell-o and fruit salad but didn't care for it. Feeling pretty good, I strolled into the living room, curled up on the sofa,

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and lay down to catch a few z's.

I must have been pretty tired out, because the next thing I remember is one helluva thump on the head. I looked up and there was Mrs. Clayton, the cleaning lady, with a broom in her hands, hauling off to give me another shot. In my excitement, I forgot I was a dog and hollered out, "Hey, cut that out! You gone flaky or something?"

As soon as I heard all the barking and whining come out of my throat, I remembered what had happened. I took off running for the kitchen. Mrs. Clayton was after me with the broom just as quick. "Wow!" I thought, "I didn't know the old broad could move so fast!"

I made the turn into the kitchen, with my feet sliding and slipping on the linoleum, and saw that the kitchen door to the garage was open. Beyond it, the garage door was up about a foot and a half. Not enough for a person to get under, but enough for me. Or so I thought. I made it about halfway through, then got hung up with my head and front feet outside and my rear end stuck inside the garage. Seeing I was stuck, Mrs. Clayton really went to work on my tail from inside.

With all that pain for encouragement, I managed to squeeze free and took off down Rolling Brook Road like a shot. When I got to the corner of Manorsville Drive, I hung a left and ran a few more blocks. Once I was sure that no one was after me, I sat down to catch my breath and see where I was. I was in front of the Connaughton's house, four blocks away from my home. I sure had been moving.

"Wow," I thought. "That was some fancy running. And I didn't have to think about it at all. I just did it!" That's when I discovered that I functioned perfectly well as a dog, if I didn't let my human ideas get in the way. I was a good runner, I knew that much. I guess all that exercise on a full

stomach had gotten to my lower digestive tract. I had to leave a souvenir on the Connaughton's

lawn. I could have gone to the curb, I suppose, but the grass felt better. Feeling refreshed, I started up Manorsville Road toward Lou's house. He had to be back from the airport by now.

As I did, I felt a sudden pain in my right flank, then another. Fleas? Then something hit me on the back of the head so hard it made my skull ring. I spun around and there, on his front lawn, was little Billy Connaughton with his air gun. I turned toward him and barked, "Cut that out, you little creep, or I'll kick your tail!"

I made a false move his way, like I was going to charge him. He let out a yell and took off" for inside the house. I watched him go, then trotted off down the street, chuckling to myself. That is to say, wagging to myself.

In a little while, I found myself at Lou Greenspun's driveway. I looked around the big curve of the drive, but couldn't see the garage to tell if Lou's car was inside. I decided to approach the house with care. If anybody but Lou saw me, there was no way I could explain that I wasn't just a stray mutt. Come to think of it, I wasn't quite sure of how I was going to tell Lou himself. I got halfway up the drive, when this incredible racket started. I almost panicked from the sound, until I realized it was only a power mower being cranked up.

A power mower is noisy to a human being, but I promise you that to a dog's ears, it's unbearable. The sound actually hurt. I couldn't stick around with that earbuster going. I went off down the road, promising that I'd return after the lawn was finished.

Figuring I'd just hang around the area until the mower stopped, I began investigating all the scents in the air about me. With my new heightened sense of smell, it was almost

like reading a paper, sniffing the breeze. I could smell other dogs nearby; cooking odors from a house a block away. I was so involved in scenting things, that I almost bumped into the truck. It said on it in old English lettering: manorsville

HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

What a crock. It was the dogcatcher's truck. It wasn't too hard to figure out who they were looking for, either. By now, either Mrs. Clayton or little Billy Connaughton's mother had phoned them about the dangerous stray inside the holy borders of Manorsville, where everybody has a pedigreed dog.

Maybe I hadn't done anything wrong as Arthur Cane saw it. But as a stray dog, breaking into a house, stealing food, and threatening one of the neighborhood kids would buy me a one-way trip to the gas chamber! I stayed close to the shrubbery as the truck passed me. As soon as it was out of sight, I hightailed it in the opposite direction and away from Manorsville. I headed for New Town.

New Town is actually part of Manorsville, just across Northern Boulevard, the main highway in our area. New Town is where all the day workers of Manorsville and the not-so-well-offs live. Manorsville people from the other side of Northern Boulevard call it New Town.

But what a nightmare trying to cross the boulevard! I swear that one car actually swerved and tried to hit me. Once across, I stayed on the sidewalk and close to buildings. Soon I was out of the section where there were stores and into New Town proper. I was careful not to stop near any house that had a dog's scent around it. I'd learned that lesson from the reception Bert had given me. I was about to give up hope on finding someplace to lay down and rest, when I found a house that didn't have a warning scent posted around it.

I looked into the front yard. The house was neat and had been painted recently. There were flowers planted out in

front, and my nose told me of carrots and onions planted in back. The name on the mailbox said Riley.

"Wait a minute," I thought, "I know the Rileys." Dan Riley is a local handyman and gardener. In

fact, it was likely that Dan Riley had been running the power mower over at Lou's house. Dan's daughter, Melissa, had gone to Manors-ville High with my sister, Sybil. Feeling that I wasn't trespassing if I knew the people, I slipped the gate latch on the fence and went inside the front yard.

Dan Riley's truck wasn't in the driveway. One of the folding garage doors was a little ajar, and I could see that the inside had been converted into a workshop. There was an elaborate workbench and a lot of tools, all neatly in place on hooks set into the garage wall. It was a real cool setup. I nosed around back a bit more. There didn't seem to be anyone at home.

"Let's see," I thought. "How many Rileys are there?" I knew about Dan and his wife. Flora, who does day work for the Colemans on our block. There was Melissa, but I remember Sybil saying that Melissa got married a few months ago. And I knew definitely that her brother, Charles, was in the army somewhere in southeast Asia. I wasn't sure, but I thought there was another Riley kid, about ten years old, though I couldn't recall his name.

While I was running the Riley inventory in my head, I heard someone around by the garage. I moseyed over to the side of the building, where I could see without being seen. Sure enough, there was a guy in work clothes getting out of a beat-up car he'd parked about ten yards past the Riley's driveway. He didn't look familiar to me, and his car had New York City plates, not Nassau County tags. "Must be a friend of the family," I thought.

Sure. Some friend. As I watched, the guy looked all around the place, then went inside the garage. I'll be darned if he doesn't start taking Dan Riley's power tools off the hooks and loading them into a big carton he found in there. I was watching a rip-off in progress! He loaded up the carton and went out the doors, up the driveway toward his car. I debated in my mind whether I was going to do anything about it. I'd had strict instructions from my father on this subject. He'd always said that if I ever saw something going on, not to get involved. "You never know if one of them might have a knife or a gun," he says.

As near as I could see, this guy didn't have any gun. He had both hands full with that carton. And that carton had about five hundred dollars' worth of Riley's power tools in it. "Well, here goes," I said to myself "If he turns on me, I can always run faster than he can." I started stalking him.

He was just outside the driveway by now and headed for his car. I got a running start, came up behind him, and bit him on the rear end as hard as I could. The dude let out a yelp, dropped the box, and tried to get at me. I hung onto his bottom as though my life depended on it. For all I knew, it did. He finally shook me loose, but as we parted company, I felt a very satisfying rip. And what came loose in my jaws wasn't just the seat of his pants; there was meat, too.

As he spun around and tried to run for it, I got between him and his car. I growled deep in my throat and showed him some fangs. Each time he circled and tried to get to the car, I'd head him off. Foot by foot, I backed him up the walk and into Riley's driveway.

"All right, Arthur," I thought. "You've got him. But what are you going to do with him?" The problem resolved itself just as the robber was looking around for a stone or a stick to run me off with, Dan Riley pulled up in his truck. He cased the situation in a flash. I looked over my shoulder at him, then quickly returned my attention to the robber. I gave him a few more curse words in fluent mutt and showed him some teeth. Dan ran into the house and in a second was back with a .22 rifle. He pointed it at the rip-off" artist and said, "You make one move, mother, and I'll let my dog tear you to bits! The Man is on his way here, anyhow. This just ain't your day. See, his toaster broke this morning, and he's bringing it over here for me to fix. So you stir one hair, and I'll let my dog finish you!"

I felt pretty good hearing Dan say my dog. It's nice to know that you belong somewhere. Up to now, every hand had been raised against me. The robber shifted his weight from foot to foot. I moved

toward him and growled.

"You didn't have no dog last week when I come by," said the robber. "I didn't see no dog."

"You weren't supposed to," says Dan. "I got him trained special to stay out of sight." Then to me he says, "You watch him good. King."

"King?" I thought. "What kind of turkey name is King? Well, it beats mutt, I guess." Things were picking up. I'd acquired a name and a place to stay.

Dan hadn't been kidding about the police being on the way. In about five minutes. Officer Kramer from the Manors-ville police showed up in his prowl car. He spotted what was going on and was out of his car, gun in hand, before the dust settled in Riley's driveway. He moved between Dan and the robber. "OK, Dan," he said in a TV cop's kind of voice, that I'd never heard him use before. "I've got him now."

"Glad to see you," said Riley. "This thing isn't even loaded. It's my son Charlie's rifle. It hasn't been fired in years."

"Well, I'm a !" says the robber. "You mean all this time, you been holding an empty gun on me?"

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I decided that a certain amount of credit was due to good old "King/" so I made a few noises at him. He looked nervously in my direction. Officer Kramer looked at me, too. I returned his gaze, sat down, and gave him a wag. He shook his head. "So he's your dog, Dan. I didn't know you'd got another one. Flora said that after Prince was run over, you weren't going to keep a dog any more. Listen, you'd better keep him in the yard. I've been getting complaints about some mutt that fits his description. Seems he's been causing trouble all over the neighborhood. The health department's out looking for him now."

Dan looked as though he was going to disown me right then. Come to think of it, it was a freak that it all happened the way it did. I got the feeling my future was very much in the balance.

Now I'm not condoning what I did, I'm explaining. I knew very well that if Dan said the word, I'd be in the pound by nightfall waiting for the gas chamber. I needed time and a place to stay, until I worked out some way to communicate with Lou Greenspun. So I walked over to Dan, wagging all the way, and I . . . well . . . licked his hand. He had grease on it, too. But it saved me. He patted my head and said to Kramer, "Must be some kind of mistake. King is a good dog. He stays in the yard and looks after things, don't you King?"

I gave him a wag and wanted to say "yes." I knew my "yes" wasn't too good, so I tried "Uh-huh." It came out almost an "arf!" I felt like Sandy in Little Orphan Annie. "Arf!" is almost as turkey as "King."

"All right, Dan," said Kramer. "I'll take your word for it. But you'd better get him a collar and license. You know how those people up in town are about their fancy dogs. If they watched their kids half as good, my job would be a lot easier."

Kramer hustled the robber over against the garage wall,

then searched and handcuffed him. He shoved him into the back of the prowl car, waved to Dan, and turned on his flasher and siren. He drove about twenty feet, stopped, and came rolling back in reverse. He wound down the window. "Almost forgot the toaster," he said, handing it out to Dan. "My wife would have my head on a plate if I didn't get it fixed."

He drove off again, with the siren going. Talk about painful noises! Dan stood in the road, toaster in hand, watching him go. Then he looked down at me and said, "Well, mutt, I don't know where you came from, but you sure saved me a lot of money. But then again, I just saved your ass, so I guess

we're straight. Now beat it!" He made shooing motions with his hands.

I was crushed! I thought I'd promoted myself a place to stay. A lot of gratitude around this joint! I was ready to take off in a sulk, when I thought about the health department truck out looking for me. Bad news. I had to go into my act again. I whined a little, sat down, and gave him my paw. It worked; he took it, and I licked his hand again. Yecch! Riley laughed—a deep, warm sound. "All right, all right. You can stay. You gonna be licking my shoes next." He walked into the garage and rummaged around. "Let's see, where did I put that thing? Oh yeah, here it is."

He came out of the garage with a ratty-looking leather collar. I sat still, while he put it around my neck. It felt rotten, but I was in no position to argue. "Maybe that's the way it should be," I thought. "The kind of mutt I am, I should be happy for any kind of collar I can get. Even a used one."

Riley stepped back a pace and checked me out. "Not bad. You could use a little cleaning up, and you're probably full of fleas. Donny can give you a bath, when he comes home."

Donny? That must be the other Riley kid. I wasn't too keen on the bath idea. Nobody's given me a bath since I was real Httle. "Oh well," I thought, as I followed Riley toward the house, "I'll deal with that when I come to it."

I lay down alongside the steps that led up to the kitchen door, when Riley went inside. I figured I'd show him what an alert, intelligent watchdog I could be. In about ten alert, intelligent minutes, I was sound asleep.

### 3 . The Life of Riley

"A dog, we got a dog!"

I nearly jumped out of my skin. Vd been napping near the kitchen stairs, and when the hollering broke out a few feet away from me, I momentarily forgot where I was. More important, I'd forgotten what I was. As I opened my eyes, I saw a small kid running straight for me. I got up and backed away, getting all tangled up in my own four legs. I ended up in an awkward sprawl halfway under the kitchen stairs. By then the kid was on top of me, pulling on my new used collar and making high-pitched squeals that hurt my ears. But now, I'd come to my senses, so I sat still for it. I looked over my shoulder and saw Dan standing on the top step with his wife, Flora. \*\*Now Donny, don't fool with that dog, until he gets a chance to know you better," says Riley. "He doesn't even know me that well."

"Aw, Papa, he's OK. Lookit how he likes me."

I was really wagging it up to show the Rileys that I liked the kid, and that I wasn't a mean dog. But to tell it true, this kid was pulling on my ears, thumping me on the head, and generally being a royal pain.

"Are we gonna keep him. Papa? Are we, are we?" screamed the kid.

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"All depends. You feed him, keep him groomed, and clean up the yard after him, we'll see."

"Oh, I will, Papa. I will!"

The way Donny carried on about me, you'd have thought I was son of Lassie. I gave the kid a few more wags and looked friendly at him. Riley's wife was watching it all. She came down and sat on the bottom step of the kitchen stairs.

"He seems gentle enough," she said.

"You should have seen him this afternoon, when he did up that robber," laughed Riley. "He took a piece out of that dude for sure. But I gotta say he really takes to Donny. You wouldn't think he was the same dog."

"Dogs have a way of knowing who's good people," said Flora. "He knows that Donny is just a child and won't hurt him."

"Sure lady," I thought. "You should have seen a sweet kid Donny's age taking target practice on me with an air rifle this morning. But I might as well make a few points with you, too."

I got myself loose of the kid and went over to where Riley's wife was sitting. I sat down and gave her my paw. She broke out in a big smile and took it. She took my head in her hands, and I must say it felt nice, the way she touched me. I was just getting into the touch thing, when she put both her hands in my mouth. Man, talk about a weird feeling! You know, when a dentist does that, it's usually just the drill or the instruments that go into your mouth. But this was two unwashed hands, and she was pulling my lips away from my teeth. It didn't hurt, but it felt so creepy!

"He's got good teeth," she said.

"That robber this afternoon could have told you that," grinned Riley.

She let go of my mouth, and I let my head drop in her lap.

She started petting me in an almost absentminded fashion. Let me tell you, that lady knew about dogs. Without really paying any attention to what she was doing, she rubbed, patted, or scratched me every place that felt good. She even hit a few I didn't know about. It had been a long day for me, and it seemed everywhere I'd been, someone was out to do me harm. I just about fell asleep with my head in her lap, when all of a sudden she got up. I nearly fell over.

"Well, this isn't getting dinner cooked," she said and went up the stairs into the house. The kid came over and started in on me again.

"Donny, you let that dog be," said Flora. "Come in here and wash up for dinner."

"Aw, all right. Mama. But can I feed him after dinner?"

"Yes, you can. But if you don't get in here right away, you won't get any dinner yourself. You understand?"

All the Rileys trooped into the house, and after a little while, some dynamite smells came drifting out of the kitchen window. I hadn't eaten anything since that morning, and all that remained was a memory. My stomach felt like it was stuck to my backbone. I was one hollow dog.

"Hmph," I thought. "There they are in the house, stuffing themselves on that great smelling whatever-it-is, and here am I, the noble, brave, long-suffering dog, out in the backyard, starving. Some reward for saving the place from robbers! Well, one robber, anyway." ^

After what seemed like five hundred years, the kid came out with a bowl in his hand. At last, my dinner was served! "Well, maybe they're not so ungrateful after all," I thought. "I mean, if they want to eat first, that's cool. It's their house, right?" I loped over to the kid, before he had a chance to call me. My mouth felt cool, and I realized that I was actually drooling. Now for some dinner. I went for the bowl with my

mouth, but the kid held it up and out of my reach.

"No, no. Not yet," he said. "\*You got to beg for it, first."

I couldn't believe it. The kid really wanted me to do tricks for my dinner. Come to think of it, though, I'd done the same thing to Bert when I had been Donny's age. Huh! I was lucky that Bert hadn't taken a chunk out of me for doing it.

I thought right then that if ever I could, I was going to put together a bill of rights for dogs. The first article would see to it that you don't have to beg for what's rightly yours and you've earned. But none of this was doing my stomach any good. The kid was still holding up the bowl and insisting that I sit up and beg. "\*All right, kid," I thought. "You want a show, you're gonna get one!"

I trotted to the back fence of the yard, turned, and began a slow, groveling-type walk toward him on my belly. Halfway back, I sat up and crossed my front paws, like I was praying. Then I rolled over and over, stopping every few feet to sit up and pray again. About ten feet away, I saw a just right-

sized stick and picked it up in my mouth. Still groveling, I came up to him. When I reached him, I stood up and using the stick like a pencil, I traced the word "please" in the smooth dirt of the yard. I finished the performance by sitting up again and saluting with my right paw.

The kid looked at the "please" scratched in the dirt, then back at me, still sitting up and saluting. I didn't know what I expected him to do, but it sure wasn't to drop the bowl and run into the house screaming. I knew then that I'd goofed. I was being way too hip for a dog, and I'd scared the kid. Hungry as I was, I ignored my bowl of dinner and rolled over and over in the dirt until I'd erased the "please" I had scratched there. Then I payed some serious attention to the food. I could see it was only table scraps, but I didn't care. When the Rileys came out into the backyard,

I was polishing off the last of it.

The kid was in trouble, naturally. He'd insisted that his parents come out to see what I'd written in the dirt. But now, there was nothing there.

"But it was right here, Papa," said the kid. "He wrote 'please' right here on the ground. And he rolled over and saluted and ..."

"I see," said Riley. "Now, Donny, if that dog wrote anything, it'd still be there, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, Papa."

"Do you see anything there?"

"No, Papa."

"OK, now. You say he sat up and prayed and even saluted?"

"Yes he did, Papa. He really did."

Riley looked over at me. "C'mere King. Here boy!" I trotted over to him and sat down at his feet looking alert and bright. "Sit up, boy," he said. I looked at him like he was talking Greek. "Roll over!" he said. I yawned and lay down on the ground. "Sit up and say your prayers, King," said Riley. I got halfway up, scratched an imaginary flea, then lay down again. Riley turned to the kid. "Well, son. He doesn't do tricks, does he?"

"But he does, Papa, he does. I saw him and he . . ."

"That's enough," broke in Riley. "You keep this nonsense up, and you're going to get me mad. Now you get into the house and get ready for bed. And no TV, either."

"Aw, Papa . . ."

"Don't you 'Aw, Papa' me. Do you want me to take off" my belt?"

"No Papa. I'm going."

"For sure, you are. And I don't want to hear any more

about this dog and tricks, you hear? First I hear of it, you get a sore behind, and I get rid of this mutt. Now get in the house. Get!"

Riley watched the kid run inside, then looked down at me. "I think you're turning out to be more trouble than you're worth," he said. "But you've been a good hound so far. C'mere."

Riley bent down and grabbed my collar. He walked me over to the garage, where he picked up about forty feet of clothesline. He tied one end through the steel loop on my leather collar. He tied the other end around the garden hose water faucet on the side of the house. He put my now empty bowl under the spigot and turned the water on to a trickle.

"There you go. King," he said. "All the comforts of home. Fresh water and plenty of rope to run on. That ought to keep you out of trouble." He turned and went up the stairs to the kitchen door. He stopped at the top step and looked down at me. "If you don't like it," he laughed, "write me a letter about it." The screen door slammed.

"Rats!" I thought. "All I wanted was a hideout until I could reach Lou. Now I'm a prisoner. I've got

to get loose and see Lou before he leaves for Europe!" I checked out the way I was tied up.

After a half hour of trying the knots with my teeth, I gave up. I lay down alongside the house, feeling lower than a snake's elbows. It was getting late. I could hear the Rileys' TV going, and the eleven o'clock news was on. The usual depressing crap. Fires, murders, strikes, possible war in the Middle East, ball scores, weather. When it was over, I heard someone turn it off, then footsteps into the kitchen. A wall switch clicked, and a small square of light fell over me from the kitchen window. I heard Flora Riley say, "Honey, do you want another beer?"

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"No, I don't think so, baby. I got a long day tomorrow. Got to finish the Greenspun place."

"Do you really have to work on Sunday to do it?"

"If I don't, what do we use for money? We scraped bottom last year for my tuition to the RCA Institute. I figured that by now we'd be in great shape. What a laugh! I should have realized that nobody up in Manorsville was going to trust a black man with a thousand dollar color TV combination, no matter how many diplomas he has."

"You're talking foolishness, and you know it, Dan. Billy Jackson works for Manorsville Hi-Fi, doesn't he?"

"Sure he does. But you notice you never see him on house calls, do you? He works in the shop, where the country club set doesn't see him."

"And makes good money doing it, too. Do you love those folks so much that you want to be in their houses? Admit it, honey, you don't take orders well. You have to have your own business. Not that I fault you for it. You're a proud man, and it's part of why I love you."

"What's the other part? My house in the country and all my millions?"

"No," laughed Flora. "It's your charm and devilish good looks."

I heard some shuffling around and then Flora said, "Cut that out, Riley. Be serious. It's getting better. Didn't Kramer bring over his toaster today? I mean, it's not much, but it's a start . . ."

"Kramer's different, and you know it. He's police, but in Manorsville, he's still help, like us. Ain't even like he was a real cop. Oh, he's got the car and the gun and the uniform, all right. But you know he's only here to run off outsiders. And to keep his mouth shut if anything goes wrong with the

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rich folks and their spoiled kids. He isn't too much more than the dogcatcher."

"Hey, talking about the dogcatcher," said Flora, "what do you make of that business with Donny and the dog? I'm worried about it, hon. Donny doesn't tell stories."

"All kids tell stories. When I was little, I was bad that way. My mom whipped it out of me pretty quick, though. And I'm telling you that it wouldn't do Donny any harm, either."

"Not true. Charles and Melissa turned out just fine without it. You're always saying how proud they've made you."

"I guess you're right. Hey! Look at the time. Let's hit it, baby. Long day tomorrow."

I heard them getting up from the table and clearing things away. The refrigerator door opened and closed. I heard Flora say, "Thought you weren't going to have another beer."

"Well, just one more. Then to bed. Wait a minute, I want to check on the back and the garage door."

"You forgetting we have a watchdog?"

"You know, I almost did? That's a strange animal, by the way. He shows up out of nowhere, acts like he hves here, guards the place, and . . ."

"Writes letters to Donny," laughed Flora.

"It wouldn't surprise me. That's one strange dog, I tell you. I was watching him this afternoon. When he lays down to rest, he doesn't circle around like a normal dog would. He just plops himself down like a sack of meal. You know, I came around the house when he was asleep, and he was sleeping on his back! I never saw a dog in my life that slept on his back. But he seems to be a good watchdog. We may keep him."

"Keep him? Dan Riley, if you get rid of that dog, you'll break your son's heart. You know how he's been after us for

a dog ever since Prince got run over."

"Trince was different. Prince was a German shepherd.

This here is a common mutt."

"Now who's acting Hke Manorsville folks?"

Riley laughed. \*T guess you're right. Come on upstairs."

The kitchen light went out, and I heard them going up the steps. For a few minutes, the bedroom light was on, then it too went out. I lay there in the dark thinking about what a day it had been.

I woke in a little pool of water. It had been raining buckets. I began trotting around the yard at the end of my rope, so as to dry off. As I did, I worked out my plan for telling Lou what had happened to me.

First, I had to go with Riley when he went over to work at the Greenspun house. Not being able to talk, I would have to write out my message, but there was no dirt to scratch on inside the Greenspun's. I needed pen and paper. Maybe just a pen would do. I could always write on a wall. Taking advantage of my long tether, I made my way into the garage. But it seemed Riley was too neat a workman. There wasn't a thing out of place or even a blunt nail to write with in the whole garage workshop. I was still sniffing around, when I heard Riley's voice behind me say, "Hey there, King-O! You're pretty smart. Came in here when it started to rain last night, huh?"

If dogs could blush from embarrassment, I would have been bright red. There I had spent the whole night in a puddle of cold water under the kitchen steps, when I could have been warm and dry.

Dan was putting together the tools he needed for the day. He picked up a lawn edger and examined the disc blade. Then he took it over to the bench and turned on the switch

to a grinding wheel. He began sharpening the blade. I couldn't believe the painful sound it made. I took off for the outside and went as far as my tether allowed. If I could have buried my head, I'd have done that too.

No sooner had the noise stopped, when I heard Riley starting up his truck. By the time I got back to the garage, he was swinging the truck around in the street. He waved to me from the cab. "Watch the house, King," he called out, and drove away.

I could have sat down and howled. My only chance to go to Lou's had just disappeared down the road. I spent the rest of the day sulking alongside the house and trying to think up an escape plan. By nightfall, I had it. Once they'd all gone to bed, I trotted into the garage and lay down. I set my mental alarm clock for sunrise and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

The first rays of the sun coming through the small garage windows woke me. I jumped to my feet and checked the area around Riley's workbench. My heart leaped. It was there! Riley is a neat and methodical man with his tools. Leaning in the corner, its cutting disc glinting silver gray in the early sunlight, was the same lawn edger Riley had sharpened yesterday morning.

I got hold of the long thick handle in my jaws and dragged it across the garage floor to the semi-

open doors. I then wedged the handle firmly between the inside frame and the door. Thank heavens they had old-fashioned folding doors instead of one overhead door! With the edger firmly in place, I took about two feet of slack from my tether and wrapped it around its upper handle. Then with one paw on the cutting wheel so it wouldn't turn, I took the rope in my mouth and began sawing it against the sharp steel edger blade. It didn't take long. The rope parted with a pop, and I was loose of it.

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But two feet of rope still trailed from the loop in my collar. "Who cares?" I thought. "Let it drag."

I trotted out the driveway and started up the road toward Northern Boulevard. I thought about the Rileys and the kid, who really wasn't so bad after all. On an impulse, I went back into the yard. I had to work quickly now, as the sun was almost fully risen. I looked around and found the stick Fd used the day before. I rolled around in the dust near the stairs, until I had a good-sized area smoothed out. Then taking the stick in my mouth, I traced out: donny was

RIGHT. I CAN DO TRICKS. THANKS FOR THE MEALS. LOVE, KING.

I went out of the Riley's yard and up the street, wagging a little, I was so happy to be loose. It promised to be a pleasant day. It was Monday and by now, my folks would be home. I didn't have to get over to Lou's. I knew that I could make my folks understand. Humming a tuneless doggy tune to myself, I made for Manorsville and home.

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\*"How could he? Charles, how could he do this? We've done our best. And now this ... I don't know ... I just don't know what to do about him."

I was standing below the window of the breakfast nook on the side of our house. If I had gotten up on my hind legs and peered through the window, I would have been nose to nose with my father as he sat across the table from my mom. I had been leery of going right up to my house, considering the sort of reception I'd been getting of late as a mutt. Besides, what do you do in a situation like this, anyway? Walk right up and bark out the whole story? Sure.

It had been enough trouble sneaking up to the house without Bert getting wind of me. Even where I was, if the wind shifted and he could scent me, I knew the whole stupid "get away—kill you" thing would start up again. That's all I'd need on top of the woes I had. And I really had some woes.

I'd been listening for twenty minutes to Mom and Dad and getting an earful in the process. See, I thought that when they'd get home and find their darling son was missing, they'd be worried. Maybe even they'd call the police to see what had become of me. I had some sort of picture in my mind that Mom would be crying and Dad

would be strong and efficient, comforting her.

What crap! He was sitting there reading the paper. I mean the lousy paper! As for Mom, all she was concerned about was that some mutt dog had been in her house, had broken things and messed the place up. What burned me was she thought that I had put the dog in the house, then disappeared somewhere.

Of course, they had no idea how long I'd really been gone. When they'd checked upstairs, they'd seen my bed had been slept in. Trouble is, that when a bed has been slept in, there's no way to tell when it was last used. So as far as they were concerned, I wasn't missing at all. They had no way of knowing that I'd been gone, so to speak, for two whole days. Mom was disturbed, all right, but only about her house and vase. I couldn't tell if Dad was upset or not; he hadn't come out from behind the New York Times since I'd been there. I guess the paper reading was getting to Mom, too, because she said to Dad, "Charles, you can put that paper down long enough to talk to me about your son. I can't raise children by myself, though God knows for the past four years, I've been doing just that."

The paper came down for that one. "Just a moment, Lila. First off, he's my son now that he's gotten himself in trouble again. I want to know why in hell he's my son when he's done something wrong, and your son when it's convenient? As I recall, it still takes two to have kids. Besides, I'm sure there's a rational explanation for all this mess. I don't see why you're taking on this way. It wasn't your closet that got pissed in, it was mine. As for the vase, the next time you take off for Bloomingdale's to ruin me financially, get another vase. I don't care to hear any more about it. I'll talk to Arthur when he gets home, and we'll get some answers. They'd better be good ones, too. I've had enough from that boy."

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Then they began going back and forth again, each blaming the other for what they thought had happened in the house while they'd been away. If only they knew what was really going on with their son, the dog! I inched closer to the window to hear better. Mom was saying, "Very well, Charlie. We'll both speak to him tonight at dinner."

"Not tonight, Lila. Can't make it. I just remembered that I have to meet with Bill Gordon in town for dinner. The risk experience on his New Jersey plant is way up. We're going to have to hike his premiums unless he gets a safety engineer out there to find out what the cause of all those accidents has been. We'll be eating at La Golue. I should be home on the 11:15."

"It seems to me that your own son is more important than some business dinner with Bill Gordon. Besides which, Bill Gordon doesn't eat dinner, he drinks it. As I recall, when you signed him up, you came back from the city feeling no pain."

"Lila, we've discussed this. When you do business with a boozer, you drink. If Bill didn't drink, neither would I. It's a courtesy, that's all."

"You were so courteous, you got sick all over the bathroom the last time."

I heard dishes rattle and saw Dad stand up. "Enough!" he shouted. "I've worked hard a lot of years to get us here. Lord knows, I didn't do it all for myself. You were the one who wanted to live in Manorsville. I got this house for you. You wanted Sarah Lawrence for Sybil; I got that, too. Anything within my means that you've asked for I've gotten for you somehow and . . . well, I'll be!"

Dad had looked out the window and was looking straight at me. I gave him my most ingratiating look and a hearty tail wag. He opened the breakfast nook window and stuck his head out. I came closer, and then suddenly he let me have

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it: a hot cup of coffee, cup and all. I was so shocked, I just stood there for a few seconds.

"Get out of here, you lousy mutt!" he hollered. Then to Mom he said, "Lila, that dog is back. The one Mrs. Clayton told us about. Call the health department!"

I stood there, coffee dripping from my face, unable to believe what was going on. My own folks were out to get me! Naturally, they didn't know that it was me, but all the same it's a low blow to find out that your own parents can be so heartless, even to a stray mutt. I hadn't done anything but be friendly, and they were calling the death wagon to take me away. I was torn as to what to do. I could stay and try to communicate with them somehow, but with the death wagon on the way, I might not get the chance. I split.

As I took off, I made up my mind that no matter what happened, I wasn't going back, ever. I headed for Lou's place at a run for the first few blocks, then settled into a steady trot, until I rounded the drive to the Greenspun house. My original plan for Lou was back in effect. If my folks didn't understand, well, too bad. I knew that good ol' Lou would help me. After all, hadn't he been there when the whole mess got started?

I hung a right turn at Manorsville Road and Larch Drive, and as I did, I ran almost under the

wheels of the death wagon itself! They were out early, and there was no doubt in my mind who they were looking for. I put on more speed, but it was too late. I'd been spotted. The truck took off after me. Although I was well ahead of them at this point, there's no winning a race with a truck chasing you. I knew I couldn't keep ahead of them if I stayed on the paved roads. But most Manorsville homes are partially fenced off, so I couldn't cut across property lines, either. I glanced over my shoulder. They were gaining on me! As I sped down Larch Drive, I saw a truck standing at the intersection of Larch and Northern

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Boulevard. It was waiting for the light to change.

It was a stake truck with a canvas top and blessedly, the tail gate was down. I reached the truck just as the light turned green. Mustering up the last of my wind and strength, I made one great leap. For a few panicky seconds, my feet scrambled madly on the steel and wood of the tail gate, then I lurched forward into the welcoming dark of the truck bed. There was nothing in the back of the truck but some burlap bags. I lay down on them and looked out from my hiding place.

We were already into the traffic on Northern Boulevard, and I couldn't believe my good luck. The death wagon had missed the light! As we moved west, I could see it still standing at the intersection of Northern and Larch, like some great frustrated bird of prey. I had no idea where my truck was taking me, but so long as it was away from Manorsville, I didn't care.

The morning rush was in full swing on Northern, but it didn't take me long to figure out where we were headed. The truck I was in was going to New York City. We crossed the city line in about twenty minutes, and a half hour later, we were on the approach to the Triboro Bridge that connects the borough of Queens to the island of Manhattan itself.

Like most kids who hve in Manorsville, I really didn't know too much about New York City. Oh sure, I'd been there lots of times, but always with school groups or my folks, back when we used to go places together. So when the truck stopped at the first intersection on the other side of the bridge, I looked out on a completely strange scene.

"OK, Arthur," I thought. "This is it. You don't have anywhere to go; you don't belong anywhere. This place is as good as any." Without caring, I jumped off the tail gate and ran up a side street.

It was a real funky street. There were tenement buildings

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on both sides and overflowing garbage cans in front of all of them. Trash and rotting garbage were packed under the wheels of the tightly parked cars that lined each side of the street. My nose told me that there was no lack of dogs in the area. One thing for sure, I was far from the high rent district. I took my time and ambled up to the signpost on the corner to see where I was. It said east 124 street and 2nd AVENUE on it.

"Oh wow," I thought. "I've got to get out of here!" I moved off down Second Avenue at a brisk trot, until I suddenly thought, "Hey, wait a minute! Arthur Cane might be in trouble in a bad neighborhood, but a mutt dog with two feet of clothesline hanging from his collar sure isn't. Slow down and think this out."

I sat down on the pavement next to a parked car to figure out what I was going to do next. Then I heard this voice from nowhere say, "That's close enough. Another step, and you lose an eye, mutt."

It was a strange, growly, low-pitched kind of voice. I looked all around, but didn't see anyone.

"Who are you?" I said. "I can't see anybody."

"Of course you can't. You're a dog. All dogs are stupid and half-bhnd, anyway."

Then underneath the parked car I was sitting next to, I thought I saw something move. But with no

colors to guide me, I couldn't make out a shape. Then it clicked in my mind.

"Wait a second," I said. "You're not even a human being."

"Isis forbid!" came back the growly voice. "Who'd ever want to be?"

"A cat! You're a cat! Gee, you really scared me for a second."

"You want something to be scared of, you just come a little closer."

"Oh come on," I said. "I'm not going to hurt you. I was just sitting down for a minute to figure out where I was going. I'm not from around here and I'm lost."

"Figure it out some place else," came the voice. "This is my street."

"Don't be ridiculous. A cat doesn't own a street. No one owns a street. I'll sit here, until I'm good and ready to leave. You don't bother me, and I won't bother you."

"Great Thoth. A dog who can think. I can't believe my ears. Where did you come from, anyway?"

"Manorsville, Long Island. And I'm not really a dog."

"You're doing a good imitation, if you're not. What are you, then, an automobile?" A low, purring laugh drifted out from under the car. "Sure. I can tell by your tail and collar that you're a Cadillac."

"I can't explain it," I said. "Outside, I look like a dog, but inside, I'm really a human being. I was changed into a dog three days ago. I don't expect you to understand."

"I understand completely," said the cat under the car. "I was once a high priest in the great temple at Karnak. I sometimes still dream of it. My robes, the torches blazing, my slaves. Ah, those were the days. We used to throw dogs to the sacred crocodiles and worship Sekhmet."

"Is that the Egyptian goddess with the cat's head?" I asked, remembering my field trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"Amazing! You know, I half believe you about being a dog. A dog wouldn't know about Sekhmet. A dog wouldn't know about anything. Only cats know. But that was thousands of years ago. I have lived many times since then, and always as a cat. In all those years, I have never met a dog who had a thought in his head."

"I told you. I'm really not a dog. I'm a human being who's been changed into a dog."

"Fish guts! Human souls enter only into the bodies of cats. And then only those who showed proper respect for cats when they were men. Dogs have no souls. Any cat knows that."

"OK, OK. You're right. I'm just a strange dog. But listen. I'm lost."

"Where do you want to go?"

"That's just it, I don't know."

"Where do you belong?"

"Nowhere I know of."

"And you don't know where you are?"

"No."

"I take it all back. You are stupid enough to be a dog."

"A lot of help you are," I said.

"Perhaps so," laughed the cat. "But I know who I am, and I'm not lost, either."

"That's not funny. I'm really in a jam. There are only two people who could understand what's happened to me. The one who did it, and he's in Africa. The other one, my friend, just left for Europe and won't be back for a month."

"It seems to me that you have no problem at all. Wait until your friend comes back from Europe."

"But what will I do? Where will I go? That's the real problem right now."

"On the contrary. If you have no place to go, and you don't belong anywhere, there's no problem."

You will go where you go and do what you will do." I heard the sound of a small, furry yawn from under the car. "Really, you dogs are a bore. We had the right idea in the old days. Great Sekhmet! You should have seen the sacred crocodiles weep for joy at the snacks we'd throw to them. I can hear the lovely whines and yelps, even now. ..."

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I saw that there was no future in talking any further with the cat. I left him there, under the parked car, mumbling dreamily to himself about old Egypt. I continued down Second Avenue. I was beginning to get hungry, and staying alive in a strange place is a full-time job. As I crossed an intersection, a neatly dressed couple passed me walking in the opposite direction. Over my shoulder, I heard the man say, "Linda, did you see that stray dog?"

"Sure I did. What about him?"

"He waited until the light changed, before he crossed the street."

"Don't be ridiculous. It was a coincidence."

As I walked down Second Avenue, I began to think, "People notice me when I do certain things that they wouldn't expect of a dog. But once they do, they convince themselves that they didn't see it at all. That's going to be my biggest problem in communicating with people. I have to prove to them that I have something to say. Even then, if they don't care for my appearance, they'll make up their minds that I'm just a mutt. I had enough trouble trying to get my message across to the cat under the car, and he spoke my language. How about with people?"

But philosophy was rapidly taking a back seat to hunger. My gut was growling, and each store I passed seemed to give off more aromas of good things to eat than the next did. There were groceries, luncheonettes, pizza parlors, Spanish restaurants. Even the fish stores were beginning to smell good to me. I got all the way to 96th Street and Second Avenue, before I saw my first chance at food that wasn't behind closed doors.

There, on the corner, was a hot dog cart. It had an umbrella of many colors spread out above it. A young guy was standing at the counter, staring off into space and listening

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to rock music on a transistor radio. He was wearing a stained white apron and wore a coin changer clipped to his belt. He had to be the man in charge. I trotted up to him and sat down at his feet. He didn't even notice that I was there. The smell from the hot dogs at this distance was so heavy that I began to drool; I could feel it. I gave a little bark, and when he looked down at me in surprise, I did my best sit-up-and-beg routine. I was sitting up and off balance, so even though I could see the kick he aimed at me, I couldn't get out of the way in time. He caught me on the left side, square in the ribs.

"Geddadahere, you crummy mutt!" he hollered.

I got. "So much for being cute and begging," I thought. "This is going to require a plan." I drew back to a safe distance in a nearby doorway and watched the hot dog wagon for a while. Business wasn't too brisk. But I observed the routine closely. When someone would come up and order a hot dog, the guy would go through a drill that he'd obviously done thousands of times.

He'd take a long-handled fork from the counter of the wagon and flip open the door to the little boiler compartment where the franks were kept in hot water. While he speared a frank with the fork, his other hand would reach into the place where the buns were kept. As the frank came out of the water, there would be the roll, ready to slide under it. Then he'd put down the fork, work the mustard paddle, get a paper napkin to slip under the frank and roll, then hand the finished product to the customer. The other hand by now was extended, palm up, for his money. But I noticed that when more

than one hot dog was ordered, he'd place the first one on the cart's counter while he worked on the next. It was all well-planned and very fast.

I waited, until I saw a few people gathered at the cart. When the guy who had kicked me went into his routine, I

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made my move. I ran full speed from the doorway and grabbed a frank from the counter. Galloping down Second Avenue, the hot dog in my mouth, I departed in a shower of some of the most pungent curse words and prize filthies Yd ever heard. I didn't care, though. I had my hot dog.

I soon discovered that all the hot dog cart operators used the same method in preparing their franks. By watching my chances carefully, I worked my way down Second Avenue past 42nd Street. In all, I stole a half-dozen hot dogs out of ten tries. The ones I missed, I had timed wrong or had misjudged the distance for my running pickup. On one try, I think I chipped a front tooth when a surprised customer grabbed the frank, just as I made my move. My tooth clacked against the stainless steel counter of the wagon. It hurt, too.

Below 39th Street, I didn't see any more frank carts on the comers. But by then, I had enough to eat. I strolled along the avenue, looking in shop windows and wondering what I was going to do with myself. It was a pleasant day for a walk downtown.

At 14th Street and below, the area began to change radically. I saw a whole lot of young people in far-out clothes. Most of the guys had hair down to their shoulders. The shop windows were different, too. There were a bunch of antique stores, head shops, and places that sold jeans and tops. I passed a number of kids about my age who were panhandling on the street.

The excitement of the area really got to me. This was the place known as the East Village. I'd heard about it, naturally. A lot of Manorsville kids came here on weekends to hear rock concerts or walk around and browse in the shops. But I'd never been here. To tell the truth, it knocked me out. The only thing that took the edge off my enjoyment of the whole scene was my dog's eye view of it all. But for the moment,

the beat and energy of it fascinated me. I almost got stepped on a few times, and once a truck came so close to me, that I felt the breeze against my fur as it went by. I moved west on St. Marks Place, up toward Third Avenue. In a doorway of one of the many storefronts, there was someone playing a guitar and singing. He was drawing a crowd, too. I stopped to listen.

He was about twenty years old, I'd say. Fair-haired and skinny as a strand of spaghetti. He was dressed in a long-sleeved shirt and jeans; cowboy boots. Despite the warmth of the day, he also wore a heavy leather vest with a lot of pockets in it. You couldn't see too much of his face, because he had a heavy moustache and wore big dark sunglasses with black frames. A black cowboy hat lay on the sidewalk at his feet. There was a scattering of coins and a few crumpled dollar bills in it. He was singing an old James Taylor tune, something about Carolina. I liked it. Almost all the music I'd heard since Saturday had hurt my ears, one way or another, but I found something strangely soothing in this guy's way of singing and playing. I edged to the front of the small crowd before him and sat down.

I'd thought at first that he was wearing the sunglasses because of the brightness of the day. Then I saw the white cane hooked to his belt. It had a dark-colored tip on it. To my dog's eyes, that meant it was red. The guy was blind. It didn't bother his playing any, though. I sat there, soaking up his music. He went on through a few other tunes; some I'd heard before. Then he began on one I'd never heard. The melody still comes back to me today, even though I'm about as musical as a train wreck. It's a sweet, distant sound, that tune. Half air, half smoke . . . light, faraway, and wispy. But it was the words that spoke to me most of all. I remember every one of them:

Fm not a man that people take to. Fm not the kind they stop and talk to. But perhaps they never see  
The me inside of me.

It's all outside, what you call seeing And some can hide their very being From the ones who only  
see The me outside of me.

Touching is real  
And if you feel  
All the beauty that lies  
In a soul that cries out  
To be free.

Look with your heart and you 'll see  
The me inside of me.

Somehow, he was saying all that had been on my mind for the past few days. How no one ever  
looked past the mutt they saw. They saw only the outside of me, not the Arthur Cane who was trapped  
in a dog's body. There was something about this blind kid that told me he could see me better than  
anyone I was going to meet. I moved away from the crowd and went over to the doorway, where he  
was standing and playing. I sat down next to his feet.

He ended his song and reached down almost to where I was sitting, his long, skinny fingers  
groping for something. I glanced in the direction of his extended hand and saw a water canteen, like  
scouts and soldiers carry. I moved quickly out of his way. His hands closed on the canteen and  
unscrewed the top. I got a strong scent of lemon and sugar. He had lemonade in it. My mouth began to  
water. I'd eaten a lot of spicy, garlicky hot dogs, and my mouth was as dry

as cotton wool. I must have moved or made a small whimper when I smelled the lemonade,  
because the guy heard me.

"What's this?" he said, reaching out in my direction. I moved in closer to his hand. He found my  
head, and his fingers raced over my face and ears. I licked his hand. "Well, ril be!" he laughed. "A  
true music lover."

I moved over next to him and sat down on his right foot, wagging it up. He squatted down and  
"looked" me over with his hands. They were as sensitive and soothing as Flora Riley's had been. He  
quickly found my collar and felt the length of clothesline that still trailed from it.

"Uh-oh. You must be somebody's runaway, boy. You got a collar and what's left of a lead. There's  
somebody somewhere wondering what's become of you. That's for sure."

He turned his face toward what was left of the crowd that had gathered, while he'd been playing. I  
don't know how he knew that there was still anyone there. I knew that I could have told. I'd have  
heard and smelled them, even if I couldn't see them. Maybe he did, too. I once read somewhere that  
blind people have sharper senses of smell and hearing than folks who can see.

"Hey!" he called to the crowd. "Does this dog belong to any of you?"

Someone in the back mumbled, "Not me." But the damd-est thing was that nobody else said  
anything. They started shifting back and forth from foot to foot, as though they were embarassed. Then  
the crowd broke up very quickly and dispersed. I found out later that it would happen like that  
whenever the kid would talk to a crowd.

It seems that normal people are perfectly willing to be entertained by a blind person, so long as he  
stays apart from them. As soon as he talks or tries to relate to them, they take off. I think that secretly,  
they feel guilty about being able to

see. They realize that the bhnd performer isn't just a curiosity, but a real person like themselves

who isn't as lucky. It makes them uncomfortable to think that they, too, could be blind.

I wanted to tell this blind guy that there wasn't a soul in the world who cared about me one way or another. What I wanted to tell him even more was how thirsty I was. He still had the canteen in his hand, so I very gently took his hand in my mouth. Then I licked off the few drops that still clung to the cap. He got the message right away. He poured a bit of lemonade into the palm of his hand. I licked it up greedily.

"Hold on there, fella," he said. "This stuff ain't good for you. Too much sugar. What you want is some water. Come with me." He slung his guitar over his shoulder with an easy, practiced motion. Then he bent down and picked up his cowboy hat. With deft fingers, he separated each coin into its proper denomination and separated the bills. Then he put them into different pockets in his heavy vest. He hooked the canteen and cane onto his belt and took hold of the rope that dangled from my collar. I went along easily. We walked thirty yards to the corner of St. Marks and Third Avenue, where there was a pizza stand and luncheonette. This blind guy really knew the neighborhood, because he walked right up to where there was a street service window and called out, "Hey, Marco! Can you spare a drink of water for a friend of mine?"

A dark-skinned counterman in a soiled white outfit came up to the window. "Hey, Tyree. What's happening, man? What friend you talking about?"

"Right here, man," laughed Tyree. "What's the matter with your eyes?"

"Say, Tyree, when did you get yourself a dog?"

"About five minutes ago. I think he's from the neighbor-

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hood. He's got a collar and a broken leash. Have you seen him around before?"

"No. I'd remember a mutt that ugly anywhere. Here's your water."

I chose to ignore that crack about my appearance and appreciated the cool water that Tyree poured out for me into his hand. I lapped it up gratefully. I was so involved in my drink, that I missed some of the conversation between Tyree and the counterman. They were talking about me.

\*T think he's part Airedale," Marco was saying. "He's about the size of one, and the fur's about the same. But he's got floppy ears."

"That much I can tell," said Tyree.

"Yeah. I forget sometimes how much you pick up on without seeing. Anyway, his color's all wrong for an Airedale. He's yellow with black spots. And that tail!"

Fingers swiftly ran down my back and tail. "I dunno. I kind of like his tail. It's like a long, furry banner. And he's friendly enough. Dogs are only mean when they're mistreated. This guy either belongs to someone, or he's run away from a new home, looking for his old one. I remember down home, when we moved from our farm to Atlanta, our old hound ran away from the new owners and walked over a hundred miles to find us."

"This hound's got a lot of miles on him, that's for sure. What are you going to do with him?"

"I hadn't even thought about it. Do you want him?"

"Heck, no! I got enough trouble with my wife and kids at home without taking on any dog. Why don't you hold onto him? If he belongs to someone who wants him back, you could maybe get a reward. Myself, I wouldn't give you two bits for him."

"Thanks pal," I thought. "Same to you."

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Tyree leaned over and scratched my ears. It felt good. He said to me, "Well, fella, I could hold on to you for a while. If nobody wants you, that makes us two of a kind. C'mon." Then to Marco he said,

"\*Gotta get back to work, man. Off to the park. Thanks for the drink for the dog."

"Any time, man. So long as it's water, you can have all you want."

"\*You're all heart, Marco."

"Runs in my family. See you tomorrow?"

"Same time, same doorway, if it don't rain. See you."

"Yeah, see you."

I thought to myself how funny it was that a blind man would use the expression "see you." But I guess it's just a way of talking. After all, what would he say instead, "feel you?"

Taking hold of my rope lead, Tyree walked up to the intersection of Third Avenue and St. Marks. It's a big intersection and extends over half a block. That's because there are a bunch of public buildings and a school called Cooper Union right there. It's laid out in such a way that traffic feeds into it from four directions, and it's like a public square with three-way traffic lights. It's a tough street to cross, even if you can see, but it didn't phase Tyree at all. He stood there at the curb, listening with an expectant look on his face. It sank in on me that he was waiting for someone to come along and help him across.

But there was a problem getting help from passersby. People kept walking past us. Once we'd been there awhile, I realized that I was the reason we weren't getting any help. As cold as they are. New Yorkers will still help a blind man across a bad intersection. I guessed that folks thought I was a trained dog, and Tyree didn't need any help. "All right, Arthur," I thought. "It's time to thank Tyree for the drink and the song."

When the light on our corner changed and the walk sign came on, I stepped off the curb, tugging lightly on the rope Tyree held in his hand. He pulled back sharply. "\*Hold on, fella," he said. "\*We can get us both killed that way. This is one bad street crossing here. We have to wait for some help."

How maddening it was! No one would help, and Tyree didn't trust me to see for him. I don't know as I could blame him. Every Seeing Eye dog I'd ever seen had been a German shepherd. The walk light was still on. I tugged again. He pulled back. It was an impasse. Then the light changed again. I stopped tugging and sat down. Tyree continued to stand at the curb, with that same "help me" look on his face. I don't know where he got his patience. We might have still been there, if a pretty girl hadn't come up to us and said, "Hi, Tyree. Going to the park?"

"Hello, Crystal. How you keeping yourself? Yeah. We're going to the park, if I can ever get across Third Avenue."

She came up and took his elbow on the other side from me. The light changed and again, I stepped off the curb. This time, the girl gave a little tug on Tyree's elbow, and he stepped off, too. We made it halfway across the intersection to a traffic island, then the light changed to don't walk. I sat down to wait.

"You know," said Crystal. "I almost didn't come over to you. I thought you'd gotten a trained dog since I saw you last."

"No," Tyree laughed. "I just picked him up a few minutes ago. He's either a stray or a runaway. What ever gave you the idea that he was trained?"

"I was watching you from across the corner. Every time the WALK light came on, the dog started across. Each time he did, you pulled him back. I couldn't figure out what was going on, so I came over to see if you needed any help."

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A look of surprise came over Tyree's face. "You know, that's the wildest thing," he said. "I was trying to understand what was going on with him. You say he seems to know when the light changes,

huh?"

"Sure does. Here, it's changing again now. Wait and see what he does."

I didn't need another hint. When the walk sign came on, I stepped off. Just as I did, some Yo-Yo in a car ran the light and came heading straight for us. Moving fast, I threw myself back against Tyree and the girl, almost knocking them over. The car sped by, not two feet from us. Tyree was somewhat flustered.

"What happened. Crystal? What happened?"

"The dog just saved our lives, that's all. A car ran the red light, and he saw it before I did. He pushed us back. Almost got hit himself. It was close."

"I'll be darned! You sure it wasn't a coincidence?"

"No way. He saw that car and did what he did. He was quicker about it than I would have been. I promise you."

"No, it couldn't be. No one trains mutts to be Seeing Eyes. And only a Seeing Eye would have done something like this."

The girl spoke my thoughts aloud, "I saw what he did, Tyree. If you don't believe it, give him another chance. When the light changes again, let him take the lead. I'll watch to make sure it's OK."

Tyree agreed, and when the walk flasher came on, I did the right thing. It was a seven-block walk to the park, and with directions from the girl, I led Tyree across each intersection perfectly. By the time we reached the park, which was in the West Village, Tyree's confidence in me was strong. Crystal left us off at the park. She had a waitressing job in the area. She mentioned to Tyree that if he was still in the

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area when she got off, she'd walk him back to the East Village.

Now that he was on familiar ground, Tyree was surer of the locality than I, so I let him take the lead. The day was warm and dry, and there were lots of people in the park: sitting on benches, winos sleeping it off, and tourists with cameras everywhere. It looked like a good day for Tyree's business. He set himself up on the edge of a big circular area in the center of the park, which I later found out was called Washington Square.

It didn't take long to draw a crowd. Tyree put his cowboy hat down on the ground in front of him. By the time he'd finished his first song, we had people around us three deep, and coins began to jingle merrily into the hat on the ground. I lay down alongside the hat, closed my eyes, and dug the sounds that Tyree was making.

For the first time all day, I was secure and relaxed enough to get some sleep. If I had known what was going to happen, I wouldn't have done it. But the sun was so warm and the music so soothing, in no time at all I was out like a light.

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I awoke to see a grimy hand reaching furtively for the money in Tyree's hat. Business had been good while I slept, and there was even a five dollar bill in the kitty. Tyree was so into his music, he didn't sense anything wrong. I didn't know who the hand belonged to; couldn't see through the crowd. I didn't care, either. Anyone who'd steal from a blind man gets what he deserves.

In one motion, I got to my feet and closed my jaws over that hand as hard as I could. As I pulled with all my strength, the owner of the hand sprawled forward through the crowd.

I guess I expected to see a wino or a junkie. I was surprised to see that the owner of the hand was a kid about eighteen, and reasonably well dressed, though dirty. He looked like one of the young panhandlers I'd seen on the streets of the East Village.

Tyree stopped playing when the scuffle began, and the crowd drew away around us. I was growling and making chewing noises as I held fast to the thief's hand. He was trying just as hard to pull himself free. We ended up twirling around in a circle like a toothy game of crack-the-whip. When we came to the apex of the next big swing-around, I let go. The kid stumbled backwards and tripped over a low

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fence around the base of a tree. His head hit the tree trunk with a very satisfying thunk! Then he lay still.

For a second, I thought something terrible had happened, but then he moaned and moved. He opened his eyes and got to his feet. When he saw me standing there, looking like I was ready to take another bite out of him, he took off running.

Tyree was still standing where he had been playing. His head was moving in sweeping motions, as though he was trying to hear and smell what was going on. He kept saying, "What's happening? What's happening?" Finally, one of the crowd told him what had taken place. Realization spread over his face. He quickly emptied his hat of the money he'd collected and reached for my rope. As he did, he said, "C'mon, fella. I know you did the right thing, but we'll still be in trouble if the cops come. It's illegal to play in the park for money. We better get us off the streets."

It made sense. I gave a tug on the rope, as to head back east. Tyree pulled back on my lead. "Uh-uh. Not that way, fella. We're going to my place."

We left the park and headed west. Funny, I'd assumed, because I first saw Tyree in the East Village, that he lived there. Turned out that he lived west of Sixth Avenue on one of those pretty, tree-lined side streets. We turned into the doorway of a not-too-well kept three-story building. I heard the rattle of keys in Tyree's hand. We walked up three flights of stairs, and Tyree opened the door of the first apartment at the top of the stairs.

It was a big, one-room apartment, sunny and facing north. There wasn't much furniture in the place: a couple of chairs with end tables, two mattresses on the floor, covered with what might have been bright colored print throws and pillows. There was a big round table in the kitchen area with an overhead lamp, and two kitchen chairs set nearby. There

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was a covered bathtub in the kitchen alongside the sink.

What really got me were the pictures on the walls. They were abstract things. Big swirls of what had to be basic colors, layer after layer of paint raised up into tortuous ropes of texture. To my vision, they were all grays and blacks, but I sensed a form and rhythm to them that soothed and disturbed me at the same time. Strangest of all was, why did a blind man have paintings on his walls?

Tyree went over to the kitchen part of the big room and sat down at the table. The overhead lamp, when he pulled the cord, turned out to be super bright. As I watched in amazement, he took off his heavy sunglasses. He reached into the table drawer and took out a pair of clear, thick-lensed glasses. He put them on and emptied his pockets of the money he'd made. Then under the strong light, with his face very close to the bills, he began to examine the paper money he'd collected in the park. He could see!

I watched in fascination as he sorted the bills according to denomination. Then he took out some of those paper tubes you get at banks and began to roll up the coins. I moved closer to him as he worked. He felt my touch and reached down and patted my head.

"Not bad for a half-day," he said to no one in particular. "Forty-two fifty. Too bad we had to knock off when we did." He stood up and went over to the refrigerator. "Hey, fella," he said to me.

"You hungry? Let's see what we got in here."

As I watched him go over the contents of the icebox, my faith in Tyree began to return. The light was out in the refrigerator, but he was checking out what was inside with his hands, not his eyes. I realized then that, although he could see things with heavy lenses under strong light, Tyree was indeed blind. But it sure gave me a weird few minutes, when I'd seen him count out the money at the table. I'd even thought for a minute there that he was a fraud and used the

blind thing as an act to make more bread. He was talking to himself as he checked out the stuff in the fridge, "Hmmm, let's see. Yeah, milk. You like milk, fella? And . . . good! I still have some hamburger left. You lucked out, furry buddy. Hope you don't mind it raw."

He set out two bowls, one of milk, one of meat, over near the covered bathtub. "This is your dining room comer, fella," he said. "You eat here and only here. Your bowls will be here. I can't have you moving things around. I'll never know where things are if you do."

As I ate, he moved into the larger part of the room, got a pack of cigarettes from the table near the armchair. He lit one and turned on a transistor radio to a country music station. He sat down in the armchair and sighed, "Now, that's real music, fella. Just like down home."

I finished my meal and came over to where he sat and lay down at his feet. He patted me absently, the way Flora Riley had, good all over. I guess Tyree led a lonely life, because he began talking to me. Not like the way some old ladies do with poodles, hke they were kids, but as though I were another person. "Well, fella. Another day. With what we got today, we're only three hundred away from the hospital. If the weather holds, and you can stop biting folks, this might be my year."

Hospital? I had no idea what he was talking about. But then again, I wasn't supposed to. He went on, ". . . can't go on calling you fella. You need a name. I wonder if you already got one you'll answer to. Now, when I come to your name, you bark and let me know if it's the right one." He stopped and laughed to himself. A short, bitter sound. Not like I'd heard him make before. "I'm really turning flaky now," he said. "Talking to a dog is one thing. Expecting answers is something else!"

"Oh no!" I thought. Just when he was starting to do something that could help me, he was going to stop. If only I could keep him talking, maybe in some way I could communicate my problem to him. I whimpered and got up alongside the chair. I put my paw on his forearm as if to say, "Go on."

"I'll be dogged if you don't act like you understand every word I say," he smiled. "Or maybe I'm getting so lonely that I want you to act that way." He ground out his cigarette in the ashtray next to the radio. "All right. I'm going to name some names. If I come to yours, you stop me by barking once, OK?"

It was working! I gave a short bark. He sat back with a look of wonder on his face. "This is crazy. I'm sitting here talking to a dog, and he's talking back! OK, fella, here we go. Here come the names: Spot. Marco says you got spots. Is that it?" I remained silent. "No? How about Sport? . . . Pal? ... Buddy? ... Rover? No, no one calls dogs Rover any more. . . . Prince?" I thought of the Riley's dog that had been run over and shuddered. Tyree noticed. "You sure don't Uke Prince, do you? How about Pard?"

He went through more than twenty-five dog-type names as I remained silent. Once in a while, when he'd slow down, I'd put my paw on his forearm to keep him going. But it was no use. He was only calling out names that you'd give to a dog. How could I tell him he was on the wrong track? It was so frustrating. Here was the first human being who was actually trying to communicate with me. And my one means of getting a message across, by writing, was useless; he couldn't see to read it. I decided to give talking a try. While he was silent, thinking of more names, I wrapped my dog's mouth

around the best "Arthur" I could pronounce. It came out "Owf-uh". He sat up. "You sure are trying to tell me something, fella. Your name? Is it your name you're trying to say?"

I gave a short, joyous bark. He was beginning to understand! "Owf-uh!" I said again. "Owf-uh!" "Awful?" he asked. "Is that your name? Awful?"

He was so close, yet so far. I took a chance. I gave a short bark after he said "Awful." Then I said it again. "Owf-uh!"

Tyree laughed a good, happy laugh this time. "OK, fella. Awful it is. I'm sure that the dude you bit this afternoon would have to go along with it. You did some awful number on him from the sound of the scuffle I heard. And if that ain't enough, I'm losing my marbles talking to you. I've been alone too long. I think it's time I talked to someone."

He got up and went over to the kitchen table and reached under it. He came up with a telephone I hadn't even noticed was there. With ease, he dialed a number.

"Hello, Suzy?" he said into the phone. "This is Tyree. Think you feel up to having dinner at my place with me and a friend? . . . No, you don't know him. Just met him today myself. . . . Nice? Oh, sure he is. He already helped me a lot today. . . . What's he like? Well, he's very intelligent, he's strong, but gentle. . . . His name? His name's Awful. . . . No, not an awful name. Awful is his name. He's a dog." Tyree laughed, then was silent for a few, as he listened to Suzy on the other end of the line. Then he said, "So we're on for dinner at my place? Great. You pick up the groceries, I'll give you the money when you get here, OK? . . . It's four-thirty now, you say? . . . How's six o'clock? Perfect. See you, love. 'Bye."

He hung up the phone, went back to the easy chair, and sat down. He patted my head when I came over and rubbed against him.

"How about that, Awful? We got company for dinner. Now I want you to be real nice to Suzy. She and me been good friends for a couple of years, now. You be on your best behavior. No biting or messing up the place. That reminds

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me," he said, snapping his fingers, "we got to walk you and buy some stuff."

We went out and took care of the necessities very quickly. On the way back, Tyree stopped at a liquor store and picked up a bottle of wine to go with dinner. Once we were back upstairs, he washed up and changed his shirt.

When the doorbell downstairs rang at six o'clock, the apartment was super neat, my bowls were cleaned and in place. As he pushed the buzzer button to unlock the downstairs door, Tyree turned in my direction.

\*"How do I look, Awful?" he asked. I barked once. "Great!" he laughed. "We're gonna look too handsome for TV tonight."

I heard her footsteps on the stairs about the same time Tyree did. It was spooky how good his hearing was. When she came through the door with a bag of groceries in her arms, I wasn't prepared for how beautiful she was.

Suzy stood about five eleven, with long sun-streaked blond hair and gray eyes that lit up the room. Her eyes might have been blue, I couldn't tell with my colorless vision, but the glow within warmed me.

"Hi, ugly," said Tyree. "Come in and meet my friend, Awful. Say hello to the lady, Awful."

For a second, I was so taken by Suzy's looks, that I didn't know anyone was talking to me. It was only that Awful sounds so close to Arthur that it sunk in. I went over to Suzy and licked her hand. Tasted good, too. She set the bag of groceries down and took my head in both her hands.

"He's perfect, Ty," she said in a well-modulated voice. "Where did you get him?"

"I didn't get him, he got me. Showed up this afternoon, and he's been tagging along ever since."

Tyree got a small boy look on his face and said, "He followed me home. Ma. Can I keep him?"

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"Only if you take good care of him," replied Suzy in mock sternness. "And speaking of taking care, you guys clear out of the kitchen if you want dinner. I haven't eaten all day. I know that you can live on music and pizza slices, but us dancers need our strength."

Tyree and I obligingly moved to the living room area while she made dinner. I noticed that as she moved around the kitchen, she knew where everything was, and once she used an item, she put it back where she got it. It meant she knew Tyree had to be able to find each thing again later. While she worked, Tyree told her about how we'd met, and the incident in the park. By the time they were both finished, it was getting dark in the apartment, and Suzy turned on the light over the table. Tyree heard the cord rattle and said, "Hey, stop running up my light bill!"

"I can't eat in the dark, sorry."

"Nothing to it. I do it all the time. You just need a little practice. You'd be surprised at how much money I save."

"That's not funny. I don't dig self-pity jokes, and you know it."

"What kind of self-pity?" came back Tyree. "All I said was that I save a lot of money on my light bills lately, and I meant it."

As they ate dinner, they talked about Suzy's job. She was a dance instructor at one of the many schools that they have in the Village. She wasn't too happy about it, either.

"Gee, Tyree," she was saying, "It gets discouraging sometimes. It seems I've spent my whole life studying dance, and this is as close as I've come to a job in the field."

"Your own fault," said Tyree. "Nobody told you to grow so tall."

"I know, I know," she said. "By some accident of nature, I grew big as a moose. It's not my fault that most male dancers are short. You can't know how it feels to be so close

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to your real life's work and not be able to do it."

Tyree made that short, barking laugh sound. "No, I guess I can't know. But in case I did, all I'd have to do is go over to the wall and feel my paintings, wouldn't I?"

Suzy's hand flew up to her mouth. Even with my no-color vision, I could see her flush of embarrassment.

"Oh, Tyree," she said "I'm sorry. I didn't mean . . ."

He smiled and said, "Forget it, honey. That was self-pity. I guess we're the ideal pair. A dancer who's too tall, and a painter who's near blind. Now we've got a third. A mutt dog who doesn't belong anywhere."

Hearing Tyree's explanation of things made my problem seem a little smaller to me. I'd thought that he was a musician, plain and simple. But this meant that the paintings on the wall were done by him! I looked over again at the nearest one. No good. Without the colors, they were meaningless to me outside of the rhythm of design. Suzy was still talking of her conversational goof about work.

"I guess it's because I don't think of you as a handicapped person, Ty. You're so self-sufficient. I don't think you'd take help from anyone."

"Sure I would. If I needed it. I just don't need too much. What I really need now is for the Vision Foundation to come through. I'm only three hundred dollars short of all I need for the operation."

"How great! I had no idea it would be so soon."

"It may not be. Even with all the money in hand, I still need a donor. I've been on the list for two years now."

"But you know it will happen. That's the difference. That's so good to hear." She made a small face. "You mean to tell me that you've known this all along and didn't tell me it would be so soon? You're awful."

"No," said Tyree grinning. "I'm not. I'm ol' Tyree. This here is Awful." He reached down and patted my head. They both laughed.

After dinner dishes were done, Suzy and Tyree sat around and talked over glasses of wine. Ty played some new tunes he had written. It was all so cozy that I curled up and dozed off.

When I awoke, the sun was streaming through the windows. The bed-couch in the corner was made up. Suzy was nowhere in sight. I could hear Tyree splashing in the tiny shower off the kitchen. Coffee was brewing on the stove. "Some watchdog I am," I thought. "I didn't hear a thing all night. A burglar with a brass band could have come in and I wouldn't have noticed." We shared some breakfast, and within an hour, we were both on the street heading I don't know where.

"Awful, I think it's going to be a good day for business. I don't feel any rain in the air. Let's go uptown today. Maybe outside of Bloomingdale's. The money's usually good up there. Besides, I don't want to run into any cops today over your biting scene in the park."

We walked east a way, then went into a subway. Wow! Talk about noise. I know that millions of people use the subways every day to go to work. I don't know how they do it. I read somewhere that guys who work in the subways for years suffer hearing loss. I can believe it. We got off the subway at East 59th Street. As we came up to street level, I saw the first familiar location I'd glimpsed since arriving in Manhattan. We were right in front of Bloomingdale's department store.

We set up business about ten yards from the corner, just alongside the main entrance to the store. We drew a crowd right away. After only a few tunes, the coins were flowing. I got the bright idea to pick up the hat in my mouth and pass

among them whenever Tyree took a break. Once he got on to what I was doing, he'd make an announcement after a few numbers, hke, "Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Now my partner will pass among you. Your contributions will go for his college education. So please, no confederate money. He can spot it easy."

The speech would get a laugh, and we would really score then. Paper money for the most part, and no coins smaller than quarters. In a short time, we had the routine worked out. After an hour or so, I was taking up the collection like a pro. I had just scored a dollar bill from a guy in an expensively cut suit. I looked up at the lady standing next to him, and I nearly dropped the hat.

She was wearing a smart summery pants suit outfit, and her hair was done to that degree of casual that spelled money. She reached into a rich-looking handbag, took out a five dollar bill, and dropped it into the hat I held in my mouth. I looked into her eyes for a second, and perhaps some glimmer of recognition passed between us. She seemed a bit flustered by my gaze, but then again, most folks are when an animal looks them straight in the eye. Dogs hardly ever do that. After a second or two, any animal averts his eyes. We stood there for a second, as though frozen. Then she turned, and I watched her well-tailored back disappear into the busy department store entrance.

As I saw her go, I thought, "Thanks, Mom. Maybe someday I can give you something that you need." I finished making my collection and returned to Tyree's side. Feeling a strange mixture of emotions at having seen my mother, I let Tyree move me off\* toward the subway. I brooded as I endured the noisy subway ride to what was now my new home.

The Famous Spotted Georgia Possum Hound

Once Tyree had sorted and counted the day's take, he leaned back in his chair with a big smile. "\*\*Awful," he said. "It just may have been my lucky day when you showed up. I made more today than I'd ordinarily make in three good working days. And it ain't even the weekend yet. I don't know where you picked up your bag of tricks. I shouldn't say it, because I swore four years ago when the light started to fade for me that there was no God, but I have a feeling that somebody or some thing beyond what we know sent you to me."

"How right you are," I thought. "But even if I could talk and explain it to you, I doubt if you'd believe it, friend Tyree." As I sat by Tyree's chair, I began to think on what he said. Some thing. If it was a God that did it, it sure wasn't any God either Tyree or I knew. However, I grudgingly admitted that it had been done by a power none of us can understand. James N'Gaweh hadn't changed me into what I was. His prayer or chant—whatever you want to call it—called on a power that did it. The more I thought about it, the more it hurt my head. The closest I could come to fitting it all together was that, as James had said, we all worship the same God; we only use different names for Him.

My thoughts on the hereafter were disturbed by a telephone ring. Tyree reached under the table and picked up. "Hello? Yeah this is me. . . . Hey, Bruce! How's it going? . . . Sure I am. I haven't missed a Tuesday night at Gertie's yet, have I?" He listened carefully for a minute. "Sounds right to me. . . . Sign me up when you get there. I'll be over about ten-thirty. Yeah, see you."

Tyree put down the phone and began to hum his tune, "The Me Inside of Me." I didn't mind. It's my favorite of all his songs. He was moving around the apartment, going to his closet and laying out a change of clothes. Some black slacks, dress boots, a black shirt, and a brocade vest, like you see gamblers wear in western movies. I imagine it was gold and some other colors by the way it caught the lights.

"Dress-up night. Awful," he said to me. "Tonight we're going to wail." A look came across his face. "Well, now, here I am getting out my good outfit, and you walking around with a rope around your neck." He went over to a funny looking clock on the kitchen table and felt the face of it. "Seven o'clock. Good. He doesn't close until ten on Tuesdays. Before we have dinner, I'll have a surprise for you."

He went off to the shower, stripped down, and in a few seconds I could hear him singing "The Me Inside of Me." I wondered what he was talking about by a surprise. "No use wondering until it happens," I thought. I was getting used to the idea that when you're only a dog, you wait for everyone. It didn't take Tyree long to shower, shave, and change clothes. In a short time, we were out on the street. I must admit that Tyree looked real sharp. The black outfit, with the cowboy hat and fancy vest, made him look like he'd just stepped out of a "Gunsmoke" episode. He was carrying his guitar in a good-looking black hard-shell case instead of slung over his back, like he did when we went out to work. We walked east, over to St. Marks Place, and turned into a

shop halfway between Third and Second Avenues. The sign said LEATHER OR NOT. The window was filled with some of the neatest leather goods I'd ever seen. I saw a vest like Tyree's working vest, but it didn't have all the pockets that Tyree's had. I figured that Tyree was a good customer here, because when we turned into the doorway, a guy with a beard and an all-leather outfit left the workbench near the window and came over and opened the door for us.

"Tyree!" he said. "Good to see you. Who's your furry friend?"

"Hey, Alan. How's it going? Oh, him. That's Awful. Had him for two days, now. You said it right when you said friend, though. You won't believe this, but he passes the hat."

"You trained him to do that in just two days? You're right, I don't believe it."

"Didn't think you would," said Tyree. "But pay attention now." Tyree took off his hat and put it on the floor. He let go of my rope and said, "Awful. Ask Alan for some money."

Taking my cue, I went over and picked up the hat in my mouth. I walked over to where Alan was standing by his workbench. Showing off a bit, instead of just standing in front of him, I sat up on my hind legs. It was worth it to see the effect it produced on Alan.

"Well, I'll be!" he said, rubbing the back of his neck. "I've never seen anything like that in my life. Come on, Ty, you been training him a long time for this."

"He showed up yesterday out of nowhere and ..."

Tyree went on to tell Alan all about our meeting, the Seeing Eye dog routine, as well as the incident with the thief in the park. Every now and then, as Tyree told him some more, Alan would glance over at where I was lying on the floor next to Tyree. He'd shake his head as if to say, "I can't

believe it," then return to Tyree's narrative about what a champ all-round dog I was. I must confess that it didn't make me mad. Come to think of it, no one in my entire sixteen years had ever said I was a good anything. For the first time, I felt I was doing something valuable and useful. It felt fine. Tyree had finished telling Alan about it all and was saying, ". . . so I'm going to play at Gertie's tonight, I get all dressed up, and then I remember Awful here doesn't have any fancy clothes. Do you have anything special?"

Alan looked over the shop. He had all kinds of leather goods on pegs set in the walls: belts, handbags, shoulder bags, hats, little leather pouches, vests, sandals, you name it. He went behind a counter and began rummaging in a great big wooden box.

"Let me see. . . I know I made a half-dozen dog collars and leashes about a year ago. They didn't sell. Too expensive. People wouldn't spend ten, fifteen dollars on a collar and another seven-fifty on a leash. If you look at it their way, they might be right. You can get a perfectly good machine-made collar and leash at Woolworth's or a hardware store for half the price. . . . Found them!" Alan glanced over at me. "Hmmm. He'll take a large dog collar. Good. The few I sold were all poodle-sized. Somebody who owns a poodle will spend almost anything. Ah! Here we are. It even matches."

Alan turned around from his search in the big box. I looked at what he was holding in his hand. It was a collar—a well-rubbed, jet black, soft leather, and two inches wide. Set into it were big silver studs in the shape of stars. At the top, where the ring for the leash hook was, there was a big blank silver plate almost as wide as the collar itself. The leash was in matching leather, with smaller silver star studs around the hook and the handle. I flipped.

Alan handed the leash and collar over to Tyree. He ran his

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long thin fingers over it, felt the studs, the flex of the leather.

"What color is it?" he asked.

"Deep black with silver studs, Ty."

"Feels and smells good."

"If you feel the inside, you'll find that the stud prongs are covered with a glove leather lining. It'll never scratch his neck or chafe him."

"You do good work, Alan."

"Bet your ass I do. How's your money vest standing up?"

"Good as the day I got it. OK, done. We'll take the collar and leash. How much?"

"For you? Twelve bucks for leash and collar both."

"OK," said Tyree.

Alan rung up the sale on a beat-up old cash register that sat on the counter. "Do you want his name

on it? No extra charge," he said.

"In that case," said Tyree with a grin, "we'll have his name on it, won't we, Awful?"

Alan went over to his bench and buzzed away with an electric engraving tool for a few minutes, then he handed my new collar back to Tyree.

"There you go, Ty. I put on his name and your name and address."

"Great, Alan. By the way, have you ever made a Seeing Eye harness?"

"I've seen 'em. They don't look hard. Like a regular dog harness, but with a swivel handle. Give me a week, you'll have it."

"Good deal," said Tyree. "I can't keep taking Awful on the subway up to Bloomingdale's. Only Seeing Eyes are allowed on the trains. It's just a matter of time before some hard-nosed transit cop catches us. And we did too good up there today to let all that money go by. How much will it cost for the harness?"

"Don't worry about it. I'll do it for cost, if you'll show me those chord changes you use on that "Me Inside" tune you wrote."

"Deal," said Tyree. Then bending over, he undid the collar I'd been given by Dan Riley and fastened my new one in place.

Alan had a full-length mirror on the wall opposite the counter. Trailing the leash behind me, I went over to it.

"Not bad, not bad at all," I thought. "I still look like a mutt made from spare parts of other dogs, but I'm the sharpest-dressed mutt I've ever seen."

I was admiring the way the fluorescent lights of the store flashed on the studs and silver plate on the collar, when I heard Alan say, "Ty, you're not going to believe this, but your dog is looking at himself in the mirror. He really is. Looks like a customer checking out how it looks on him."

Tyree laughed. "Now do you believe all the things I've been telling you about him? Awful is the darndest animal I've ever come across, and I've had dogs all my life."

Alan stood there, shaking his head. "You know, Ty, if you were to tell me that he played guitar, too, I might be tempted to believe you."

"If he did," said Tyree, "he'd have all the right changes, not like some pickers I know."

Alan grinned ruefully. "All right, all right. Some people have to make a living at other things, you know. If tomorrow I could make a living playing and singing, I'd be out there on the street to give you some competition."

"No way," said Tyree. "You don't have a partner like Awful to help with the money. Besides, I think I'm going to train him to play the harmonica next week."

"Don't tell me that," laughed Alan. "After what I've seen tonight, I'm liable to believe you." He moved over to a switch box near the door. "You going over to Gertie's?" he asked.

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"It's Tuesday, ain't it? Is the Pope a Catholic?"

"Good-oh. It's real slow tonight. I'm going to close down early and go over myself. Let me get my guitar, and I'll walk over with you. Did you eat dinner yet?"

Tyree snapped his fingers. "T knew I forgot something." He ruffed up the fur on my head. "Awful, you must be hungry as a bear, and you never said a word. Yeah, Alan. I'm up for some grits. How about the Cauldron?"

"Sure thing. Tuesday night is calamari. Let's make it on over."

Alan shut down the store, got his guitar from in back. After he'd put up enough iron folding gates and locks all over the storefront to keep out an army, we walked over west. Along the way, Tyree had

me demonstrate my street-crossing skill. Alan was properly impressed. After a while, they talked about things I didn't know and people I'd never met. I tuned out their conversation and thought my own thoughts. I came out of it only when we came to intersections, and then I stayed sharp. We reached the West Village in a short time. We turned down a street named MacDougal, and after a block's walk, were standing in front of a restaurant-bar. There was a big painting on the window glass of what looked like a witches' cauldron with red flames underneath. The sign said in red letters the cauldron. We went in and found a quiet table in the back of the large single room, past the bar.

It was a real neat place. They had paintings all over the walls, one wilder than the other. On the wall opposite the bar, there were I don't know how many photographs of people in show business. They were all in frames. Some had been there so long, they were faded. I saw one of a very young-looking Bob Dylan, and a lot of other familiar faces I didn't have names for. Many of the people in the pictures

were holding guitars and smiling that smile people only smile for photographers.

But what really said things to me was the smell coming from the open kitchen near our table. I never get a chance to eat much foreign cooking. Dad doesn't think it's dinner unless it's steak with a baked potato and salad. Once in a while, maybe chops and fries, but that's it. A waiter came up to our table. He knew both Tyree and Alan; greeted them by name. They called him Tommy. He set the menus down and took drink orders from Alan and Tyree. Then he noticed me for the first time. I'd been quietly lying on the sawdust-covered floor, looking the place over and drooling over the cooking smells.

"Your dog, Tyree?" he asked.

"Sure is. Can't you see what his collar says?"

"Don't care what it says," said the waiter. "We can't let him in. Health regulations say no dogs in restaurants."

"Come on, Tommy," said Alan. "Don't be a hard-nose. Anybody from the Board of Health ever came in here, he'd be too busy counting the cockroaches to notice the dog."

"Very funny. Very funny. But no dogs."

"How about Seeing Eye dogs?" asked Tyree. "They're allowed, ain't they?"

"Yeah, they are," said the waiter. "But that doesn't look like any Seeing Eye dog I've ever seen. He's a mutt with a fancy collar is all."

All the good feeling I'd had over my new outfit evaporated in that single sentence. The waiter was right. I might have the fanciest collar and leash in the world, but it didn't change the fact that I was a mutt. I got up as if to go. Tyree pulled back on my new leash.

"Hold on there, Awful," he said. "Don't get your feelings hurt because someone doesn't know any better." He turned

his face toward the waiter. "See what you did? You hurt Awful's feelings. For your information, sir, this ain't any mutt. He's a purebred Spotted Georgia Possum Hound, one of the toughest, smartest breeds in the world."

"Come off it," said the waiter. "I know a mutt when I see one. Spotted Georgia Possum Hound . . . there's no such breed."

"The devil there isn't!" said Tyree. "My Uncle Buford been raising them for years. You don't see them up north any more than you see possum up here. Nobody gonna part with a valuable dog like this to a Yankee." Tyree was warming to his subject. Alan was sitting back in his chair with a huge grin on his face.

"Sure, Tommy," chimed in Alan. "If you didn't spend all your time waiting tables and chasing

broads that you can't make, you'd know about Spotted Georgia Possum Hounds. They're rarer than Rhodesian Ridgebacks."

"And a lot smarter and braver, too," interjected Tyree. "You get a good Possum Hound, he'll go after a black bear for you. If you got the guts to follow him, that is. And they make the best Seeing Eye dogs in the world. Trouble is, anybody who raises them wants to keep them for themselves or relatives. If it hadn't been for my Uncle Buford, I never would have got this one here."

From the expression on his face, I could see that the waiter wasn't as sure of himself as he had been. Tyree and Alan went on and on about Spotted Georgia Possum Hounds, each story more outrageous than the next: how a Spotted Georgia Possum Hound saved the entire town of Grimsby, Georgia, from attack by alligators crawling out of the Okefe-nokee Swamp, by coming to town and waking up the populace. How there was a statue put up to the hound in the town square. By the time they were done, they had me believing

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that there was such a breed of dog.

"OK, OK. I give in," said the waiter. "Next you'll be telling me that he can wait tables, too."

Just then, a couple of villagey-looking folks came in. A guy and girl wearing jeans and shirts. He had a beard and long hair. So did she. Long hair, that is. They sat down at a table close to the bar. Tommy the waiter was so into the conversation with Tyree and Alan, he hadn't noticed them come in. Making as little fuss about it as possible, I picked up the menus Tommy had left on the table. Menus in mouth, I trotted over to the couple and put the plastic-bound folders on the table. Then I sat down, looking at them as though to say, "What'll it be?" Alan saw the whole thing happen. As I watched from across the room, he tugged at Tommy's sleeve while the waiter was listening to another tale from Tyree.

"Uh, Tommy," said Alan. "I hate to say this, but Spotted Georgia Possum Hounds can wait on tables. Look over there." He pointed across the room to where I was sitting before the guy and girl. "He brought the menus over. If you want to keep your job, you better get their drink order before the dog does."

The waiter looked my way, with mixed anxiety and disbelief on his face. He stood there for a second, then whipped over to the table. "Good evening," he said in a professional manner. "May I help you?"

The guy never batted an eye. I guess when you live in the Village for some time, you get so used to seeing far-out things that nothing really surprises you.

"We'll have a couple of beers," said the bearded guy. "The dog already brought the menus over." He perused the menu as though nothing unusual had happened. "What's the special today?" he asked.

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"Fried calamari," answered Tommy absently, still staring at me.

"OK," said the guy with the beard. "We'll have two calamaris with spaghetti and small salads."

Still in shock, Tommy took out his pad and wrote down the orders. He turned toward the open kitchen and started to go. The bearded man called him back. "When did you start this with the dog?" he asked. "I've never seen a dog do that in my life!"

Tommy the waiter was silent for a second. Then he looked the guy right in the eye and said, "Well, sir, that's probably because you've never seen a Spotted Georgia Possum Hound before. Amazing dogs. Why once in Grimsby, Georgia—that's near the Okefenokee Swamp, y'know—there was this Spotted Possum Hound that ..."

I walked back to the table where Tyree and Alan were sitting, leaving the waiter to fill the

customers in on what a rare, intelligent breed of dog I was. Evidently, Alan had told Tyree what had happened, because they laughed so hard, Tyree almost fell off his chair. If that wasn't enough, all through their meal, the couple I'd brought the menus to kept looking over at us. I guess they were expecting me to bring dessert or something. Anyway, each time they did look over and Alan noticed, he'd tell Tyree. That would start them off laughing again.

When dinner came, what I had of it was great. It tasted like fried chicken with shrimp overtones. It wasn't till later I found out what calamari was. It's deep fried squid. If I'd known, I wouldn't have touched it. Then again, I'd never have known how good it was.

When we left the Cauldron, we walked down MacDougal, and in a few steps were standing in front of one of the many Village bars that feature entertainment. The big neon sign in front read Gertie's. All over the front of the place, there were photos of now-famous or near-famous performers who had gotten their starts there. I knew a lot of the names and faces. I admit it. I was impressed.

Inside, the place was a madhouse. Seems Tuesday night at Gertie's is the night when anyone who can play an instrument is allowed to come in and do their bit onstage. I never saw so many guitars, banjos, and mandolins in my Hfe. There were guys with more than one instrument in cases, others with five and six harmonicas in leather holsters, some had bass fiddles. There seemed to be amplifiers and electronic equipment all over the place. And the girls! They were all sizes, ages, and shapes. Some were waiting to go on and perform, others were girls of the musicians. Still others had come to meet guys or other girls.

Onstage, there was a group playing on amplified instruments with a full set of drums. The smoke in the air was thick enough to chew, and the sound of the electric instruments was hke a wall that hit you when you opened the door. Outside of the music being loud enough to hurt my ears, I was really turned on by the place. All the Manorsville kids talked about places like this. Here was I inside of one!

We hadn't got past the long bar which led back to where the stage was, when we stopped. Seems everyone in the place knew Tyree and wanted to say hello. After the first few, I lost track of names, and let the place kind of flow over me. I wasn't watching or listening to anything in particular, but soaking up everything like a sponge.

We finally made it into the back room, where we found a table out of range of the electric group on stage. Alan and Tyree got a couple of beers, and we settled down to watch the acts and wait until it was Tyree's turn to perform. I remembered that he'd said ten-thirty on the phone to Bruce

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(whoever that was). I looked up at the big clock they had behind the stage. It read 10 o'clock.

The group onstage finished up a number that sounded like ten electric cats being ground up in a Waring blender, and a black man in a dashiki came on stage. He was obviously the MC, because he came on applauding for the noise that had just stopped.

"Aren't they wonnnn-derful?" he shouted. "That's the Cambridge Water Supply, a brand-new group that comes to us all the way from Bosssss-ton! Just another one of the mannnny wonnnn-derful talented people you'll hear tonight. For those of you who just came in, I'm your host, Brother Bruce."

Alan leaned over to Tyree and said, "Brother Brucie is in great form tonight. He's got a new dashiki, floor length. He looks like the homecoming queen at Brown." Then they both laughed.

But now Brother Bruce was introducing the next act, "And nowwww, ladies and gentlemen, our next act. This is a young man who comes to us all the way from Atlanta, Georgia. Now, he doesn't play an electrical guitar, so you mussst listen carefully. ..."

Alan leaned over to Tyree. "He's introducing you. Better get the ax out."

"Plenty of time," said Tyree. "Have you ever heard Brother Bruce take less than five minutes to introduce an act?" He opened his case and took out the guitar. He tuned it quietly while Brother Bruce rambled along on stage.

Brother Bruce was having his troubles with the noise, too. I later learned that it was always this way. The big crowds were made up of musicians waiting to go on. The rest of the crowd was made up of their friends. I was a bit surprised. I thought that at least the musicians would be quiet, under-

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standing what the act on stage was going through. But they were the noisiest of the whole bunch. By now, Brother Bruce could hardly be heard. "And so here he is. Our own modern day trooooub-a-dor: Tyree! Let's give him a warrrrm Gertie's welll-come!"

Tyree told me, "Stay, Awful," and threaded his way through the tables and chairs to the stage. He got on to a light spattering of applause. By the time Brother Bruce had set up the microphone and a chair for Tyree to sit on, the crowd sounded like a mob. "My God," I thought, "This is worse than working in the subway!"

I have to hand it to Tyree. He paid no attention to the noise at all. He didn't even try to talk to the crowd, to quiet them down, before he started in playing. He just began picking a country blues tune, medium fast and very very quietly. He got halfway through the tune before the noisy rabble even noticed that there was someone onstage playing. By the time he got to the end of the tune, half the house was listening. Up to this time, he hadn't even opened his mouth to talk, let alone sing. Then he gently sang in a quiet, far off voice:

If I had wings, like Noah's dove, I'd fly downriver to the one I love. Fare-thee-well, oh honey, Fare-thee-well. . .

By the time he came to the second verse, the whole house was so quiet you could have heard a mouse peeing on a blotter. When he finished, the crowd erupted into wild cheers. After that, he owned them as an audience. He did one tune after another; the house wouldn't let him offstage. Alan came up and joined him, and they sang together. A guy they both knew came up and played blues harmonica. I didn't get

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his name, but he sure could wail.

When Tyree finally begged off doing any more tunes and left the stage, we were suddenly all at a celebrity table. The same people that had talked and been rude earlier in Tyree's set came over and congratulated him. Some of the girls came over and tried to get next to Tyree and Alan, but that stopped pretty quick when Suzy showed up. I couldn't blame them. You put an average pretty girl next to Suzy, and she looks pretty poor, not pretty pretty.

We hung out for the rest of the evening, laughing and drinking. Then Alan peeled off for the east side. And with Suzy and Tyree arm in arm, we walked to Tyree's place. They sang all the way. As we went up the three flights of stairs, I had to admit that it had been the best day Fd ever had in my life, boy or dog.

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The next few weeks seemed to slide by, with one day following another in a happy routine of work and play. There became less and less need of explanations between Tyree and me. I guess you could call it mutual trust. The weather held good, and the money flowed in even better than the first few days we'd worked together.

I got to know Suzy and Alan a lot better, too. We saw a lot of them. So it came as something of a shock to me one Tuesday night when I happened to glance at a poster at Gertie's. From the date, it was almost the month of August. Lou Greenspun was due back from Europe any day now.

If you've ever heard the expression "mixed emotions," you can know how I felt. Of course, I wanted to get back to being Arthur Cane again, but in a strange way, I'd been much happier as Awful, the mutt. In a very short time, I'd become somebody. I was Tyree's partner. When we'd go to the Cauldron for a beer, it got so that people would not only say hello to Tyree, but they'd always have a kind word for me as well. My biggest fan was Tommy, the waiter. He'd save me bones and some of the fancier scraps from the kitchen. I had to work for them, though. See, each time we'd go to the Cauldron with Alan, I had to repeat the same stunt with the

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menus. Tommy never got tired of telling customers about Spotted Georgia Possum Hounds.

Tuesdays were our big nights out. We both dressed up. Tyree called my new Seeing Eye harness my new working clothes, so on Tuesdays I wore my fancy collar and leash.

It was Tuesday, the 30th of July, according to the naked lady calendar behind the bar at the Cauldron. Tyree, Alan, Suzy, and I had just finished our dinners. They had all ordered espressos and brandies and were sitting around rapping, Alan about the leather business and music; Suzy about her upcoming audition with a dance company in Brooklyn somewhere. Tyree had been quiet all evening, not down, mind you, but as though his mind were somewhere else. Both Suzy and Alan had noticed it, but it was Suzy who commented first. She'd addressed a question to Tyree, but he hadn't even heard her.

"Tyree," she said, "are you still with us? I don't think you've heard a word anyone's said for the past half hour."

Tyree gave a jerk, as though he'd been roused from a deep sleep. "Gee, I'm sorry, babe," he said. "Yes, you're right. My head was someplace else." He reached into his shirt pocket and took out a folded envelope which I recognized right away. When we'd come home from working uptown that afternoon, it had been stuck in the door, across the lock, so Tyree couldn't miss it. It was the first piece of mail I'd ever seen him get. He handed it across the table to Suzy.

"This was in the door when we got home tonight," he said. "I've already told the super that when anything comes from this address, to stick it in the door. I've been afraid to ask anyone what it's all about. I was going to wait until after the show at Gertie's, but I have to know now. Suzy, will you read it for me?"

Suzy opened the envelope and almost immediately cried

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out, "Oh, Ty! It's from the Vision Foundation!"

"No point in getting all shook up about it, hon," said Tyree. "I knew where it was from. I got to

know what it says. Read it, will you?"

"If you don't, I will," said Alan.

"All right, all right," said Suzy, unfolding the letter. "It says, 'Dear Mr. Tyree, This is to inform you that on August 10th of this year, we will have available for . . .'" Suzy let out a shriek that caused everyone in the Cauldron to turn and stare at our table. "Darling!" she cried, getting up and hugging Tyree. "This is it! It's the notice! They say they've tried to reach you by telephone, but you're never in. They say that any time after August 10th, you can make arrangements to come in. They've got the donor!"

Alan let out a whoop that turned heads again. He called Tommy over. "My good man," he said to Tommy, doing a W.C. Fields. "What sort of champagne do you stock in this sordid pleasure dome? My friends and I are celebrating and we feel that only a bit of the bubbly will do."

"We stock only the finest," said Tommy. "We have Pierre Brion, extra dry."

"Is that imported?" asked Alan.

"All the way from California," replied Tommy.

"Well, then," drawled Alan, leaning back in his chair. "Kindly extract the corks from a flask for two. Bring us three glasses and a bowl for Awful."

"What's the big occasion?" asked Tommy. "Somebody buy a lot of leather stuff, or did you finally score with one of those ugly chicks you're always going out with?"

"Nothing like it," intoned Alan, still doing the Fields bit. "My friend here has a special reason to celebrate. The young lady and I are merely his willing accessories on this joyous expedition into the consumption of spiritus frumenti. In

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short, my good man, it's Tyree's party."

Tommy looked over at Tyree, who hadn't said a word since Suzy had read the letter. He was sitting very erect, with a strange expression on his face. His dark glasses hid most of the look, but I could see that from beneath the heavy frames, tears were slowly trickling down his cheeks.

"\*Tf you'll excuse my saying so," said Tommy, "he don't look all that happy."

Tyree snapped right out of it. He came back in a W.C. Fields dialect that sounded a little odd because of his Georgia accent. "What you observe are tears of sheer joy, oh bringer of liquid delights. Do we get our champagne, or do we have to remove our patronage to some other bar?"

"Right away, sir. Anything you say, sir," said Tommy in mock servility. "Consider it done. Your whim is our command." He hustled off to the bar.

The champagne arrived, and I had some in a bowl. It's funny tasting stuff, champagne. Tastes a little like cider, but with bubbles. I lapped it up in short order and begged for more. Alan made a big joke out of it, saying that I was a rummy all along, but Tyree had reformed me.

"No way," laughed Tyree over his glass. "Awful is only drowning his sorrows. After August 10th, he's out of a job!" They all laughed.

That's when it sank in on me. Tyree was right. If he was getting his eye operation on the tenth, he sure wouldn't be needing me anymore after that. I guess I would have been depressed about it, if it weren't that I felt so happy for Tyree. I had more champagne. When the first bottle was gone, Alan called for another. By the time we were ready to leave for Gertie's, we'd knocked off three whole bottles of the stuff.

A few words about champagne: don't drink it. I'd been swilling the stuff down as though it were cider and hadn't

noticed anything happening. But when I got up to leave with the group, the room began to revolve

slowly. I knocked into two tables on the way out and managed to hit both sides of the opened door, before I was able to get through it. Everybody thought it was real funny. So did I. In fact, if someone had come up to me right then and said, "We're going to cut off your tail and stuff it in your ear," I probably would have fallen down laughing at that, too. I was, as they say, feeling no pain.

After that, things get a bit blurry in my mind. I remember us all going to Gertie's. I remember drinking even more champagne. I also recall that when Tyree's turn to play onstage came, I went up with him. What I clearly recall was joining in on the verses of the "Me Inside of Me." I pointed my nose straight at the ceiling when Tyree began the second verse and howled all the way through the rest. Nobody seemed to mind. I sure didn't. I was beyond caring.

I woke up the next morning at Tyree's apartment to find Alan snoring gently in my face. I didn't mind the snoring so much, but his breath was like stale champagne. I got unsteadily to my feet, and the hangover hit me like a hammer. I hadn't felt this bad since the morning I awoke to find I was a mutt dog. The ashtrays in the room were filled to overflowing, with each one exuding an aroma of stale smoke. Scattered about on the floor were ashes and butts from when the ashtrays got full. Two empty champagne bottles were lying on their sides in the middle of the rug. Glasses and small plates from snacks were in various unlikely places throughout the small apartment. My head began to ache and throb dully. I think by comparison, dying would have been like a week in the country.

As I made my way toward my bowls, Tyree began to stir.

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My tongue felt like a used bath mat, and when I got to my bowls looking for a drink of water, I nearly retched. There was about a half inch of flat, stale champagne in the bottom of each one. Choking down the nausea, I half crawled into the bathroom for a drink of water. The first sound I heard while I was drinking was a low moan from Alan. As I emerged from the John, he was sitting up, and Suzy and Tyree were sitting on the edge of the mattress on the floor. Alan was saying to them, "I don't care what minor sin I may have committed last night. The punishment this morning far outweighs it. Never again."

"Until the next time?" asked Tyree.

"No more next times, ever," said Alan, knuckling his eyes. "How are you, Suzy?"

"Just fine, Alan," said Suzy. "You three were the big drinkers last night. I only had a Uittle bit. Boozing and dancing don't mix, you know. Not only that, I have a job to go to, and I have to dance today."

"Don't even tell me about it," moaned Alan. "I couldn't bear to think of walking, let alone dancing. Ty, do you have any aspirin?"

Tyree got up and went to the John. In a second, he came back with a big bottle of aspirin and a large jug of ice water from the refrigerator. Alan gulped down the pills, then did his best to drain the ice water jug. The day was warming up, and a fine bead of sweat was breaking out on Alan's brow. He mopped his face with the back of his hand and said, "You know, at first, I was afraid I was going to die. Now I'm afraid I'm going to Hve. Do we have anything that might be breakfast?"

"Not a chance," said Tyree. "When we got the hungries last night, we ate everything in the house. We'll have to go out for food."

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Alan slowly folded up on the floor again. He made some small whimpering noises, then said in a burry voice, "OK. Breakfast out. I'm not opening the store today, it being a holiday and all."

"What holiday is that?" asked Suzy.

Alan rolled over and regarded the ceiling. "Today," he intoned like a newscaster, "is Saint

Ulmric's Day. No work, no nothing."

"Who are you jiving, Alan?" asked Tyree. "First off, you're Jewish. So what's all the chatter about saints?!"\*

"Saint Ulmric is a druid saint," Alan said weakly. "He's the patron of leather workers with hangovers. Today, I am a druid. My parents in Brooklyn will never know."

"Mebbe so," said Tyree. "But I don't happen to need an excuse. Me and Awful have made enough this month for me to take off all of the month of August after my operation. I think we're going to go up to Central Park and sit under a tree, regretting our sins. He was putting away the champagne last night like a real boozehound. I wonder if dogs get hangovers?"

I would have barked him a quick "yes," but I was afraid that if I did, my head would fall off and roll around the living room floor. I got to my feet and walked over to where Alan had set the ice water jug on the floor. There was a coating of cool water condensed on the outside, and I started licking at it.

"I guess that answers your question, Ty," said Alan. "I think Awful doesn't feel any better than we do. Tell you what. If I can clean myself up a little over here, I'll go with you. I could use a day in the park."

"First for the bathroom!" cried Suzy, getting up and running for the door.

About an hour later, we were all on the street. Suzy

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dropped off at her job without eating any breakfast. Alan, Tyree, and I had a quick bite at the Nathan's on the corner of Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue, before we boarded the subway for uptown and Central Park. Somehow we managed to survive the noise of the subway trains for the fifteen minute ride.

Alan had brought his guitar with him, and we hung out in the park for a long time, sitting under a tree. Tyree showed Alan the proper chord changes to "The Me Inside Of Me," and the day slipped by painlessly. As late afternoon came upon us, Tyree began to gather things together.

"Alan, if we don't want to get caught in the rush hour, we better get to the subway right now. Feels late. What time is it?"

Alan consulted an antique pocket watch. "Four thirty," he said.

"Ouch!" said Tyree. "We're too late already. Well, it can't be helped. We'll just have to fight the rush."

We got it all together and went down into the subway. I'd never been on the subway during rush hour and was unprepared for the incredible crush of humanity that squeezes itself underground in New York at the end of each working day. I don't think there's enough money in the world that could make me take subways every day during rush hours. Tyree was somewhat apprehensive about going on the subway with me, because I wasn't wearing my Seeing Eye harness. I was still wearing my dress-up collar from the night before.

The platform was jammed with people. The first train that came in and stopped was so crowded that we had to let it pass without us. We moved close to the edge of the platform, so as to be the first ones on the next train that came in. When it arrived, it was just as crowded as the one we'd let go by

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earlier. I guess Alan and Tyree figured it wasn't going to get any better, so when the doors opened, we squeezed inside. I sat down next to Tyree, who was hanging onto a pole near the door. That's when it happened.

A fat lady came through the open doors and set what felt like a size fifty shoe square on my tail. I

let out a yelp of surprise and pain and pulled forward, away from the agony. Before I realized what had happened, I was outside the subway car on the platform again. The doors closed behind me. In fatal fascination, I watched as the train slowly pulled away from the platform. I saw the look on Tyree's face as Alan explained to him what had happened. It was all pantomime to me and seemed to take place in slow motion. In a few seconds, two of the only friends I had in New York City had disappeared noisily into the dark depths of the subway tunnel. And there was I, at a super-crowded station with no idea what to do about it.

The sign on the platform read columbus circle. Fine, but no help to me. Every time we'd taken the subway before, I'd let Tyree guide me. He knew the subway system and I didn't. No doubt about it, I was lost on the New York City transit system!

What to do? I could stay on the platform where I was, and see if Alan and Tyree came back on the next train to get me. Or, I could get out of the subway and walk downtown to Greenwich Village. The problem was very quickly resolved. As I glanced at the mass of people on the platform, I saw a transit policeman making his way through the crowds toward me. Remembering Tyree's cautionary words about dogs on the subway, I slithered between the legs of people on the platform and made for the stairs. The transit cop wasn't fooled. He kept after me. I finally reached the stairs to the street and made a dash for freedom. Once I reached the

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upper level, I ran under the nearest turnstile and out onto the street.

As I burst out onto the pavement, I saw to my alarm that I'd come up a different stairway from the one we'd taken down. I was in the middle of a traffic island and cars were rushing by in all directions. There was a complicated arrangement of traffic signals controlling the flow of cars and pedestrians clogging the street. I waited until a walk sign went on, then made for the Central Park side of the avenue. I must have read the sign wrong, or some joker ran a red light. I'm not certain how it happened, but I got halfway across the street, when I felt a terrible thump on my right rear side. Before I knew it, I was flying through the air. I recall turning over in midair, the pavement coming up to meet me. I also remember thinking, "This is it, I've been hit by a car!" Then, blackness.

Whoever it was that hit me, they didn't even stop. When I came to, I was looking up into the face of a man who could have been in his forties, or maybe fifties. It was hard to tell. He was unkempt and dirty. The ravages of heavy drinking were written in corduroy seams on his face and tracteries of red blood vessels in his watery, pale eyes. A wave of wine-soured breath in my face caused me to turn away. When I looked again, another half-destroyed face had joined the one floating over me. I wasn't in much pain, but my whole back end seemed numb and paralyzed. As I lay there, unable to move, I heard bits and pieces of conversation.

"Is he dead, Joey?" said one floating head.

"No," said the other. "I can't tell what's wrong. But that car musta threw him fifteen feet. Didja see it?"

"Hey, take a look at that collar. Is the plate on that made outa silver?"

"Read what it says," I thought. "I have a home and

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friends. Just get me there; Til be all right." I felt hands fumbling around my collar. "Thank God/" I thought. "He's checking my collar." His hands were at the buckle now, slipping it off my neck.

"Yeah, it sure looks like silver," said one of the floating heads.

"You got it? Let's get out of here," said the other.

"What about the pooch?" asked the one called Joey. "You wanna leave him here on the street?"

"He looks like he's done for, anyhow. Besides, if you try to pick him up and hurt him, he could maybe bite you."

"I wish I could," I thought. "If I could only move, I'd take a hunk out of you thieving bastards!" The faces disappeared abruptly. I think I may have blacked out for a little bit, because I found myself crawling across the sidewalk, my hind legs dragging uselessly. I got to the nearby park entrance and wiggled under the shelter of some bushes. Then I slipped away again.

When I reawoke, the sky was dark, and the section of Central Park I'd crawled into was deserted. The small street lamps were lighted, casting flickering shadows among the darkened trees. There was a quietness in the air that only comes with unpeopled places. Then, a little at a time, I began to hear the small sounds of animal night life: crickets, a frog near the lake, the occasional rumble of an unhappy caged animal over in the zoo, some distance away.

Cars were still driving through the park. I saw a hansom cab go by, a young couple with eyes only for each other in the back seat—small murmurs of conversation, then as they passed from view, the laughter of the girl in the horse-drawn cab floated back to me where I lay. I don't think I ever felt lower. Here I was, lying hurt, and life went on. People were loving, laughing, having a good time everywhere. Being

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alone is tough, but being alone and hurt with nobody caring is the worst of all.

"Enough self pity/" I said to myself. "OK, Arthur: on your feet. Let's see if any thing's broken or too painful to use." It was hard, but I managed to get up. No doubt about it, there was something awfully wrong with my hind legs. I was too weak to try to walk. Even as I stood there in the darkened bushes, I felt my hind legs start to tremble uncontrollably, and my whole back end sank slowly to the ground. It was a panicky feeling. I'd sprained my ankle once while learning how to ice skate. I thought of how it had felt, being unable to support my own weight. This felt worse, much worse. For a few uneasy minutes, I thought that my back was broken. Then I thought back to my scout's first aid course. If I could move my hind legs at all, that meant my spine hadn't been broken. Chances were, I was only badly bruised.

There was a faint, buzzy ringing in my ears. "Try to remember, Arthur. What does that mean? Concussion?" Try as I might, I just couldn't recall. All the questions I had answered to get my merit badge swam round in my head.

The darkness at the edges of the areas lit by the street-lamps seemed to turn an inky black, then it spread like water rising to where I lay. The blackness rose to my eye level. I sank beneath the surface of it, spinning into the whirlpool of ink that it made. I lost consciousness just before I hit bottom.

I awoke to hear a rooster crowing. For a few silly minutes, I thought that I had died and gone to some sort of animal hereafter, where there were farms and chickens. Then I recalled that there were farm animals kept at the children's zoo, so city kids would know what they looked like. The sun was coming up. I ached all over, but the buzzing in my head and the dizziness were gone. I got unsteadily to my feet and to my delight, found that my hind legs were working again.

True, they weren't very steady, but compared to last night, I felt a million percent better.

I checked out my surroundings by daylight. In my delirium last night, I'd crawled further into the park than I'd known. I was in a clump of bushes not a hundred yards from the entrance to the children's zoo. It was still too early for visitors to the park, but here and there I began to see an occasional pedestrian, evidently walking to early work somewhere. As they say, the city never really sleeps, but day people were getting up, and another day's rush hour was building.

I spotted a drinking fountain nearby. Like most of the fountains in Central Park, this one wasn't

working right. The drain at the bottom of the basin beneath the bubbler was clogged. It left a pool of clear, good quality drinking water. I wrestled myself up on my still rubbery hind legs and had a long, cool drink. Even that mild exertion did me up. There was little doubt that I had to rest a lot more before I could even think of trying the long walk downtown to where Tyree lived. There was also a question of food.

I was obviously in no shape to try my grab-and-run routine with hot dog wagons. I painfully heaved myself up on my hind legs again to the drinking fountain and drank down as much water as my stomach would hold. A stomach full of water beats a stomach full of nothing. Maybe all the water would ease my hunger pangs somewhat. I crawled back into the clump of bushes and lay down, trying to rest and get some of my strength back.

I slept on and off all through the day. The bushes where I lay were close to a row of benches. About noon the park filled with people. A lot of them came from the nearby office buildings, carrying their lunches in brown paper sacks. By watching the lunchers, I was able to scrounge a few half-

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eaten sandwiches and small pieces of edible stuff from what they left behind. By late afternoon, I felt able to leave the park and strike out for the Village and my friends.

As I walked through the park, I felt strength returning to my back legs. When I came to the Sheep Meadow, which is just a big open stretch of grass (they don't keep sheep there), I tried some running. At first, I had some trouble coordinating my front and back legs, but soon I was doing pretty well. I mentally thanked whatever guardian angels watch over dogs. Painful and shocking as they had been, my injuries weren't too serious. I crossed a few footpaths and exited from the park close by the same subway station I had run out of the day before. Crossing the street very carefully this time, I went around Columbus Circle, past the fountains and big statue of Columbus, and began my long walk downtown to Greenwich Village. I didn't know where Tyree or Suzy might be, but I was certain that Alan's store would be open. All I had to do was get to Alan's, and he'd do the rest.

I guess I'd underestimated how serious my injuries were. I had little or no energy. Every five blocks or so, I'd have to lie down in a doorway and rest awhile before I could go any further. What kept me going was the knowledge that each block brought me closer to my friends and any medical attention I might be in need of. I got as far as Pennsylvania Station at 34th Street and Eighth Avenue, when I met the man in the raincoat.

I'd say he was in his middle fifties, medium height, gray-haired. He wore a ratty, grease-stained raincoat. Underneath the coat, he was wearing what once might have been a fairly expensive suit, but it was as dirty and spotted as his raincoat. He wore a grayed-out, grimy white shirt, open at the collar. A gray stubble of beard covered his cheeks. But his voice was gentle, as he came up to the doorway where I was resting.

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"Here doggie. Nice doggy. Want something to eat?"

I looked wearily at what he'd taken from his raincoat pocket and was holding out to me in one grimy hand. It was a supermarket package of ground beef, the plastic covering peeled away from the cardboard tray beneath it. I got an overwhelming scent of meat, and my mouth began to water. Maybe this guy wasn't as bad as he looked. He set the package down in front of me, and then just before he walked off into the night, he said, "Have a nice meal, nice doggie. Eat it all up, now."

He crossed Eighth Avenue and disappeared into an entrance to Madison Square Garden. Once he left, I didn't need any urging. I wolfed down the package of chopped meat he'd left behind. It tasted good, but there was a bitter, metallic aftertaste to it that puzzled me. Not having had much experience

eating raw meat since I'd been changed to a dog, I ignored the strange taste. Then the pains started.

My whole stomach turned into one huge knot of pain. My body was racked with violent spasms of nausea. It was then that I knew what happened. I'd read about the crazy people in the world who hate dogs enough to wish them dead. Till now, I'd never come across one. That dirty bastard had poisoned me!

The only thing that saved me was that I threw up. I knew I had to get the stuff out of my system. I thought of everything I'd read and studied in first aid about what to do if someone is poisoned. The manuals all say the same thing: induce vomiting. No problem if you're a human. You can take stuff to make you toss, or if that doesn't work, you can always tickle the back of your throat. But I couldn't do any of those things!

I thought of pork chops with whipped cream. Oysters in chocolate syrup. Spaghetti with butterscotch meatballs, any-

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thing to turn my stomach. What finally did it was roast haunch of vulture with green sHme sauce. Everything came up for that one. I stayed in the doorway retching for what seemed like days. Finally, the spasms stopped.

A strange feeling came over me, then. I felt high. I don't mean happy high, like I had been on champagne. I mean dizzy, nauseous, light-headed, and weak. The effect on my thinking was even stranger. I got mad. Biting, fighting mad. In one twenty-four hour stretch, I'd been hit by a car, robbed of my fancy collar and leash, and now poisoned by some crazy. I'd had enough. All my anger was concentrated on that sickie in the raincoat. It seemed to me in my whacked-out state that he stood for everything rotten in my world. He wasn't just a deranged person who hated dogs, he was all the evil people in the universe. I had to get him and stop him before he made others sick and miserable.

I'd seen him go into Madison Square Garden, so I crossed the street and when someone went in, I slipped in through the same door. I found myself in a long arcade of shops. There were a few people passing by, most of them heading for an escalator at the end of the arcade. The sign said over it TO ALL TRAINS.

I didn't have much trouble with the escalator, except that my toenails tended to get stuck between the grooves of the moving steps. At the bottom, I found myself on the level where the Long Island Railroad trains come in. I looked across the wide expanse of terminal floor, and there he was! He was standing by one of the entrance gates to the train tracks. It looked like he was trying to mooch coins from the people who were boarding at that gate. I saw to my satisfaction that he wasn't having any luck. The people boarding just brushed by him. Now to get him!

I raced across the slippery marble floors, toenails slipping and sliding, trying to get some traction. But I was weak, very

weak. It felt like I was trying to run across a field of Jell-o. When I was less than halfway to him, he saw me. His mouth dropped open in an ugly grimace of mixed hate and fear. I could feel the fur on my neck and shoulders standing on end, and my lips peeled back from my teeth in a snarl. I must have looked pretty fierce, because he took off like a shot.

I caught him before he could get up any speed. I was too weak to manage a running jump onto his back, so as I came alongside him, I sank my teeth into his forearm. I felt my fangs pass through the dirty clothes and into the rotten meat underneath. He let out a terrible howl and tried to beat at me with his free arm. I set myself and pulled on the forearm held fast in my mouth, moving my head from side to side, so as to get my teeth in deeper. As I pulled, he lost his balance and came tumbling down on top of me. To avoid being squashed, I let go of his arm. His head hit the floor with a thump, and he

lay there, stunned. I quickly straddled him and looked down into that sick face.

His eyes came back into focus, and he found himself looking up into the bared teeth of one very pissed-off mutt dog. He nearly passed out from fright at the sight of me. But that was when I made my mistake.

At that point, an attack-trained dog would have gone straight for his throat. But despite my anger and my poisoned state, I couldn't bring myself to do it. I saw the terror written into every line of his face, smelled the scent of fear mingled with sweat all over him, and I was suddenly sickened by what I'd done. I looked away for a second. In that moment, he lost his fear enough to start screaming for help. I mean, he didn't holler "\*Help!" He began to make this horrid gurgling sound that ended up in a high-pitched wail of fright. I looked around and spotted a cop headed in my direction.

Just feet away from where I stood, the gates were closing

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on the last of the late commuters boarding a Long Island train. I gathered up my wits and strength and dashed through, just as the gate snapped shut. The warning bell was sounding on the automatic doors of the waiting train, and I shpped aboard. In a few seconds they too closed, and the train began to move, taking me I didn't know where. It was for sure taking me away from the city and my only friends, but what could I do?

One thing for certain, I had to avoid the conductor when he came around for tickets. All I needed now was to be put off a train, God knows where, and sick and hurt, try to find my way back to someone who'd help me. Already there were commuters lowering their papers and staring, wondering what a stray mutt was doing alone on the Long Island railroad. Still dizzy and aching, I went to the rear of the car and curled up under an empty seat. The car began to spin around, so I closed my eyes. It helped a bit. As near as I could tell, there was still a lot of poison in my bloodstream that I couldn't throw off. The spasms began again, and I blacked out for a few minutes. I dreamed that I was Arthur Cane on my way home from the city after a long day. The familiar surroundings of the commuter train did it, I suppose. I heard the trainman call, "Manorsville . . . Manorsville!"

I got to my feet. It wasn't a dream! The train was slowing down, and I peered through the window. Sure enough, there was the Manorsville station sliding into view. I scrambled to the end of the car and out the sliding doors. My feet touched the rough concrete of the platform, and I got a whiff of the first non-exhaust-laden air I'd breathed in a month or more. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the look of amazement on the conductor's face as the train pulled away. In the forty minutes I'd been in the train, he'd never seen me.

The Manorsville station is below ground level, but open to

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the sky. On each side of the tracks, there are long stairways leading up to the street. I let the bulk of the arriving passengers go before me, then tried it myself. I made it, but it felt like there were twenty-pound lead weights on each of my feet. By the time I reached the top of the long flight of stairs, I was panting badly, and small black flecks swam before my eyes. The metallic aftertaste of the poison still clung to the back of my tongue, and great tidal waves of nausea and dizziness swept over me at short intervals.

When you feel that bad, there's only one place you think of, I don't care what anyone says. That place is home. I forgot my resolve never to return. I forgot I was a dog. All I knew was that I was sick and hurt. I wanted to lie down in my own bed and feel cool sheets and soft pillows. And why lie? I wanted my mom and dad. The only real thing in my mind was home. I had to get there.

The big break for me was that I wasn't lost. I was in my own hometown, not two miles from

where I lived. I even knew how to get there quickly. Ignoring the way the ground kept tilting this way and that, I staggered off in the direction of my home. Thankfully, I was on the proper side of Northern Boulevard. I don't think I could have gotten across it safely in my weakened condition. I wove my way across a few small intersections in town and before long, stores and streets gave way to lawns and gardens. The summer sun was setting, but there was still a fair amount of light.

I soon began to pass homes of people I knew: Goldman, Myer, Connaughton. As I rounded the turn into my street, I felt a sudden elation and surge of energy. The lights in the dining room flicked on in my house! I could see shapes moving inside. Using the last of my strength, I crawled up to my doorway and collapsed on the portico in front of my home. I had hoped that Bert would have heard or scented

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me, but he was strangely silent. The flagstones of the front step felt pleasantly cool on my stomach. I guess I was running a high fever from the poison. The firm stones became the black whirlpool of the night before and I spun down, down, down, into its depths.

The next thing I knew, gentle hands were shpping what felt like a collar around my neck. I opened one eye and tried to focus on who was lifting me. All I could make out was a heavily gloved hand which promptly closed over my muzzle, pinning my jaws shut. I tried again to see a face, but my vision was still screwed up. In the light of the decorative coach lamp we have out on our lawn, all I could see was a vague blur where a face should have been. But what I could tell for sure was that I was being carried away from my home! I tried to struggle, but the grip of the hands holding me became firmer. My muscles felt like used chewing gum, and I couldn't even open my mouth to bark.

"I guess this is what they mean when they say sick as a dog," I thought. Even though they held me securely, the hands that immobilized me were gentle. I gave up the struggle and let myself be carried. By the time I saw where I was being carried to, it was too late. The back doors were open, and I was being gently deposited inside a wire cage in the rear of the van. I caught a ghmpse of a few huddled, furry forms in other cages, then the doors swung shut and the interior lights went out. From another cage on the far side of the darkened van, I heard a small voice saying over and over, "Ooooh, no! Ooooh, no!"

Then the engine of the truck started up. And off I went, a prisoner in the Manorsville Health Department death wagon!

#### 8 • A Stranger Saves My Life

I knew I had died. When I opened my eyes, I was looking at Jesus Christ. There was a corona of hght behind his head, just Uke the stained glass windows in church. He looked exactly like His pictures, except He was wearing some kind of white coat. That didn't make sense. I was lying on a cold surf"ace, and my side felt chilly. I tried to focus my eyes better. He was still there. Light shoulder length hair, beard to match. Soft, warm eyes, gentle hands. It was Him all right. He was talking to me in a low, soothing voice as His hands moved over my body.

"Easy now, fella. I'm not going to hurt you. Let's turn you over here, see if anything's broken . . ."

"Wait a minute," I thought. "Wouldn't Jesus automatically know if I had anything broken? Besides, are there bodies to be hurt in heaven?" I'd always been taught at Sunday school that when you died, it was only your spirit that went to heaven. Your body was supposed to stay behind, like a used container. As Jesus turned me over on the cold surface on which I lay, I felt another poison spasm coming on. I began to tremble. I guess I whimpered a bit. Jesus said to me, "OK, boy. It's all right. Don't be afraid. We're just finding out what's wrong with you is all."

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Just then, my vision cleared. I was lying on a long metal table. There was a large, bright, overhead light suspended above it. The man I thought was Jesus was wearing some sort of laboratory coat, like we do in science lab. His hands continued to move over me gently, touching here, poking there, never hurting me. I looked around at the room I was in. There were tiled walls, which gave way to painted plaster halfway up to the ceiling. A big electric clock on the wall read 10:25. Whether it was A.M. or P.M. I couldn't say; there were no windows in the room.

There was a desk and a couple of chairs off in a corner. I could see that there was a man in a white coat like Jesus was wearing. He was seated at the desk and partially visible in the reflected light of the desk lamp. Except for the bright overhead light, there weren't any other lights in the room. The man at the desk spoke to Jesus in a raspy voice.

"Hey, Finney. You gonna spend all night on that mutt? Dr. Morris'll be in at noon tomorrow."

"Listen, Carter," said the man called Finney, "this poor guy may be gone by then."

"Then you got nothing to worry about, do you?" replied the other. "I don't understand why you're bothering at all. If he goes now, it only saves the township a little gas on Monday. Nobody's gonna adopt a mutt, let alone a sick one. Go home and get some sleep. Or whatever it is you hippies do when you go home. This is my shift."

Finney sighed deeply, as though he'd heard all this before. "If I happen to like animals and want to save lives instead of taking them away," he said, "that's my business. And if you don't want your big red nose badly bent, you keep it out of my business. Do you understand me?"

By the time Finney had finished his little speech, he was leaning far across the desk, and Carter was leaning way over

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backwards in his straight-backed chair. I looked at Finney, and he reminded me of the picture in my Bible Studies book, when Jesus drove the money changers from the Temple. Righteous wrath, my Sunday school teacher called it.

As if to emphasize his last words, Finney reached across the desk and prodded Carter in the chest with his forefinger. The little push Finney gave him was enough to tip him over, and back he went. The back legs of the already tilted chair slipped on the tile floor and landed with Carter still sitting in it. It hit the floor with a solid smack. So did the back of Carter's head. He was silent for a second, then he began to spew forth some of the worst obscenities I'd ever heard. Finney stayed where he was, on the other side of the desk, looking down at Carter on the floor.

"You ought to be more careful, Carter," smiled Finney. "You could hurt yourself that way."

"Hurt myself? You pushed me over. Don't think that Dr. Morris won't hear about this. I got connections in this town. This time tomorrow you'll be out of a job!"

A look of mock disbelief spread over Finney's face. "I don't know what you're talking about. Carter," he said in an even tone. "You were boozing on the job, as usual, and you fell over in your chair. Come to think of it, I probably only stayed this late tonight because you were too drunk to work. At least that's what Dr. Morris will hear if you so much as open your mouth. Morris knows you're a drinker. God help him, he's related to you if only by marriage. I think he'll believe me and not you. What do you think of that?"

Carter rolled out of the chair and righted it. He hauled himself up and sat down again. He opened the desk drawer and took out a bottle. "Aw, c'mon Finney," he said in a whining voice. "Can't you take a little kidding? I was just having a little fun, that's all. I wouldn't say a word to Dr.

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Morris. We both work here, right?"

"I know that I do," answered Finney. "But I can't figure out what it is that you do around here. Besides suck on that jug, that is."

Finney didn't say any more. He came back to where I lay on the table. I was still too weak to move. He gently continued his examination of me. When he touched the sore spot on my right flank where the car had hit me, I almost bit him out of reflex. Instead, I closed my jaws over the hand that had touched me, but lightly, so my teeth wouldn't break the skin. He moved his hand away.

"Uh-huh. Bad bruise. Looks like a car did it. You show signs of toxemia, too."

He stepped back and took a long look at me. "You've had a busy few days, fella. As near as I can tell, you've been hit by a motor vehicle of some sort, then poisoned. Tough run of luck you've been having."

"You're telling me!" I thought. Finney went over to the desk and picked up a clipboard. He took a ball-point pen from his jacket pocket and came back to where I was lying. He began filling out a form.

"Admission date: August second. . . . Picked up at Cane residence, Manorsville, 8:15 P.M. Breed: . . ." He looked at me again. "Hound and shepherd mongrel. ... Color: yellow, black saddle, and spots ..."

Finney's words sank in on me. Hound and shepherd. So that's what I was! I had often wondered what kind of dog or dogs I was. Evidently Tyree had felt something about my hound ancestry when he made up the put-on about spotted Georgia Possum Hounds. And shepherd. Maybe that's why I was such a conscientious watchdog. I hadn't really thought about it when I'd defended the Riley home or bitten the kid that was trying to steal from Tyree. I'd

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done it almost instinctively. It made sense.

Finney finished filling in the form on the clipboard. He returned it to the desk, where Carter was now slumped over and snoring noisily. He took a ring of keys from a peg on the wall and came back to the examination table. He reached under the table and drew on a pair of heavy padded gloves. I eyed him apprehensively. He must have noticed my expression or body attitude, because he said, "Now, now fella. Don't get upset. I only have to put you in back, in isolation. We don't know yet what other goodies you might have wrong with you. Like rabies or distemper. Sometimes, you guys get scared of the cage and struggle. You've got a good mouthful of teeth there. I don't want you making any painful mistakes at my expense."

"Don't worry," I thought. "I'm in no shape to even bite dog food right now." Finney picked me up and slipped a light collar with an extension handle on it around my neck. I could see from the way it was made that if I struggled, the collar became a choking noose. He set me down on the floor. I tried my legs and found they would hold me up. Finney seemed pleased. We walked up and down the examining room floor together. He smiled.

"You're made of some tough stuff, fella," he said. "You've taken some hard knocks, and you're coming back for more. I kinda like your style."

"You're OK, too," I thought. "Too bad we have to meet this way." Even though I was weak, I reached over to Finney's bare arm above the glove and licked it. I couldn't have gone near those gloves. They had put too many dogs before me into the death wagon. There was the smell of fear and hurt on them. Finney seemed delighted by my response. He took off the gloves and squatted down. He took my head in both hands and looked into my eyes. I looked right back.

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Like I said, it disconcerts people when I do that. Dogs don't look folks in the eye that way. We

stayed locked in each other's gaze for a ten count. Then Finney shook his head as if to clear it and said to me, 'There's something strange about you, fella. I don't know what it is, but I have a feeling about you. I think that you. . . Wait a minute!' His fingers flew over the worn down area of fur where my collar had been. \*'You've been wearing a collar for some time. You just may be somebody's lost dog. And there are these funny marks on your shoulder fur, like you wear a harness as well as a collar.'

I gave a weak bark of assent. If I could only tell him. But what could I do? I knew that once I was in that isolation cage, it was just a matter of time before I'd be hustled off to the gas chamber. In my mind, I could even see the expression on Carter's face when he'd turn the gas valve. I decided to run my whole book of tricks on Finney. I wasn't in shape for it, but I knew it was my last chance to cling to life. Even life as a dog beat the gas chamber every time. Besides, I was now back in Manorsville. I could get to Lou Greenspun if . . . "That's right," I thought. "Say it. If I . . . live." Finney was still staring at me because of the bark I'd given. In his surprise, Finney had dropped the lead on the choke collar.

I trotted over to where Carter was now loudly asleep. The almost empty bottle was on the floor alongside his chair. I picked it up in my mouth and quietly deposited it in the wastebasket by the desk. Then I came back and sat down at Finney's feet. Even though it hurt to put any more weight on my back legs, I sat up and offered him my paw. He broke into a huge grin and took my paw lightly in his hand.

"Good boy," he smiled. "I can't stand the smell of the stuff", either." He looked at me as though deciding what to do with such a rare animal. "But that doesn't change things

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much. I still have to put you in isolation. But if no one adopts you by Sunday, I'm taking you home myself."

"You've got a deal, friend," I thought. I let Finney pick up the lead on the choke collar again and permitted myself to be walked over to a door on the far side of the room. He stopped and opened it, then reached inside to turn on the light switch. As he did, an incredible racket broke out in the room. I looked around at the place we'd just entered.

It was a scene right out of a horror movie. A bad sci-fi. The room was divided into two main sections. On one side were individual cages of the size I'd been brought here in. There were animals of all descriptions in these cages. Dogs, cats, I even saw a skunk and a raccoon. Then, on the other side of the room, were two very large pens. Inside them were six or seven dogs, with enough room to walk around in. Males were on one side, females on the other. It seemed that when the light went on, every last one of them gave voice.

At first, the noise was just a jumble of sound to me. Then, as I listened more closely, I heard individual voices. They were all saying pretty much the same thing: \*'Let me out!' I couldn't blame them. At the rear of the two large pens, I saw a big iron door with a heavy wheel in the center to close it with. I knew what it had to be. I shuddered and was glad I'd be in an isolation cage. I wondered how they could have slept at all with that thing staring them in the face. They didn't know, of course. Finney led me to a large single cage and urged me in.

After he'd made his rounds of the other cages, he came back to mine, closed the grillwork door, and fastened the latch. He turned to go, then came back and stood in front of me.

"Good night, fella," he said. "Don't be afraid of this place. It's only a stopover. You won't be staying here, if I have

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anything to say about it."

He patted my head through the grille, then turned and walked away. He looked around the large room as he stood at the light switch in the doorway. It was a look of infinite sadness. Then he hit the light switch, and the room was in darkness. From over on the far side of the individual cages, I heard that same voice again saying over and over, "Ooooooh, no!" I curled up and after it quieted down, I fell off to sleep without even eating a bite of the food Finney had left for me.

I was Arthur again. But I was still in prison. I was in a single cell. I was wearing a gray uniform with a number stitched over the shirt pocket. I heard noises at the end of the long corridor that ran between the banks of cells. A door opened, and a guard dressed in blue came down the aisle and stopped in front of my cell. "You got a visitor, Cane," he said to me. "Your lawyer's here. Follow me." He opened the cell door and I obeyed.

I was led into a large room separated by a central partition that ran the full length of the room. Set into the partition were glass panels, with smaller partitions at right angles to the big one. It neatly divided the big room into small interview cubicles. There were chairs in each set of cubicles, and a telephone on each side of the glass panels. Once inside the cubicle, the only person visible to you would be the person who'd come to see you. You couldn't hear anyone on either side of you, because all the talking was done into the telephones. The guard led me to a cubicle and indicated a chair. Just as he went to go he said, "Fifteen minutes and no more. Make a fuss and you don't get any more visitors—ever."

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I looked at my visitor through the heavy pane of glass. It was James N'gaweh! He picked up the telephone on his side of the glass and motioned to me to do the same. I picked up my phone. James looked at me with a big smile and said, "How are you, Arthur? Enjoying your summer vacation?"

It was a lucky thing that the heavy glass was between us. If I could, I would have done him some serious harm. Recovering my cool, I leaned back in my chair and smiled right back at him.

"Just fine, James. How's yourself? Are you just running around screwing up people's lives, or have you discovered some new games, like pulling the wings off flies?"

"Now, now, Arthur," he said in a conciliatory tone. "I'm sure you don't want to stay here, do you?"

"No, I can't say as I care for it too much," I came back coolly.

"Then you'd better pay attention to what I have to say. I am your solicitor, you know."

"All right. I'll play your funny game. But get me outside, and I'll change the rules a little bit." I'd tried to get a little Bogie feeling into the way I talked. But instead, it was coming out more like a dumb, scared kid.

"Arthur, Arthur," said James N'Gaweh, shaking his head and smihng ruefully. "This isn't doing you any good." He opened a briefcase that he had in his lap. He sorted through some papers. "Ah, here we are. I have your file and some good news. I think we can get you out of here."

"You can?" I cried, my heart jumping. "How? . . . No, I don't care how. Just get me out of here!"

"It's a very simple process, Arthur," said James silkily. "All you have to do is confess."

"Confess to what?" I cried into the telephone. "I haven't done anything to confess to!"

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\*"Oh, I think so," went on James in the same oily tone. He consulted the papers in his briefcase. "Yes, here it is. You can confess to being ignorant and arrogant in your ignorance. You can confess to being an overprivileged, overbearing, materialistic snot. You can confess to never having done a thing in your life that wasn't in your own narrow selfish interest. You can confess to being so narrow that when you had more in life than many hardworking men ever know, all you wanted was more." He set down the file, took out a pack of cigarettes, and lit one. "The hst," he said, "goes on and on. Do you

really want to hear it all? I think that the last charge on the bill of particulars is the best. It says, Further, the defendant is as useless as a stray dog!" "

James leaned back in his chair and began to laugh. Louder and louder. Then he started to bark like a dog. The guard came to my cubicle. He started barking, too. The room began to spin, and all I could hear was barking and more barking.

I was in the isolation cage Finney had placed me in the night before. Daylight was coming through glass-bricked windows set high in the walls of the main detention room. The whole place was filled with hysterical barking. The door to the examining room was open, and standing with his back to me was a man in a white lab coat. When he turned, I saw that it was Carter. He was feeding the animals in the cages. As he fed them, he kept up a running commentary, although there was no one to hear him. He was calling each of the animals by name. I hadn't seen any name tags on the cages and wondered how he knew them all. Then, I caught on to what he was saying. He really didn't know the animals' names. He was calling them by the names of people he knew.

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He was telling them things that turned my stomach. Carter was a man with more poison in his system than I could have eaten in a ton of bad meat. When he came to my cage he regarded me with a baleful eye.

"Ah, Finney, you hippie S.O.B.," he said to me. "Only three more days to live. I'm gonna enjoy turning the valve on you. You're gonna choke and cry out for air. Then I'll give you more gas. I'm gonna laugh when you cramp up and your eyes bug out. I'm gonna have a good time when your tongue turns black and hangs out of your mouth. Then Finney, you rotten hippie, when you're nice and dead, I'm gonna pick up your stinking carcass and throw it in the incinerator. I can hardly wait until Monday."

It wasn't smart on my part. I knew that Finney was going to adopt me if no one else did. I shouldn't have let Carter get to me. As it was, I flew at my cage door, teeth bared and tried to get a piece of him. It was dumb. I couldn't get at him through the grille, but boy, he got me mad. The suddenness of my rush startled him. Even though he knew he was safe, the coward backed off".

"Garrh, you rotten mutt," he said drawing back. "That's right. Try and get me. You can't. But I'm gonna get you. On Monday." He laughed a dirty laugh and again pantomimed turning the gas valve, hissing like some alcohol snake. 'T see you already got some food, Finney," he said. "That's good. Because I ain't givin' you any!" He turned and walked away.

I was glad he had other work to do. It was bad enough being in the pound without him adding to it. He moved off" to the main pens, feeding the animals inside, telling each what he was going to do to them on Monday and still calling them by name.

At noon, Dr. Morris showed up to examine all the new arrivals. By then, Carter had left, and Finney had begun his day's work. But I didn't see Finney until he came to my cage to bring me to the examination room. I came willingly and even helped him get me up on the table. I protested a bit as he fastened restraining straps to me.

"Don't panic, boy," he whispered. "I think Dr. Morris is afraid of you. He wants the straps on."

Dr. Morris came over once I was securely fastened. He was a plumpish man in his early forties with graying hair where he wasn't balding. He wore a lab coat, but not like Finney's or Carter's. His was pale blue and obviously had been made for him. Knowing Manorsville folks, I was pretty sure he'd had it tailored. He even had a manicure. He consulted the information on the clipboard Finney had used last night. Then he gave me a cursory examination. He touched me as though he was afraid of getting his hands dirty.

"I see you indicate signs of toxemia, Finney," he said in a well-modulated voice. "This animal looks pretty chipper to me.

"He didn't last night. Doctor," said Finney. "I thought we were going to lose him at first. But he's pretty tough. He may have thrown off the last of the effects during the night. Do you want me to run a blood analysis?"

Doctor Morris sighed deeply and looked at Finney like he was a not-too-bright child. He came around the examination table, took Finney by the elbow, and guided him over to the desk. He sat down behind it and motioned Finney to the other chair in front of it. Dr. Morris opened his tailored lab coat and from an inside pocket drew out a leather cigar case. He cut the tip of his cigar with a little knife thing on the end of his key chain. He lit the cigar with a gold lighter, savoring the blue smoke. Then when he felt settled, he regarded Finney from across the desk.

"Bill, I've been meaning to have a talk with you," he said in that same smooth voice. "I know that you're quite serious about your studies in veterinary medicine. I find your enthusiasm quite commendable. But if you're going to make your way in this world . . .," he waved his cigar, indicating the room around us, "you must be made aware of certain facts of life. Take that mongrel over there, for instance . . ." Another cigar wave in my direction. "Now, you want to do a blood analysis on him. Fine. That's proper procedure. For a client's animal. But this mongrel is a street pickup. You can see from the look of him that no Manorsville family would ever adopt him. It's merely a question of priorities."

"Do you mean because he isn't a purebred that we have to let him die?" asked Finney. "I'm sorry, Doctor. With all due respect to your position, a sick or hurt animal is a sick or hurt animal. I got started in veterinary because I wanted to help animals."

Dr. Morris made a gesture with both hands, as though he were pushing away something distasteful at a banquet table. "You seem to misunderstand deliberately, Finney. We all want to save lives. But somewhere along the line, we have to make decisions. Now, if I were to spend time and money on that mutt over there, it would take me away from my practice, where I have at least a dozen animals waiting for my attention. Good, clean animals with good homes, and more important, with owners who will pay for the care I give them." He gestured at Finney with his cigar, like a pointer. "And no matter how you may choose to . . . er, what is the expression you young people use? . . . er, put it down, there's absolutely nothing wrong with making money. In fact, without money, my idealistic young friend, none of what you see here would ever exist. None of the treatments, none of the medications, none of the animals up for adoption. Putting it

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simply as possible, we can't go throwing money down the drain on animals that will only be destroyed eventually."

"Then how about people?" asked Finney. "Why do we try to save people with terminal conditions? They're going to die, aren't they? If it comes to that, why bother with the practice of medicine at all? Aren't we all going to die, eventually?"

"You seem to have a positive talent for beclouding the issues. Bill," said Dr. Morris impatiently. "People are people. Animals are animals. There's no comparison. None."

"I'll say there isn't," said Finney. "I've never heard of an animal killing if he wasn't hungry. I've never heard of animals cheating, stealing, lying or murdering, either. Yes, you're right. There is a difference. Animals are much better than most people."

Bill Finney was getting excited, now, and leaning across the desk the way he had the night before with Carter. But Dr. Morris wasn't as easily faced off as Carter had been. He leaned forward, too. He

and Bill Finney looked at each other, nose-to-nose, like two dogs about to do battle.

"I've been more than patient with you, Bill," he said with a slight edge to his voice. "But you're making things extremely difficult for me. Your training makes you a valuable assistant here, but it does not make you indispensable. Do you grasp my meaning?"

"Better than you'll ever know. Doctor," he said through his teeth. "And by the way, you spoke of medication earlier. I've been checking invoices on medical supplies delivered here. It seems that although the township is buying a lot of antibiotics, last night I couldn't find a single unit in the supply locker. We got a shipment in just last week. I unpacked it myself. Where do you suppose it could have gone, Doctor? Is it going over to your clinic to treat priority cases? Or is your alcoholic cousin-in-law selling it?"

"That's quite enough, Finney!" cried the doctor, getting to his feet. "You're fired. Don't bother to finish out the day. Collect your belongings and go. See Mrs. Gold at my office for your salary check . . . no, don't even do that. I'll have it mailed to you. I have your address on file right here."

"Fine with me, Doctor," said Finney, making the word sound dirty. "All I have to take with me is my books." He stopped and looked over at me. "And that hurt mutt that you have no use for. I want him. I'm adopting him."

Doctor Morris looked up at the ceiling and toyed with his cigar. "I don't think you heard me correctly, Finney," he said. "I told you to take your belongings and go. That animal is impounded and the property of the town of Manorsville. I am the one who decides who can or cannot take an animal out these doors."

"That's low, Morris," gritted Bill Finney. "What do you care about him?, I'm only taking him off your hands. A question of economic priorities, just like you said. All I'm doing is saving the township a few cubic feet of gas."

"I'm through talking with you, Bill," said the doctor, waving his cigar airily. "If you aren't off the premises without delay, I'm going to have to call Chief Kramer to put you off." He leaned forward over the desk, resting his fingertips on the surface. "The dog," he said with satisfaction, "stays here. Unless, of course, you choose to apologize to me for your insinuations about me and my . . . er, family." He sat down behind the desk with a smug expression on his face.

"I hope you aren't waiting there for an apology, Doctor," said Bill Finney, heatedly. "Because you'll be a lot older and . . . (here he smiled) a lot fatter and balder before you'll ever hear one from me! I'll be in as a private citizen tomorrow to adopt that dog. I can pay the fee, and there isn't a thing you can do to stop me."

"Oh, I think there is. Bill," said the doctor with a greasy smile. "I see by your personnel file that you're a New York City resident. An outsider. Suppose, as a member of the Board of Selectmen of Manorsville, I decide you can't give this animal a decent home. I think you'll find I wield a certain amount of influence in this town." He reached for the phone on his desk. "Now are you leaving, or must I call Chief Kramer?"

"You win, Morris," said Bill Finney with resignation. He turned toward the door leading out of the examination room. As he passed by me, he said in a whisper, "Sorry, boy. I did the best I could." Then he walked out the door, taking with him my last chance to live.

The door closed behind him, moved by an automatic door closer. The hissing sound it made reminded me of Monday and the gas chamber. I began to howl. Dr. Morris came over to the table where I lay restrained. He wasn't near as gentle as Finney. He put on the death gloves and slipped the choke collar on me so tight I could hardly breathe. He walked me into the main detention room and disregarding the isolation cages, popped me into the main detention pen with the other male dogs

collected there.

"Some vet you are," I thought. "I could be infecting all these other dogs with the leaping crud for all you know. Or care." The other dogs in the cage drew back as he neared it, unlike the reception they'd given to Finney. They could tell that the good doctor wasn't on their side. I watched the well-tailored Dr. Morris go back into the examination room, then turned to have a better look at my fellow prisoners.

## 9 • Behind Bars

There were four of us male dogs on one side of the pen and three females on the other. On my side were an old fox terrier, a small mutt of no particular breed, a big Boxer, and me. Just the other side of the wire were the ladies: two toy poodles, one obviously pregnant, and a very, very old Pekingese blinded by the cataracts that clouded her eyes.

At first, no one on my side came near me. Not even for an exploratory sniff or two. I moved over to an unoccupied section of the big pen and lay down. After a few minutes, the Boxer swaggered over and stood in front of me. "I'm Charlie," he said in a dumb-dumb voice. "Fm the boss here. I eat first. I drink first. Get it?"

I looked up at him. He was big for a Boxer and quite formidable. I was very mindful of my weakened condition. I think if I had been in any kind of shape, I might have given him an argument. He didn't seem to be too bright. I've never met a Boxer who was. I was probably faster than he was, too. But feeling as I did, all I wanted was some peace and quiet. I looked at him for a while, showing neither defiance nor deference. Then I said, "OK, big fella. Anything you say is all right with me."

"Good," said Charlie, pleased that he had a timid soul to

deal with. "We ain't gonna have any trouble, then. Just don't forget it. Otherwise. . ." He growled and bared his teeth.

I lay there, not moving. Making any motion would have justified a fight. He stared at me for a few seconds, then waddled over to the other side of the pen. "Up yours, Charhe," I said silently. He was still watching me from across the pen. I gave an elaborate yawn and closed my eyes as though falling asleep. Inside my head, all I could think of was Monday. I kept getting the same mental picture of the look on Carter's face as he turned the valve. I thought of all the possible ways I might escape and kept coming up blank. It didn't look too good.

There was no point in trying to charm Carter. He hated Finney so much that he hated me by association. Dr. Morris would see to it that my death sentence was carried out, if only to spite Finney. Bill Finney had certainly saved my life, but he'd just as surely condemned me to death. The only way out I could see was to be adopted. That meant whenever some prospect came in to adopt a dog, I had to outshine all the others in the pen. I began to think of them not as fellow prisoners, but as competitors. Competitors for life.

"Well, well now. I never thought a big, strapping fellow hke yourself would back down to Charlie," said a voice with a rich Irish brogue. "Is it lack of guts, or are you waiting for the proper time to take him? I can tell you how to beat him, y'know."

The voice snapped me out of my reverie. I looked up and saw the fox terrier I'd noticed earlier. He was standing over me, his tongue rolled out in a big smile, his small stump of a tail awag. He was a bouncy little guy, and inspite of my prejudice against small dogs, I liked him right away. There was something undefeated about him. He didn't wait for answers to any of his questions. He rattled on as though he

hadn't talked to anyone for ages. "Parnell's the name," he said. "Glad to make your acquaintance. This isn't much of a place, is it? Well, never mind. We shan't be here for long. Someone'U be soon

here to get me, anyway. Terrible food, isn't it? I don't think I've eaten this poorly in my entire life. They won't let us near the darlin' girls, either. Oh, the prison life's a trial and there's no denying it. Tell me, laddie buck, do you have a name?"

Jumping at the chance to get a word in edgewise I said, "Arthur. Arthur Cane. And if you don't mind, Parnell, I'm not feeling very well just now. I'd rather be alone."

"Alone? And sick at the same time? Rot! Utter rot. What you want is company and a bit of cheer. A bit of beer wouldn't harm you either." He fell silent for a split second. "Ah, what I wouldn't give for a bit of lager. All they give you here is water." He made a small sound of disgust. "Oh, it was a black day when Bracken died. A black day."

"Who's Bracken?" I asked more out of politeness than interest.

"Who's Bracken? Who's Bracken, he asks?" Parnell was getting so excited that he was bouncing from foot to foot. "I'll tell you who Bracken was. He was my partner. Together we ran Bracken's Rest, the finest gin mill in Manorsville. A prince of a man, he was. Always a kind word, a warm place to sleep at the foot of his own bed, good red meat, and a sip of beer to wash it down with. And we ran a beautiful saloon, just beautiful. Oh, there were arguments among the customers from time to time, but rarely a fistfight on the premises. Good lads, our customers. They'd take their differences outside almost every time. Then Bracken had to go and die on me." Parnell paused and a look of deep grief passed over his face.

Once Parnell mentioned Bracken's Rest, I placed it immediately. I knew the joint, although I'd never been inside it. On the "wrong" side of Northern Boulevard in Manorsville, Bracken's Rest was where the working men in the area went to drink. The place had a reputation for being clean and well run, though a trifle rough for most Manorsville residents. I'd waited outside in the car for Lou many times when he'd go in and buy beer to take out. Bracken didn't check ID'S if you looked old enough. A lot of underage kids from Manorsville bought beer there.

So Bracken had died. I never knew the man to talk to, but indirectly, Bracken had been responsible for a lot of good times for Manorsville High students. Any beer party I'd attended in Manorsville, the beer had come from Bracken's. Now Bracken was dead. I interrupted Parnell, who was still running on about what a prince Bracken had been.

"If Bracken's dead, who's running the place now?" I asked. You would have thought I'd asked an Israeli how he liked Arabs.

"Who? Who, you ask?" spluttered Parnell. "The daughter is who. A dreadful woman with no heart at all. I know you'll find this hard to believe, laddie buck, but she actually . . ." He looked around as though afraid to be overheard. ". . . keeps a cat! A bloody Siamese he is, that barely speaks a word of English. Lays about all day and doesn't do a thing. I don't regret a bit of what I did."

I knew I was about to get more conversation than I really wanted, but I asked him anyway. "What did you do, Parnell?"

The question was all he'd been waiting for. He sat down for the first time since he'd come over to talk to me. "Killed the bastard," he said with great pride. "Or came close. I'm not certain. It was after Bracken died, and the daughter came to live in the apartment above the saloon. She brought that useless lump of a cat with her. I had to sleep downstairs, in the place of business. Can you imagine that? Me, who never slept anywhere but at the foot of Himself's bed." Parnell got to his feet and began circling me as he spoke. "She even brought the beast downstairs to the saloon during business hours. Well, one fine day, I was walking past the basket where the useless creature took his rest. I was keeping my mind on me own affairs, not bothering a soul, when the bastard takes a swipe

at me with his nasty claws. Mind you, I'd done nothing to provoke him. And after I'd spent day after day seeing the great clot lay about and get fawned over by the daughter. He got red meat to eat and I got ..." A shiver ran through his body. ". . . tinned dog food! Can you imagine that? Bracken would share his steak or liver and bacon with me, and the poor best his daughter could do was that slop not fit for pigs. Er . . . where was I?"

"The cat clawed you," I said.

"He did that, the low clot. Well boyo, I turned on him and got a bit of his forepaw in my teeth. We spun round and round, and when I was finished with the beast, there was no fight left in him. The daughter screamed and the cat howled. When it was all over, she carried him upstairs, the cat not moving and bleeding in a few places. I don't know if I did for him or not. But I hope so." Parnell sat down again, his excitement subsiding. "The next day, they came and took me away in the lorry. Brought me here," he said. "But she'll find out. She can't run the Rest without me. I was Himself's partner. She'll wise up and come fetch me. You'll see. It'll be any time now." Parnell, having finished his recitation, lay down alongside me. He looked over at me, obviously expecting some comment.

What do you say under such circumstances? I knew that unless somebody adopted Parnell within a few days, he was

a goner. Involuntarily, I glanced over at the big iron door. It seemed more menacing than ever. The worst part was lying to Pamell about it. I guess I could have told him about what was behind it, but I didn't have the heart. Instead, I just said, "Sure, Parnell, sure. She'll reahze how valuable you are to the business. You'll be back home again in no time."

It seemed to mollify him. He regained his original cheerfulness and said, "Certainly she will. Certainly. Now, would you like to come meet the lads? I'll bring you over and introduce you to them."

"I've already met Charlie," I said, my tone making my meaning plain.

"Ah, Charlie's all bluster and wind," said Parnell. "He hkes to think he's boss around here. It's not worth the time to prove him wrong. If he wants to eat first, let him, I say. What difference does it make? There's more than enough food for all. If you can call the cereal they give you here food, that is. Don't bother your head about it, Arthur. Come meet the lads and . . ." He gave me a knowing look. "The ladies as well."

Still feeling far from fit, I followed Pamell over to where the other dogs lay in varying attitudes of repose. Charlie got up as we approached, but Parnell had anticipated him. "Easy there, Charlie, me lad. There'll be no trouble. I was just bringing Arthur here over to meet you." Parnell's assurance carried weight. Charlie remained silent and sat down. But he still didn't take his eyes off me. Parnell made introductions. "This rascal here is called Scamp." The no-breed mutt bounced to his feet and came over and exchanged sniffs and smiles with me.

"Pleezedtameetcha," he said. "I didn't get your name. Parnell talks so much that he don't say anything. Glad to see I ain't the only lowbrow in this jail. Rotten joint, ain't it? But

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I been in worse than this."

My heart jumped. If what Scamp was saying was true, a stay in the pound didn't have to mean death for a mutt. I had to know what he meant by his last remark. Was it just brag talk, or had he really survived being in a pound?

"My name is Arthur," I replied. "And what do you mean about worse places? Have you ever been in a pound before?"

"Been in one?" said Scamp, his voice rising. "Buddy, I was almost born in one. When I was a pup, me and my brothers and sisters was all in a pound with our mother. It took a little time in stir to

get on to all the tricks that get you adopted, but we all got good homes, except for Mom. She was sick to start with. She didn't make it. One day, they took her into the other room. She never come back."

The casual way Scamp talked about his mother dying shocked me. It must have shown. He cocked his head to one side and said, "Whatsa matter, Artie? Somethin' I said?"

"No, just thinking about how sad it was, your Mom dying/'

"Don't upset yourself, kid. That's hfe. Some of us makes it, others don't. Besides, I hardly remember the old doll any more. Past coupla nights, I been tryin' to remember what she even looked like. Same as I been tryin' to recall the tricks that got me sprung the first time."

"How did you do it, Scamp?" I asked and watched a sly look come over his pointy face.

"If I told you, you'd know too, wouldncha? Sorry kid, but I get the first crack at the suckers. Once you see me do it, you'll know how. But until then, I ain't sayin' a word about it." He moved over into a corner and lay down. He gazed off into space and said more to himself than anyone else, "I think she had black and gray spots, but I ain't sure."

conversation with Charlie. I went over to the grille separating the male and female dogs. I tried a few hellos, but none of the "ladies," as Parnell called them, seemed interested in talking to me.

Mentally shrugging my shoulders, I walked back to the corner I'd chosen for myself when I was first put in the big pen. Parnell trotted after me and joined me as I lay down. His non-stop chatter was beginning to get on my nerves. I lay down as though to take a nap. It didn't seem to faze him at all that I'd apparently gone to sleep. He just kept rattling on. In a short time, I was genuinely asleep. Then bedlam broke loose.

"Here they come, Artie!" cried a voice I knew to be Scamp's. "The suckers are here. Now watch an operator at work!"

A man and woman in their late twenties were entering the detention room with Carter. They had a little girl about six years old in tow. They came up to the pen gate, where we waited. The man turned to Carter and asked, "Which ones are up for adoption?"

"All but three," answered Carter. "The Peke is here to be destroyed. She's old and blind. The apricot poodle is in a family way by some mutt. You wouldn't want her." Then he looked at me with undisguised hatred. "The big mutt, you wouldn't want either. He's vicious. Bad for your kid." The young couple immediately drew back from my end of the cage, taking the little girl with them.

"Oh, great," I thought. "It's bad enough being a mutt trying to get adopted. But this rummy is making it even tougher!" The couple were now at the far end of the pen. The man was holding tightly on to the little girl's hand. They weren't taking any chances on me, the vicious mutt.

But I had to admire Scamp's style. He didn't even bother

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with the couple. He zeroed in on the httle girl and made his pitch. He wagged and jumped. Then he sat down, cocked his head to one side, and made small whining noises at the kid. The little girl's eyes grew very big, and she moved closer to the grille. The father felt the kid's tugging and looked askance at Carter.

"That one's OK for a mutt," said Carter condescendingly. "\*\*What you really want is that Boxer over there. A good pedigree and a good breed for kids."

"He looks sick to me," said the woman.

"Nah," said Carter. "He's half-starved. We picked him up hanging around where his owners used to hve. Dogs do that, you know. His owners moved to California. The dog kept haunting the place and running away whenever somebody went near him. Finally caught him by using food for bait. A few weeks of steady eating and decent care, he'll be good as he ever was."

All the time Carter had been extolling Charlie's virtues, Scamp had been making points with the little girl. She was pressed close against the wire, and Scamp, who had no shame, was pouring it on for all he was worth. I had to laugh inside at him. All the time he was coming on like any little lassie's idea of an ideal dog, he was giving me a constant breakdown on what he was doing. When he licked the little girl's hand through the grille, he said to me in a confidential tone, "See, Artie. Don't waste your time with the adults. Get to the kids. Once they want you, ain't a parent in the world will say no."

He was right, too. Before long, the couple had decided to adopt Scamp. Or actually, the little girl decided on Scamp, and the parents went along. The little kid stayed behind, talking to Scamp, while her parents and Carter did the necessary paper work. When they came back, Carter had set up one of those folding cardboard dog carriers, like you see on airlines. Printed on the side of the box, like a label were the words: manorsville pet clinic, northern blvd. and CYPRESS ST., MANORSVILLE, N.Y. Underneath that it said: j.H. MORRIS, D.v.M. I noted that the box said nothing at all about the Manorsville Health Department. "Nothing like a little advertising for Dr. Morris," I thought.

If the label on the box hadn't assured Dr. Morris some business. Carter wrapped it up real good afterwards. He told the couple that the adoption fee covered the cost of shots for Scamp, but that Dr. Morris would administer them at his clinic. All nice and neat. Once in the clinic, the dog became his steady patient as long as the couple kept him. The good doctor didn't miss a trick.

But commercial considerations were the last thing on Scamp's mind. When he saw that he was getting "sprung," as he put it, there was no stopping his gloating. "I got 'em!" he chortled. "I nailed the suckers just bigger than Ufe. Remember what you saw me do, Artie. Concentrate on the kids. That's the secret. I'll think of you tonight when I'm in a nice house with a gut full of hamburger and a soft place to sleep. Take care of yourself, Artie," he said, as Carter took him out of the pen and put him into the cardboard carrier. "Use all the tricks you got. You'll be OK. Us mutts gotta stick together." Then he was off with his new owners. Just like that.

I guess I should have been happy for Scamp, but after seeing the way Carter was out to get me, I was terribly depressed. We had a few more prospects for adoption that day. The toy poodle was snapped up by a young girl in her twenties. Each time a prospect came in. Carter would warn them against me, saying I was vicious.

By the end of the day, there were only Charlie, Parnell, and myself among the male dogs. On the other side of the wire were the old Peke and the pregnant poodle. The ranks were thinning out, and we still had Sunday before us. A few new arrivals came in, but they were placed in isolation. Lucky guys. They had a week to find new homes in. I had one more day.

I couldn't sleep that night. I was afraid of more dreams like the last one. What kept me awake more than anything else was the knowledge that the iron door was waiting. To make matters worse. Carter had left the lights on. He was probably in a drunken stupor in the examining room. Parnell was a great comfort. He kept my mind off the death that awaited us by telling me stories about Bracken and the Rest. He had a lot of opinions on morality and world politics. Things he'd heard from Bracken. But when I pressed him about particulars, he had to admit that he'd no idea what he was talking about. He knew the words and expressions, but that's all they were to him: words. In truth, he only really knew his life as the pet of a man who owned a bar. He was, for all his talk and wit, just a dog.

"And what are you, Arthur old buddy," I asked myself, "a pink elephant? Face it, you're going to be dead in twenty-four hours or so. Shouldn't you be collecting your thoughts, getting your soul ready?" But how could I? I'd never even seen anyone who was dead. Some animals, sure. On the roads. But they weren't real, either. Just bundles of flattened fur on the highway. I'd always felt

vaguely disturbed when I'd seen them, but it passed after we'd driven on a way.

But death by gas? It was like the documentary films they're always showing on TV about World War II. I was in a dog's equivalent of a concentration camp. On Monday, I was going to the gas chamber. I shuddered and again, couldn't take my eyes off\* the iron door. I was glad when Carter staggered in and turned off' the lights he'd left burning.

It was better in the dark. I couldn't see the door. I lay

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there, wakeful and brooding, when I heard a whisper close by. At first, I couldn't believe my ears. But there was no mistaking the dumb-dumb voice or his heavy scent. It was Charlie the boss Boxer. "Arthur, are you asleep?"

"No, Charlie. Vm awake."

"Gee, that's good. I wouldna wanted to wake you up. You sure you're awake, Arthur?"

"Charlie, if I was asleep, I couldn't be talking to you, could I?"

"No, I guess you couldn't."

"What's on your mind, Charhe?"

"Parnell says you know a lot of things, Arthur. He says you know even more than he does. I never heard him say that about anyone before. So I wanted to talk to you about something." He fell silent. I could almost hear the gears grinding, as Charlie tried to put his thoughts into speech.

"Well, what's bothering you, Charhe?" I asked, trying to help him.

More silence. Then after a minute, he said, "What's behind that big iron door, Arthur? Scamp said it was a bad place. Is it?"

"Bingo," I thought. "Even Charhe is getting the message that something's wrong about this place. What to tell him?" I decided on the truth. The only problem was to put it in terms that Charlie would understand.

"It is a bad place, Charlie," I began. "A very bad place. And unless people come in and adopt us, the man who smells of whiskey is going to put you, me and Parnell, and the ladies in that room ..."

"We gonna be with the ladies?" said Charlie in disbelief. "Oh no, they never let us near the ladies." He was silent again. Then: "It's a real bad place, Arthur?"

"As bad as they come, Charlie. Once you go in there, you never come out."

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"You mean we gotta stay in there forever?\*"

"\*Not forever, Charlie. After a few minutes, you get very sleepy. Then you go to sleep and never wake up."

"T don't know if I like that. I like to sleep, but I want to wake up."

"There's no waking up, Charlie."

"I'll wake up. If I don't want to sleep, I'll just wake up. You'll see, Arthur. You wait and see." He padded off across the pen. I could hear his toenails on the concrete floor and his heavy sigh as he lay down to sleep. The last I heard from him was when he said to himself, 'T don't have to sleep if I don't wanta. I don't." Then silence.

"So that's the truth of it, is it?" said Parnell.

I nearly jumped out of my skin. He must have come up on me while I was talking to Charlie. But from his manner, Parnell hadn't missed a word. I couldn't see him in the darkened pen, but I heard him snuffle once. Then he said in the most serious voice I'd heard from him, "It's death for us all, isn't it, Arthur?"

"Yes, it is," I answered gloomily. "I've been trying to think of a way out all day. No go. Carter's

warning every prospect away from me. If I don't get adopted, that's it. At least there's hope for you, Parnell. You're a purebred. You have style. I'm just a mutt. No one wants a mutt. No one."

"Rot! Utter rot, my boy," said Parnell, sounding like his old self. "It's true you lack a certain elegance, but you're a fine figure of a dog for all that."

"And what about Carter telling people that I'm vicious?"

"Would Carter be the chap who smells so pleasantly like a gin mill?"

"That's him."

"Hmmm. That is serious. Well then, I guess we're both in for it now. Bracken's daughter hasn't shown up, and truth to tell, I think she . . . she . . ." Parnell's voice broke. I could

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hear him choking back the tears. "She isn't going to come at all!" His last words became a mournful howl. He sat down alongside me and poured his soul into howl after heartbreaking howl.

"Poor guy," I thought. "There he was, cheering me up, and he had his suspicions all along." But Parnell was such a game little guy, wearing his courage out in the open, that to hear him howl in despair nearly broke my heart. If he'd kept it up much longer, I would have joined him. I felt that low. Then as suddenly as he began, he stopped. He said to me in a faraway voice, "I suppose if I got to heaven when I die, I'll see Bracken there ..."

"Where did you hear about heaven, Parnell?" I asked.

"From Bracken's daughter. Whenever someone asked her about Bracken, she'd say that's where he was. Where he went. Now, I knew Bracken was dead. Didn't I see him fall down and not get up again? I was there, y'know. But this heaven place. I don't know where it is."

"Not where, Parnell. What. It's not a place, like Manors-ville, or Great Neck. It's that when your body stops, your soul ..." I stopped abruptly. We'd been taught in Sunday school that lower animals like dogs and cats don't have any souls. Well, I was a dog. And I knew that I had a soul. I thought of Parnell, invisible in the darkness, awaiting an answer from me. In my mind's eye, I could see his bright eyes and alert, tough little frame. "No," I thought. "You can't tell me that there's no soul inside that scrappy little body!" I continued my speech to Parnell. "Your soul, that's the you inside of you. What you think with, feel with—that part goes to heaven. Nobody knows where heaven is. That's because you have to die to get there."

Parnell was silent, then said, "Maybe no one ever comes back to tell us about it. Because it's such a fine place, no one

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wants to leave it. Even for a little while."

"I'm sure that's why, Parnell."

"Ah-ha! Just as I thought. Well, then, lad. It'll only be a few days, I'll be seeing Himself again. I'm glad we had this chat. I don't feel near as bad as I did. Thank you, Arthur. Thank you more than I can say. Til be getting my rest now. Good night."

"Good night, Parnell," I said, sounding more assured than I actually felt. Before long, the only sound in the pen was the breathing of the sleeping animals.

I lay in the darkness, thinking about all that had befallen me in the past month or so. I'd learned a lot. Not in terms of books, but people. I'd found out how truly rotten people can be. But I'd also found out what a truly wonderful thing a kind and sensitive person can be.

I thought about Lou Greenspun. How could I ever have envied him? The only things Lou had were possessions. He had no friends like Tyree, Suzy, or Alan. He'd never know what swell people the Rileys were, either. And if things didn't change, he wouldn't ever belong, truly belong, anywhere. For

the first time, I felt sorry for Lou.

As for my mom and dad, I don't think I ever really knew them. My sister Sybil, either. "And you won't have a chance to," I thought glumly. "Come on, Arthur," I said to myself. "You had your whole sixteen years to know your family. Face it, you blew it. But I would try now, I answered. Sure you would, said the voice inside my head. Now that it's too late, there's no place to run, no place to hide. Only hours left, now. Carter will be in soon, and your last day on earth will begin. It's almost like that song says: 'this is the last day of the rest of your life.' "

A faint grayness was beginning to tinge the glass-brick windows high above me. Only a few more hours until dawn.

I wanted to howl. I wanted to cry. I wanted my mom and dad. Even my sister, Sybil. I wanted another chance, a chance to do things differently. Do things right. But there are no second chances for mutts. I fell into a fitful sleep just as dawn was breaking. It was only the wild barking that woke me. I opened my eyes to find that Parnell had gone crazy. He was running around the pen, caroming off the walls, shouting, "A well! A well!"

It was bright in the room. The wall clock said 12:20. Food and water were in all the bowls. I'd slept through feeding time and the morning chorus. But poor Parnell! The gutsy little guy couldn't take any more. He kept dashing around the pen screaming, "A well! A well! A bloody, beautiful well!"

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"Parnell!" I cried. "Get hold of yourself!"

"A well! I'm in the bloody well!" he shouted, as he ran past me.

He ran to the far end of the pen and halfway up the wall. He bounced off, turned in midair, then headed back toward me. I stood directly in his path. As he tried to run by me, I threw a body block at him that knocked him off his feet. He didn't get up. He lay on his side panting on the concrete floor.

"Now what's this all about?" I demanded.

"It's a well," he panted. "Bracken's daughter came in a few minutes ago. She's taking me back. I heard her say to Carter that I was in Bracken's well. Whatever it is, I'm in it, and I'm going home!"

"A well?" I said. "You must mean a will Bracken mentioned you in his will."

"Isn't that what I just after saying?" he gasped. "Look! Here she comes now with that Carter chap you don't like."

I looked at her as she came through the examining room door. She was fat, middle-aged, and her hair was in one of those things you see women wear over rollers. Despite the warm August weather which had the air conditioners in the

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room humming, she wore a Hght, ratty coat. Underneath it, you could see she was wearing a housedress of some kind. Her face was bright with makeup that ended at her jawline, like a mask. Below it, her neck looked like a plucked chicken's. She must have bathed in some cheap perfume. Wave after wave of overpowering scent swept into the pen every time she moved. She was talking rapidly to Carter as they entered the room.

"\*So I ask you, Mr. Carter, what was I to do? It was simply luck that you hadn't done away with him."

"You weren't even close, Mrs. Martin. We only put them to sleep once a week. On Mondays."

"Thank God for that," said Bracken's daughter. "I'd have been out a great deal of money. I swear Tom must have gone mad to leave half the place to a dog. Even worse, I have to care for the nasty brute. I've spoken to my lawyer, too. He says that the thing is legal and ironclad to boot."

"People do strange things when they get attached to animals," said Carter. "There was a woman

over in Douglaston left a quarter of a million dollars to her six cats. Her only son doesn't get a dime of it, until the last one of them dies. She even said in her will that if any of them dies from other than natural causes, the whole bundle goes to the A.S.P.C.A. Seems she didn't trust her son too much."

"The world's full of loonies, and that's for certain," said Bracken's daughter. "Tom had that same thing in his will. Thank heavens Parnell's seven years old. I can't imagine what I'd do if I had to wait around for a younger dog to die. As it is, I have to keep him away from my poor Jackson. He nearly killed him last week."

"I know," said Carter. "Dr. Morris said you almost lost him. It took twenty stitches to patch him up. The doc says he won't ever walk right again. His front leg was pretty badly mangled."

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"Did you hear that, boyo?" whispered Parnell to me. "\*Mangled his leg, I did. Serves the Httle bastard right. Glad I did it."

Carter had set up a cardboard kennel and was walking over to the gate of our pen. Bracken's daughter stayed behind, as though she didn't want to go near Parnell. The little fox terrier turned to me with a sad expression on his pointy face. "Arthur, me lad, it's sorry I am to leave you. If there was a way that I could take you along, I would. But as you say, there's always that heaven place. I almost envy you. When you get there, will you say a hello to Himself for me? Tell him I miss our good times. And Arthur ..." He paused, feeling deeply what he was about to say. "If you hke, you can stay with Himself in heaven. Keep him company for me until I get there. He's a prince of a man, Bracken is. There'll always be a warm bed, good food, and a bit of beer for you. Himself 11 take you in, I know. He's a heart as big as Ireland herself." He cleared his throat of the emotion choking it and said, "Here comes the chap with the box, now. I have to go. All the best to you, Arthur."

Carter opened the pen and collared Parnell. With a practiced motion, he popped Parnell into the carrying case. It was almost too late, but I called after him, "So long, Parnell. You've been a good friend. I'll tell that to Bracken when I see him!"

There was no answer. Or if there was, it was muffled by the carrying case. I sighed deeply and looked around at the now almost empty pen. Charlie was in his corner. The big oaf had slept through the whole thing. I was just as glad. I really wasn't up for any conversation with Charlie. I went over to my corner and lay down. The clock on the wall said 1:05. Less than twenty-four hours left.

No one else came in for the remainder of the day except Carter. I kept switching my attention from the outside door,

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hoping against hope for adoption, and gazing at the iron door, my spirits sinking each time. Whenever Carter came in, I pretended to be asleep. He must have had a busy day out front. He only came in three times. The last time was to turn out the lights.

All through the day, Fd managed to keep myself from losing control. It was especially rough when Charlie came over to talk to me. He still couldn't grasp the idea, and I didn't want to go through any more explanations. It ended up with Charlie staying on his side of the pen and me on mine. After Carter left, I sat alone in the dark with my thoughts. I wanted to live. Either as Arthur Cane or a mutt dog. Life is sweet, even when it's bad. Briefly, I thought of fighting. Maybe I could get a good bite out of Carter, before he gassed me. But I knew that he wouldn't take any chances. It would be the choke collar and the heavy gloves with the smell of terror on them. I wished I didn't have to wait until morning. I wished that I could do it myself. I think I would have had the guts to turn the gas valve on myself. But to go out pleading and crying, bowels and bladder wide open from fear. I couldn't stand the thought.

My mind drifted to Tyree, Suzy, and Alan. I wondered what they were doing, if they missed Awful; were curious about what had become of me. "I'll bet Tyree posted a reward," I thought. "Don't be foolish," I answered myself, "he needs every cent he's got for his eye operation. No one puts up rewards for mutts."

But Bracken had thought of Parnell even from beyond the grave. He'd seen to it that his partner would never be in need. Tyree had called me his partner. I'd have bet anything that if Tyree knew where I was, he'd have been there. Suzy and Alan, too. I missed them. "If only I had a way to leave a note for them," I thought. "I want them to know how much I . . . loved them."

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A full, warm feeling came over me. I actually loved someone! In fact, I loved three people. Then I thought of Mom, Dad, and Sybil. I guess I loved them, too. But it wasn't the same feeling that I had for three people who'd been strangers to me for all but a few weeks of my life. It's hard to describe the feeling. Like telling a blind man about the Mona Lisa. You have to feel it yourself to know it.

I suppose that my folks loved me. I couldn't tell. The only talk we ever had was when I was in trouble. Oh sure, my dad would ask me how I was, or how school was going. But it was always in the way that grown-ups have of asking that lets you know they don't really care about the answer. I would miss them, though. I hoped that they would miss me. You know, once in a while say, "Gee, I wonder where Arthur is. I hope he's well and happy."

I reflected on how little I'd accomplished in my sixteen years. I'd never driven a car, I'd never been to California or Europe. I'd never really been anywhere. And, although being so close to the Great Beyond and all, I still couldn't fight the bitterness of knowing that when it came to girls, that I'd . . . well, I'd never. That stung.

"But you have loved and been loved," I said to myself. "That's something in itself. Think of all the people who live long lifetimes and never know love at all." It was a comforting feeling. It would be nice to keep in mind when the big iron door closed behind me. I resolved to think of it when the gas came on. As a last thought, it would be a good one.

About dawn, a profound feeling of peace came over me. I recognized that there was no out; no second chance. I also realized that no matter what happened, I was still a person. By God, I would die like a person. With as much dignity as I could muster. I felt so together, that I finally curled up and went to sleep.

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"Awful! . . . Awful, where are you?" It was Tyree's voice. I knew it was all a dream, but I gave in to it. "Awful!" Tyree was crying, "I want to talk to you ..."

"Over here, Tyree," I called.

He walked right through the closed grillwork of the pen and came over to me. He wasn't wearing his heavy sunglasses. I saw his eyes. They were bright. Alert. He'd had his eye operation. He could see me! Tyree squatted down alongside me and took my face in both his hands. He looked deeply into my eyes with no discomfort at all when I returned his gaze.

"I knew you'd look like this, Awful," he said. "I had a picture in my mind as to what you'd look like, and I was right." He reached into his money vest and took out my fancy dress collar. "Come on, boy," he said softly. "We're getting out of here."

Tyree stood up and walked over to the big iron door. He turned the wheel and swung the door open. I couldn't believe my eyes. It wasn't the inside of the gas chamber. It was the inside of the Cauldron. Suzy, Alan, and my folks were in there. So was the whole Riley family, dressed up like for church. There was a big banner stretched across the room. It read: welcome home, Arthur! we all

love you. Everybody started to cheer. I began to laugh and cry at the same time. I knew it was a dream, but it was all so beautiful, I didn't care.

"Thank you, God," I thought, "for giving me this dream. This last bit of happiness before I die." I thought of Parnell's words to me and added, "Thank you, more than I can say." I moved into the room with Tyree, getting hugs and kisses from Suzy, Alan, and my folks. The Rileys came over and

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welcomed me, too. No one seemed to mind that I was a dog. They were all so happy to see me.

Tommy, the waiter, came up to us with a huge bottle of champagne in an ice bucket, just like in the movies. But he tripped and the ice flew into the air and came down on me.

"Graceful, very graceful," taunted Suzy, enjoying Tommy's goof. "Do you do a lot of that?" Everyone laughed, but I was getting chilled.

"I'm cold," I said. "Awful cold."

"Awful's cold!" shouted Alan. "Awful cold." More laughs. I began to shiver. Then a racket started up outside the Cauldron, beyond the door.

I heard Bill Finney's voice shouting, "You can't keep me out. I don't care who you call. Call the National Guard if you want. I'm taking that dog!"

"You can't go in there, Finney," I heard Carter's voice say. "You don't work here any more."

"I'm freezing," I shouted. "I'm going to catch pneumonia in here."

"What was that?" I heard Carter say.

"Whoever you've got hidden in the detention room. Carter. Is that the reason you don't want me to go in?"

"Get away from that door, Finney. I'm warning you . . ."

"Up yours, Carter. I'm going in!"

"Wait a minute," I thought. "What's going on here? What's Carter doing in my last dream on earth? And why am I so cold? My hands are like ice! Hands?" I thought, and at that moment the lights went on in the detention room. The door to the gas chamber was open wide and from where I sat inside, I could see both their faces. I guess what they saw would have surprised anyone. For there, inside the Manors-ville Health Department gas chamber, naked as a jaybird, sat

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one Arthur Francis Cane.

\*"Who the hell are you?" cried Carter.

"Don't put it on for my benefit, Carter,\*" growled Finney. \*\*"I don't care how you get your kicks. Just let me take the dog and ..."

Finney looked around the big cage. Except for Charlie blinking the sleep out of his eyes, there was no one but me. "Where is he, Carter?" said Finney. "Where's the dog, my dog?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, Finney. I closed down the place on time, like always. The mutt was in here with the Boxer when I left. I never seen this kid before in my life!

"He's right. Bill," I put in. "I'm the dog. Or I was when I went to sleep early this morning."

Finney came inside the pen and inspected the gas chamber. He satisfied himself that the mutt was, indeed, gone. "Listen, kid," he said to me. "I don't know who you are, or what's been going on here. But as far as I'm concerned, it stinks to high heaven. I'm calling the cops."

"And I'm calling Dr. Morris," added Carter.

They went through a whole comedy routine then as they both tried to get through the examining room door at the same time. I called after them, "Listen, you guys. If you're going to do some telephoning, would you call my folks? The Canes on Rolhng Brook Road. Manorsville 5-6720. Tell

them to bring me some clothes. I'm freezing!"

Inside of a half hour, things got very hairy, indeed.

### 11 • The Tail of the Dog

It took a week to get things straightened out with my folks. Not that it's really straightened out, even now. My big mistake was telling the truth. No one, not even Lou, who was there for part of it, believed me. I guess maybe the Rileys would have remembered the message I left in the dirt of their yard. But come to think of it, I wouldn't repeat a story like that to anyone. People would figure Riley was a coo-coo as well.

Besides, I don't see too much of Lou lately. Soon as the story of me being found naked in the dog pound got around the Manorsville grapevine, I became as acceptable in those parts as a leper in a steam bath. I never thought that Lou would run out on me, but I guess life is one long learning process.

I wish I could say that the whole mess brought me closer to my mom and dad, but it didn't. After a solid week of trying to get them to believe the truth, I gave up. It didn't matter when I told Mom about the day I saw her at Bloom-ingdale's. She believed I saw her, but not that I was Awful, the mutt. She said I'd run away from home, and I'd seen her in the crowd, but she hadn't seen me. Even telling her about the five dollars didn't make a dent.

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Dad washed his hands of me. My disappearance and my explanation for it turned out to be the last straws in a long string of incidents that were driving us farther apart, anyway. His idea for solving the communication problem between us was to send me to Dr. Fenton, a psychiatrist. I made an even bigger mistake when I told the truth to Dr. Fenton. After I'd told him what really happened, I thought he actually believed me. He made notes all through my story. He said, "Uh-huh . . . then what happened?" in all the right places, too. I felt I'd finally found a sensitive person with an open mind. He was leading me on. Old open mind sent me to another doctor for complete psychoanalysis.

I guess he also told my folks that I was halfway out of my tree. They didn't put up a fuss about me going into the city twice a week for the sessions. At first, Mom or Dad drove me into the city and stayed outside in the waiting room while I was inside with Dr. Staub, the analyst. But after ten or twelve sessions, it began to interfere with both their social and business schedules. Dr. Staub, who isn't a bad guy considering what he does for a living, easily convinced them that I could come into town alone.

But he still calls them when I arrive for my session. And after I leave, I suppose. He doesn't know I'm on to him. I found out about it when I left my notebook with my dreams in it out in the waiting room. I overheard his secretary talking to Mom on the phone. Funny. Even though I'm Arthur Cane again, I'm on a short leash. They must think I'm ready to take off any time.

Once Dr. Staub started to trust me, he told me that Dr. Fenton had recommended putting me away for a while. But he was convinced that I was basically quite sound. The silly reason he trusts me is because I lie to him. I learned my lesson with Dr. Fenton. When Dr. Staub asked me where I'd

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been for the six weeks, I told him that I'd run away from home. Gone to Greenwich Village and lived as best I could. Panhandling.

When he got to the crucial part, how I ended up naked in the dog pound, I told him "the truth." I'd been hit by a car and didn't remember anything after that. I didn't know how I'd gotten back to Manorsville, I added. It seemed to satisfy him. Now we spend the sessions trying to find out what happened during the "missing days" between the car accident and the dog pound. He says I'm a victim of traumatic amnesia from the car accident. He says that the memories of the missing time will come

back with each session. I'm spending my spare time trying to think of plausible lies to "remember."

I went back to Manorsville High when school reopened. But it wasn't any picnic. The story about me was all over the school. Mom wanted to take me out and put me in a private school. I said no. I've never had many friends outside of Lou. And after what I'd learned about things as a mutt, I didn't care what the kids at Manorsville High thought. One way or another, a lot of things I used to think were important don't matter at all to me lately.

I've taken more interest in my school work, too. Face it, when you don't have friends or any outside activities at school, you get into the work. My grades are above a B average, now, and getting better. I've gotten heavy into biology and the science subjects. See, I've made up my mind that I want to go on to college and learn to be a veterinarian. I haven't told that to Dr. Staub, though. He'd probably say it was an unhealthy interest, and a regression to my old story of being a dog. Meantime, I've been checking out all the books on biology and zoology I can from the library. I plan to have a head start when I hit college.

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I've taken a part-time job after school, too. I had time and no one to spend it with. Why not a job? I work at the Baskin-Robbins in Manorsville four days a week, when I'm not at my sessions with Dr. Staub. I've saved a good bit of money. Between school, the job, and Dr. Staub, I don't have time to spend it. No, I take that back. I have spent some of it.

I managed to convince Dad that we should have a really good stereo system throughout the house. Because it's something that he and Mom can show off for company, both of them went along with the deal. The hard part was to convince them that Dan Riley should do the job. What clinched it for me was that I offered to pay for extension speakers in my room from my savings. The system was installed just before Christmas.

When Dan Riley came to do the job, I stayed home from work to watch him do it. Mom was busy that day, and Dad was in town. I'm pretty sure Riley thought I was a pain in the ass. I kept trying to talk to him while he worked at the installation. He gave me a couple of hard looks when I asked about Flora and Donny. I had to say Sybil talked to me about them. I was asking for her. After all, to Riley's knowledge, Arthur Cane had never seen either of them. When I saw he was getting suspicious, I backed off and let him work undisturbed. He put in a great system, too. Sounds better than Lou's.

The toughest part of being Arthur came this spring. I'd finished my shrink session and had gone straight to Pennsylvania Station to get my train back to Manorsville. But there was a breakdown in the tunnel. The loudspeakers said that trains would be delayed two to four hours. I called home and, for once, found Mom there. I told her about the breakdown and that I'd be late. After I left the phone booth, I wandered

around the terminal, looking at window displays. Then on an impulse, I left the station and grabbed a subway downtown to Greenwich Village.

The streets were lined with people. They have a big outdoor art show there. Painters, sculptors, and jewelry makers all have stands and sell their stuff right on the sidewalks. Most of the stuff you see is pretty bad. But some of it is dynamite. I strolled along the street, looking at the exhibits and remembering places I'd been with Tyree. I found myself in front of the Cauldron. I knew I was underage, but I went in, anyway. Tommy, the waiter, was behind the bar. A promotion, I guessed.

"Hi, Tommy," I said. "How's it going?"

"OK," he said, giving me a big smile. "How's yourself?"

I thought for one crazy second he recognized me. He greeted me that warmly. I ordered a draught beer and made small talk as he served me. He looked at me funny, then said, "You know, I see

hundreds of people every week here. Thousands when the art show is on. I'm sorry, man, I can't seem to place you. Where do I know you from, anyway?"

"I'm a friend of Tyree, Alan Marcus, and Suzy Childs," I explained. "I used to come in with them before I . . . er moved to Long Island." Recognition and acceptance flashed across his face.

"Oh. That explains it. But I oughta remember you, then. When did you leave the Village?"

"Last year, about August."

"Was that before or after Tyree had the operation?" asked Tommy.

"Before."

"Have you seen him since he got his eyesight back?"

"Not yet," I said. "I wasn't sure of where to look for him. Is he still living over on Waverly Place?"

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"Yeah. I think so. But you won't find him there now. He's over at his stand on West 4th Street."

"His stand?"

"Oh yeah. You wouldn't know. Tyree was a painter before he lost his vision. Since he's OK again, he's exhibiting in the art show. He won an honorable mention for one of his paintings. You oughta go see him."

"I will," I said. "West 4th and where?"

"Between MacDougal and Sixth. North side of the street, near the church."

I thanked Tommy and finished my beer. Walking up to West 4th and MacDougal, I thought of how to approach Tyree as Arthur. No plan I made seemed to make any sense, so I decided to play it by ear.

I heard Tyree before I saw him. He was playing the guitar and singing "The Me Inside of Me." He hadn't forgotten any of the tricks he used when he was a street musician. He'd draw a crowd with his music, but instead of passing a hat, he sold his paintings to passersby who stopped. I watched him from the back of the crowd.

He hadn't changed in appearance in a year. Or didn't seem to have. It was a bright day, and he was wearing his heavy sunglasses. He had on a new leather vest. One without money pockets. But I recognized Alan's work right away. Tyree was sitting on a folding chair, picking and singing. His paintings were hung on the wall of the building behind him. I was so into listening to his music, that I didn't notice the paintings at all. Not at first.

They were all pretty much the same as the ones I'd seen in his apartment. But I'd had no idea about the colors! Wild, swirling gouts of primary hues, ropes of pure color shading into variations of lesser intensity. There was only one picture in the entire display that wasn't abstract. It was a portrait of me!

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I looked out of place amid all that far-out stuff. A painting of a yellow mutt with black spots. He had pictured me sitting down with his cowboy hat in my mouth and a background of a doorway. It was the doorway we'd worked from on St. Marks Place. In the picture, I was wearing my fancy collar that Alan made for me, not my "working clothes." Once the crowd he'd drawn had thinned out, I got up my nerve and walked over to him.

"Hi, Tyree," I said. "How's things?"

"Beautiful!" he said. "A great day, a good time. Good paintings. Sorry I don't know you, friend. For the past eight months, I've been seeing a lot of people for the first time. Ever since my operation." He pointed at his sunglasses. "So if I don't greet you by name, forgive me. I'm trying to match your voice to your face. But to tell the truth, I don't know your voice, either."

"We used to see each other at Gertie's. Just to say hello," I lied.

"Oh, that's it. I should have known." He took off his sunglasses and looked at me closely. "Sorry," he said, noticing my expression. "I was just memorizing your face. Next time I see you, I'll remember."

"That's a neat picture of Awful," I put in, changing the subject.

Tyree's face brightened. "You remember Awful? I only had him for a month or so last year. Best dog I ever had. He was only a mutt, but he had more heart and smarts than any pedigreed Seeing Eye dog ever born. I still think of him a lot."

"What became of him?" I asked.

"The darndest thing," said Tyree, leaning back in his chair and lighting a cigarette. "We got separated on the subway. When I came back for him, he was gone. We, my friends and I, looked for him for a week. I even ran an ad in the Village

Voice. But we never saw him again. I'd still pay the reward to anyone who knows where he is." He looked at me sharply. "You wouldn't know, would you?"

"No. I only asked because I remember the night he got up onstage and sang with you. At Gertie's."

"That was the night before I lost him!" Tyree exclaimed.

I had really talked myself into a corner. I wanted to say to Tyree, "Here I am. It's me. Awful." "He'd probably think you were a stone coo-coo, too," I thought. "Better leave things the way that they are. After all, Tyree has a new life now. You don't belong here. As Arthur, you never could."

"Gee, that's too bad," I said aloud. "It's a great picture of him. But what puzzles me is how you knew what he looked like. Didn't you lose him before you could see him?"

"Sure did. But my friends told me what he looked like when I started the painting. I knew from touch how he was put together, and the kind of fur he had. They filled me in on colors and spots. Stuff I couldn't know. I think he came out pretty good. I mean, you recognized him right away."

"You don't see a dog like that every day," I said, and added on a wild impulse, "Spotted Georgia Possum Hounds are very scarce this far north."

"So you know about that," laughed Tyree. "Yeah. We had some great times together, me and Awful."

"And Suzy and Alan," I put in, forgetting myself. Tyree gave me that funny look again. "I always saw you together at Gertie's," I explained, hurriedly.

Tyree shook his head. "I really should remember you, friend. What's your name?"

"Arthur. Arthur Cane. I live on Long Island. I was visiting with friends here last summer. I went to Gertie's every Tuesday night to hear you. Do you still play for a living?"

"No. Just for fun, now that I'm back to painting," he said. "Business has been good since the honorable mention." He waved his arm at the far-out paintings. Sure enough, there was a certificate of honorable mention hanging below one of them. "You wouldn't be interested in buying a painting, would you, Arthur?"

"Yes, I would," I said, realizing it was true only as I said it. "I'd like to buy your painting of Awful."

"Sorry. That one's not for sale."

"Come on, Tyree," I coaxed. "You could make another painting of Awful, couldn't you?"

"I suppose I could. But why should you want it?"

I hesitated for a minute. No way to explain that I'd never had a picture painted of myself, man or dog. I hit on a partial explanation that satisfied him. "Well, you see," I said, "I spent last summer here with friends. It was the happiest time I ever had in my life, so far. A good part of it is tied up with Gertie's and seeing you and Awful ... I'd like to have the painting to remind me of all those good

times."

"That's one of the best reasons I've ever heard for buying anything," said Tyree with a huge grin. "It would really make you happy to have it, huh?"

"It sure would."

"It ain't cheap, this painting," said Tyree.

I could see him looking over the clothes I was wearing, trying to figure a proper price. I felt sad about being sized up that way. Then I thought, "Why shouldn't he get what he can from you? You look like what you are: a well-off kid from Long Island. One of the useless ones, so far as he knows. In fact, if it hadn't been for Tyree, you might have become just that."

"I don't have too much bread," I explained. "Just what I've saved from my job after school." I did some quick

mental arithmetic. "I could only pay you a hundred dollars for the picture."

"And you'd spend your savings for this painting?" asked Tyree.

"Every cent," I said. "I'll catch hell from my folks for doing it, too. They think I'm a bit strange the way it is. But money doesn't mean the same thing to me as it does to them."

Tyree smiled at me. "It never has to me, either, Arthur. You're a funny kid. I like you. I think I do remember you now that we've talked. But I still can't place your voice." He flipped his cigarette into the gutter. "Tell you what," he said. "I'll sell you this painting for seventy-five dollars, if you can wait until the art show is over. That'll give me time to make another. There's something slightly wrong with this one that I wanted to redo, anyway."

"You mean that Awful's wearing his dress-up collar and not his working clothes?" I asked, knowing that I'd made a slip. Only Tyree, Alan, and Suzy knew that expression. Tyree was eyeing me very strangely.

"Alan Marcus told me about Awful's two outfits," I said quickly. "He was very proud of the harness he'd made. He told me about it at Gertie's one night when you were onstage."

Tyree relaxed and said, "That's it exactly. It surprised me that you'd know. And you know Alan?"

"Very casually. I've always meant to go over east to his shop and look around. But I don't get into the city often lately," I lied.

My mind was racing. If Tyree cross-checked with Alan . . . "Don't be silly," I told myself. "Why should Alan remember someone he talked to a year ago at Gertie's? There were gangs of kids hanging out there on Tuesdays."

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"You don't have to go over to the East Village to see his stuff," said Tyree. "Alan's got a booth over on Sixth Avenue, just around the corner. Why don't you stop by? I was going over myself in a few minutes."

I was tempted to go. To talk with Alan, maybe hang out with him and Tyree. Then I thought of the time. I glanced at my watch and said, "I wish I could, Tyree. But I have a train to catch up at Penn Station. My folks expected me home some time ago. Tell you what. I'll give you my name and address. I don't have enough cash with me now, anyway. I'll send you a check for the painting, and you can send it to me." I reached into my wallet. "Here's twenty dollars cash deposit."

Tyree looked at the money in my outstretched hand. "You'd give me that cash without getting a receipt or the painting? That's not smart, Arthur. You could get ripped-off that way."

"I don't think you'd cheat me, Tyree," I smiled. "Not you. I've heard your song. The one that goes, 'Look with your heart and you'll see . . .' I guess that I just see you from the heart, that's all."

"Good enough for me, Arthur," said Tyree standing up. He took the painting of me down from its

hanger. He leaned it against the folding chair. Then he took out a note pad from his back pocket. He wrote something on a page, tore it out, and handed it to me.

"This is my full name and address," he said, not knowing it wasn't necessary for me. "When you get the rest of the money, send it here. I don't need this painting to make a new one. I just said that to discourage you. Figured that in two weeks you'd cool off on it. I can see now that you ain't gonna cool off. Take the painting with you. I trust you for the rest of the money."

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"I'll mail the check tonight," I said.

"Whenever," he replied. "I don't think you'd cheat me either, Arthur."

I was at a loss for words. I'd been afraid that Tyree would be changed now that he could see. But I should have known better. Tyree with eyesight was only Tyree with eyesight. Same great guy.

I stammered my thanks and walked off down the street. I didn't want Tyree to see the tears in my eyes. "So long, old buddy," I thought. "Maybe some day, somehow, we'll get together, and I'll be able to explain it all to you. If anyone could believe me, it would be you, Ty. Maybe Suzy and Alan, too."

I saw Alan at his booth as I walked to the subway station on Sixth Avenue. He was coming on hard at a chick who had a jewelry stand next to his exhibit. She looked bored. I laughed to myself. "Poor Alan. He still can't score!" Then with my portrait under my arm, I went downstairs to the subway.

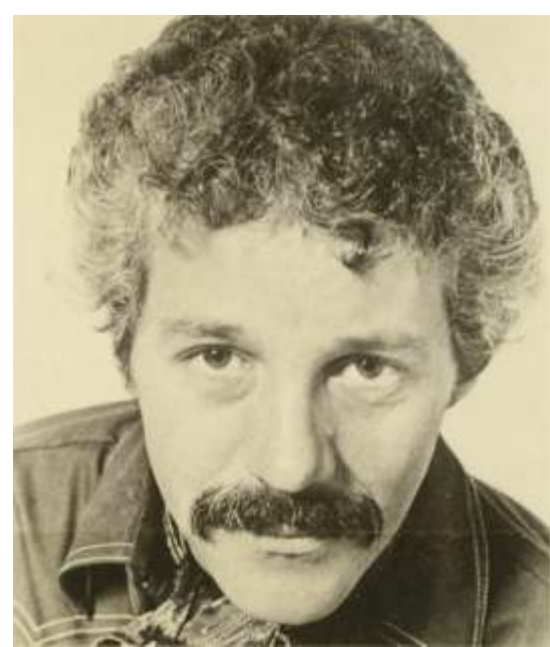


PHOTO BY BOB CAMPBELL

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# The Dog Days of Arthur Cane



**T. Ernesto Bethancourt**

