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To Sack the Dark City

THOMAS CRAWLEY, '62

THE stranger stood on the lonely strip of sand between the sea and the black marble walls of the citadel. Dressed only in white trunks, with a bulky knapsack slung over his left shoulder, the blond-haired invader had just swum more than a mile to this solitary landing. Sweeping his long, wet hair back with his two hands, he dropped to his knees, bowed his head and prayed silently to Mithra. Then he got to his feet, confident eyes sailing to the summit of the wall. Wedging into a narrow rain-groove, the soldier from Utopia began his climb into the dark city.

Dusk had almost disappeared beneath the horizon when he pulled himself over the top. Breathing heavily from the slippery ascent, he looked tensely into the shadows of nearby buildings and waited. Suddenly something touched his arm; he instinctively jerked a dagger from his bag, jumped onto a stairway and turned to face whatever man was on this height with him. A voice from the shadows whispered, "Raphael?"

The swimmer replied, "Yes?"

"We've been waiting for you." There were two men, who took him to the house of a man called Howard, the leader of the group collaborating in the Utopian plot to overthrow their government. When Raphael had dressed in the dark-colored clothes Howard had waiting for him, he took his seat at the head of the conference table.

There was little to be said. The three ministers who had declared war on the island kingdom of Utopia were to be assassinated, or delivered alive to Raphael for punish-
ment in his country. The five men whose job it was to kill, looked gravely at each other. With lowered eyes, they said a short, private prayer and left to hunt down their declared enemies: Judge Injustice, Captain Avarice and Pride, the king of the dark city.

Raphael, alone in the silent house, removed a large packet of thin, highly-gummed notices from his knapsack. In brilliant phosphorescent colors, the almost irremovable badges offered huge rewards for assassination of war-favoring officials, for desertion, for sabotage, and for instigating or abetting any other subversive activity. Throughout the night, the cautious and agile commando left his mark in places the day-lit city would marvel at. On the sheer faces of tall sky-scrapers; on valuable plate glass windows that the frantic authorities would have to smash in their desperate haste to remove the ghastly propaganda; on lamp-posts, on sewer covers, on fences; on animals and policemen's uniforms, Raphael plastered his posters with savage glee.

Smiling but weary, Raphael returned to the spot on the wall where he first entered the city. He had almost reached the top of the stone stairway when he saw the five men standing there. They were tired too, and disappointed. Howard said softly, "You lied to us, Utopian."

"Lied ... to you?"

"We found no evidence that the three men you sent us after really rule this city. When we went to the places you said they were hiding in, we found nothing. And you've made us fools in the eyes of our countrymen," explained Howard.

His exhaustion draining from him, Raphael lashed out at them, "You can tell me that Injustice is not here when your wealth-bloated capitalists revel in the misery of
the proletariat? After mass-producing want and idleness, they boast of their severity in punishing the injustice of theft. Their treatment of the poor is 'neither just nor expedient; . . . first making them thieves and then punishing them for it.'

"Look at your courts. Injustice abounds in subtle laws that permit any number of interpretations, decisions depending on the glibness and not the truth of the lawyer. 'All laws . . . are promulgated for the single purpose of teaching each man his duty.' But few men can understand your legal obscurity; and many of those who do, twist it to their own advantage. See the almost total lack of concern for men's rights, and tell me again that you cannot find Injustice here!"

The five men shifted uncomfortably and would not look at Raphael. With compassion for their shame, the speaker continued, "Avarice? Why he fosters these and manifold other injustices, substituting false material values for human worth. And Pride . . . Only Pride could so rejoice in the vain subjection of things and persons that he would make a man delight 'in the faint gleam of a little gem when he can look at some star or even the sun itself.'

"Listen, my friends, Injustice and Avarice are commanded by King Pride who derives his power from the scepter of Mammon. If we can get that rod away from him, we'll have little trouble beating the three of them. Whadda ya say?"

From the pensive and restless group, Howard asked, "Suppose we fail?"

"There are two alternate plans. The faction of Prince Humilitas has already begun to grow and with enough support could overthrow the present monarch. Or,
there's the ancient claim of sovereignty the 'Cloudlanders' could press, since those Three gave you this land to begin with."

Raphael saw that his little band was with him again. He knew that their eyes, now dulled with fatigue, would be bright for the cause tomorrow, and he said, "Your people must not deny the claims of their immortal souls nor their birth-right in eternal life. We've got to free them from these evil rulers so they can live a life of pleasant virtue in accord with the benign mandates of nature and of Mithra."

Then from the city came the noise of marching feet. Files of soldiers wearing the livery of King Pride swarmed toward the stairs on which Raphael stood. He could feel the panic that gripped his five followers, and he raised his arm in a vain attempt at comfort. Out of the corner of his eye, the Utopian saw three shadows move from the darkness near the wall. When the feeble light from the far-below street caught their faces, King Pride, flanked by Avarice and Injustice, shouted to the traitors and the spy, "You fools are surrounded. I command you to submit."

Howard saw him lift the scepter of Mammon to blast his huddled crew to ashes. The rebel threw himself across an open space and raced toward the king, reaching with angry hands for the threatening wand. Blue fire flashed up his arms and ate into his throat when he touched it. Howard toppled backwards and fell, his bleeding head dangling above the far-away street and sending slow streamers of red down the face of the stone.

As Pride raised the scepter again, Raphael urgently said to his men, "Find Humilitas, and pray! Goodbye brothers." Jagged light streamed from the rod as Raphael
raced up the marble stairs toward the rim of the city wall. The other four conspirators scattered. Raphael leaped to the top of the wall, and as the blast from Pride's scepter exploded into the stone, launched himself far out over the water. When his dive broke the surface of the sea and Raphael arrowed into its depths, he knew he was safe.

*        *        *        *

Today, as in sixteenth century England, the Utopia of St. Thomas More cries out the same vital truths that man must cling to if he would be true to himself and save his soul. But the voice of the virtuous Utopian is not of itself sufficient; when he has been heard, he can be silenced by human viciousness and forced back to an obscure neverland where men feel free to ignore him. The hearers of his voice and the acceptors of his word must tackle the task he has set, and overthrow their infamous vices by virtue and prayer.

St. Thomas stood upon the turreted walls of England and, with Utopia in his heart, defied that lecherous Pride who drove him by his two-edged scepter into the sea. Yet, from the top of every fortress-soul that looks upon that "remote and far-away" island called Utopia, the voice of Thomas More still shouts the words of rebellion. This is the summons to sack the dark city of self, to put its wicked counsellors to the sword, to raze its altars of iniquity to the ground, and build this island called "Nowhere" amid the billows of a virtuous sea.
Evocation

R. A. Leidig, '62

On the long evenings at the end of life
We sit reflectively, and think of past affliction
Dimly remembered or still painfully engraved,
While time flows warmly in an endless stream
Washing up submerged memories on the shore.

It sometimes happens then that we can take
An isolated moment from the stream
To gain instructive insights,
But the flood recedes, enveloped
In formless doubts quick-changing like the sea.

There is a sharp confluence of
Regret and memory, each striving
To govern; another force resolves these two
Serenely, in a strong and surging current
That brooks no wavering—submission to a higher Will.

PHILOSOPHICAL ATTITUDES

There's much regard
For Kierkegaard.

Take not the doctrine of Sartre
To heart.
Herodotus and a Hitchhiker

JOHN EAGLESON, '64

THE time: 9:30 a.m. The place: Norristown Interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. A huge tractor-trailer rig with "Transamerican" across its dirty sides turns off Route 422 on to the approach ramp and begins to snake its way around the clover-leaf toward the toll booth. Near the top of the incline, with its air brakes hissing, it grinds to a halt. A lone hitchhiker with a small satchel and a bedroll climbs the three steps into the cab. The GMC diesel engine whines again, the gears grind, and the truck rumbles forward . . . I was that hitchhiker. That was my first hop on a hitchhiking marathon that was to take me over 15,000 miles through 41 states.

I was not the first to attempt such an adventure. The idea is old. Over 2,500 years ago Herodotus, the father of history, trying to learn all about the world and everything in it, also fought against heavy odds. He had wondered about the people in the strangely-named towns beyond the mountains. He had wondered about the far-away places he had heard the soldiers speak of when he was young. He had wondered about the homes of the people who came from across the sea to trade with the merchants in his town. To answer his questions Herodotus went to Persia and Italy, to Arabia and Egypt, to Cyrene and the Black Sea, and through practically all the known world. Herodotus was the first sightseer. I had wondered too: about Mark Twain's Mississippi, about the Arizona Indians, about Pike's Peak, about the New Orleans French Quarter, about the giant redwoods in California. And so I traveled to dis-
cover these things for myself. "Goodbye, Mom," I said one day. "I'm going to see the world."

It wasn't easy. Herodotus knew well the disadvantages of primitive travel: he crossed burning deserts in caravans; he used the crude Greek roads; he crossed oceans in unreliable ships; he risked his life with wild beasts and bitter winters. Though my discomforting encounters were not so dramatic, I, nevertheless, in my travels of only two months, managed to get myself in some pretty miserable situations. My intention of learning the ways of the world was often severely tried.

Many of the problems I had to deal with Herodotus never had to face. He was spared from glaring old grandmothers who are shocked by the sight of your soliciting thumb, or snobbish city slickers who pretend they don't see it at all, or teen-age girls who laugh at it from their father's new Buick. Perhaps Herodotus had to wait all night in the rain for a ride, but when finally a vehicle came, he did not have to contend with the warped sense of humor of the truck driver who made my hopes soar by slowing down, but shattered them and my eardrums by a blast from his air horn and then roared away, leaving me in the spray of his passing.

Herodotus traveled perhaps not safely, but at least slowly. Even he would have abandoned his adventures if he had had to ride up the tortuous Redwood Highway in California with an untalented but courageous woman driver who insisted on going 70 on the straightaways and couldn't slow down in time for the curves. Herodotus would have gotten ulcers riding from Keokuk, Iowa, to St. Louis, Missouri, with a trucker who hadn't slept in four
Herodotus and a Hitchhiker

days but had the uncanny knack, innate to all truck drivers, of waking up just as his fifty-foot truck and its sixteen tons of steel rods were about to plunge into the Mississippi River.

Many times Herodotus must have spent an uncomfortable night, and I often shared his want of a soft mattress. I was once deposited by some thoughtful driver in Cameron, Arizona. This “town” is a gas station—a small gas station—which some imaginative cartographer thought fit to put on his map. It didn’t take me long to conclude that I was stranded. For protection from the elements that night, I slept under a bridge in a niche just about the size of a coffin. Hundreds of feet below me the Little Colorado River roared; two feet above me an occasional passing truck roared; the next day my head roared.

Not the least of my troubles was the police. It was they who once tried to squelch my Greek spirit of independence by making me take a bus out of the state and who tried to crush my Greek pride by calling me a vagrant when they found I had only $13 in my pocket. Herodotus, your trials were never so great!

But my Greek counterpart was never disturbed by the inconveniences of the primeval transportation facilities. If he saw something new, he was happy. With the simplicity and enthusiasm of a child, he tells in his histories how the Arabians cut hair and the methods the Scythians used in milking mares. He describes Ethiopian mosquito nets and Babylonian city planning. He was interested in everything that happens in the world. Although the whole world is a little larger than one summer’s hitchhiking allowed, I still was able to get a candid cross section of at least
the United States. Drivers unloaded their troubles on me; they shared their happiness with me; they tried to convert me. I saw many of the major points of interest in the country, and the natives I traveled with often gave me inside stories on places the guide books don’t list.

On Route 11 North near Birmingham, Alabama, a nineteen-year-old Southern gentleman and his younger sister gave me a ride. Southern hospitality they had in abundance, and I was treated to a day of sight-seeing and amusement in Birmingham. But I saw more than Birmingham’s famous statue of Vulcan that day. For the first time I saw what the Southern mind thinks of the Negro. With the candor of youth we exchanged our ideas on civil rights and segregation. They told me about the activities of their father, a member of the Ku Klux Klan. The boy told me that in the factory where he worked a white would not take a job a colored man had held. I heard from the Southern belle that her grandfather had once filled a Negro full of buckshot, and she was proud of it. The prejudice is generations deep, and these people know nothing else. I was able to understand—a little—why they don’t want integration, and my contempt for their ideas was changed to pity.

In Louisiana a zealous member of the Baha’i religion—a sect I had never even heard of—drove me from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. He told me that his people have a religion that is the perfection of all others, and of course a lively discussion ensued, in which he learned a few Catholic tenets. We were both broadened by the conversation.

I talked with a lumberjack in Vancouver, Washington. He worked with his hands and was proud of it. That
week a redwood tree eleven feet in diameter had succumbed to his chain saw. (They no longer use axes.) David telling of his fight with Goliath never beamed as this Northwoodsman did when he told me of his triumph.

Truckers on the turnpikes from Boston to Chicago often gave me rides. They usually travel by night. They are always tired, and it was my responsibility to keep them awake by shouting inane remarks over the roar of the 250 horsepower diesel engine that sat obnoxiously between us. Eighteen hours a day, six days a week, these men ply the pikes from New York to Terre Haute, or Detroit to Baltimore. "Why don't you sleep?" I asked one red-eyed driver. "You're gonna kill yourself someday." By his answer, I knew that he had been caught up by the American spirit. "We gotta make a living too," he replied.

I saw the plight of coal miners in West Virginia. Either the mines were no longer operating, or they were mechanized. Hundreds were jobless but too deeply implanted in their rural West Virginian life to move their families to an industrial city. The towns are living ghost towns, slums deep in the mountains. I talked with the natives here, and I could see in their eyes and their wrinkled foreheads the sadness that comes from watching a home slowly crumble.

In Salt Lake City, Utah, a Mormon family entertained me for a weekend. I saw the Mormon Tabernacle, famous for its organ, acoustics, and choir. I swam in Great Salt Lake, where old ladies fall asleep while floating on their backs, and little children scream when the briny water surprises their skinned knees. Here I got a brief glimpse of the life of these Latter-day-Saints. I knew people whose
religion was their way of life, who each gave two of their best years as voluntary foreign missioners, who are never alone in times of distress, but are supported financially and morally by the whole Mormon community. Before my visit I had connected Mormons only with polygamy.

I didn't travel as far as Herodotus, and my perception and insight were not as keen as his. But I was able to capture his Greek spirit of a genuine interest in people and places. Rainy nights and sleepy truck drivers are passing inconveniences, but my knowledge of Americans and American problems and entertainment and customs will stay with me always.
Though I Am Young

Terrence Doody, '65

Though I am young, I often think
Of the youth that I have passed,
And what I would have done with it
Had I known it wouldn't last.

If I had seen its fragile charm,
Its easy state of grace,
Would I have stopped to smell a rose,
Or let the rain play on my face?

Or is this curse of blindness, too,
A blessing in disguise,
That lets me sit and think of things
I'd seen with sightless eyes;
And live within myself again
The time that had gone by
When I was free and unaware
That someday I must die?
Autumn

TERRENCE DOODY, '65

It is autumn,
and the leaves are falling now
like confetti from the trees.

And here beneath my feet,
they sing their dirge,
and sign to me
a moment passed, and gone.
For like the earth,
I too prepare to die.

But as I walk
the thought occurs to me:
Without this autumn
would never come the spring.
JUST the other day at work I was discussing skin diving with a fellow reporter when he happened to mention the fact that Burt Mason had sold his interest in Sub-Marine Research Associates, the group planning to raise the German submarine *U-853* which is sunk off Block Island.

This amazed me because everytime Burt and I had been together he expressed a boundless confidence and enthusiasm that, with the needed money on hand, the sub could be raised from where it had been depth charged to death May 6, 1945. For years he had shown the courage and stubbornness of a Don Quixote in meeting the problems and difficulties that had arisen about his project and now all he would say was “I’ve had a bellyful of the submarine.” At least that’s all he would say over the telephone, but I felt he had to by lying for raising that U-boat had come to mean everything to him.

Later, as we talked over lunch at Ballard’s Isle, he said that he had been forced to sell stock in his company in order to raise much-needed money. For various reasons, I got the impression that Burt had been forced out of the company he had founded and out of the one project that had represented life itself to Burt for so long. As we wasted away the afternoon over highballs, Burt reminisced about some of his adventures hunting the sunken sub, and, he also recalled in his collection of tales—this made me quite proud—the day I had gone out with him over two years ago.
It was an early Saturday morning around the beginning of August and it was already very warm when I boarded Burt’s 38-foot cabin cruiser, *Summer Palace*, at Point Judith. All the gear had been put aboard the afternoon before, so Burt and two other scuba divers, Ray Morrow and Peter Schmey had been waiting for me to arrive.

As the boat pulled away from the dock, I began to get tense because, until that time, I had done very little diving and most of that had been done in tropical waters. As a matter of fact, I had been diving in Rhode Island waters only three times before and never below fifty feet. It was an ideal day for deep sea diving for when we tied up to the buoy marking the submarine two hours later, the ocean was as smooth and calm as a mill pond.

On the way out Burt started to spin tales of valuable treasure aboard and also one about top German leaders
using the U-853 to escape the onslaught of the Allied armies. He told a great deal about the sub's past in order to while away the time and I was so captivated by the U-boat's history that I have since done some checking on my own.

Burt explained that the U-853, a seven-hundred forty-ton IX-C class submarine had been commissioned June 25, 1943 and had made her first war patrol from Kiel in 1944. In mid-Atlantic on May 25 of that year the U-boat, under the command of Helmut Sommers, sighted the Queen Mary, but even though the sub surfaced in an attempt to catch the Queen, she was not fast enough. Instead, three British planes attacked the U-853, but she fought back with anti-aircraft fire until she was able to crash dive to the safety of the deep. On June 15, United States Navy planes spotted the sub and a battle similar to the one of May 25 was fought with the same results.

Toward the end of the month the elusive U-boat was caught on the surface transmitting information to Germany and although she was attacked by a score of Navy planes and six destroyers, Sommers, whose crew now called him "Der Seiltaenzer" — The Tightrope Walker — again was able to get his boat and crew out of a close situation. Sommers lived up to his nickname. Although he had been wounded in twenty-eight places, he skippered his ship deep below the seas, evading the ships and planes that were hunting him, all the way back to Lorient, France.

On February 23, 1945, the refitted U-853, now snorkel equipped, sailed under the command of Helmut Froemsdorf, who at twenty-four, was the oldest man aboard. Although the sub-killing techniques of the U. S. Navy had
been vastly improved, the U-boat managed to reach the East Coast and worked her way south into her assigned area, the Rhode Island waters off southern New England, late in the month of April.

Although Froemsdorf must have known that Germany was being defeated, he remained undetected in his patrol area off Block Island and the mouth of Narragansett Bay. He must have known how near he was to the Newport destroyer base and the risks he ran, but when the small collier, SS. Black Point, bound for Boston with a load of soft coal, appeared on the afternoon of May 5, familiar preparations were made, firing switches were closed and a torpedo streaked away.

The explosion tore off forty feet of the collier’s stern. She filled, settled by the stern, rolled to port and slid below the waves within twenty-five minutes with twelve men still on board. The collier, which went down just four miles off Point Judith, had been without escort, nor had she been zigzagging for the area had been considered free of enemy submarines. This was the first, and, as it turned out, the last kill of the U-853. The collier was also the last ship sunk by the forces of Nazi Germany.

The SS. Kamen, a merchantman picking up survivors from the Black Point, sent out an SOS on the torpedoing and the location of the Black Point. The message was picked up by the Coast Guard frigate Moberly and two Navy destroyer escorts, Amick and Atherton. The ships, which were thirty miles south of the sinking, raced north and arrived at the scene at 7:30 p.m.

A search of the area was planned on the assumption that the German skipper would try to run out of the imme-
diate area and find a spot where he could safely lie on the bottom for the night. Off the southeast point of Block Island, nine miles south of the sinking of the *Black Point*, is a steeply rising shoal known as East Ground. It was felt that the U-boat might lie alongside the shoal in an attempt to escape detection. Also, there was a wreck in the area which might further confuse the search.

The *Atherton*, which picked up the U-boat on her sonar, began the attack at 8:30 when she dropped thirteen magnetic depth charges. As the *Atherton* made a second run with hedgehogs, the *Amick* left the scene bound for Boston. A second hedgehog attack was begun immediately, but the *Atherton* lost contact with the U-boat and she did not again, till three hours later, make sonar contact with the *U-853* a mile east of the first attack scene. She made an attack with hedgehogs and right after, oil, air bubbles and pieces of splintered wood rose to the surface. The *Atherton* now made two depth charge runs over the sub which was lying dead on the bottom in only one hundred ten feet of water, but on the second run the Navy ship was temporarily crippled by her own depth charges. The water was now covered with oil, wood, dead fish, life jackets and a wooden flagstaff.

Taking up the attack was the *Moberly*, but, to her surprise, she discovered that the U-boat was again on the move at a speed of five knots. She attacked with depth charges and then retired to repair the damage done to her steering gear. Both ships, having experienced strong pounding from their own depth charges, decided to retire till dawn.

In the morning, before the attacks began again, sail-
ors discovered German escape lungs, life jackets, rafts and a large amount of oil floating on the surface. Also at dawn, two blimps arrived to aid in the attack.

An unusual plan of attack was devised. Three ships, one after another, made depth charge runs on the U-853. The first ship passed over the sub, dropped her charges and drifted off to repair her steering and sonar gear. She was followed by the second and third ships, which also drifted off for repairs. By the time the third ship finished her attack, the first one was repaired and ready to begin the cycle again. The blimps also attacked the German U-boat with seven-inch rocket bombs. The U-853 died the day before VE Day eight miles southeast of Block Island. This was the last naval battle fought in the Atlantic.

Burt broke off his tale for a while in order to check the course against the charts and to change his clothes. In a little while he returned top side wearing just a bathing suit, sat down, and resumed his fascinating tale.

Ever since the ship was sunk, rumors of treasure on her have been circulating, Burt continued. One of the stories has it that the U-boat was carrying flasks of mercury ballast or other valuables, including United States currency, to be used for exchange purposes in a neutral port. Also, it is known for a fact that there were fifty-eight men aboard the U-853, ten more than the normal war complement for this type of U-boat. Were they members of the Nazi high command trying to escape a crumbling Nazi Germany?

We discovered a large depression just over the captain's cabin, Burt went on. The depression was caused by dynamite set off by Oswald Bonefay, a commercial salvage
operator, several years ago. It seems Mr. Bonefay was under the impression that there was a fortune in American currency in a waterproof strongbox in the captain's quarters, but he failed to break through the hull plates.

We will never know the complete, true story of *U-853* until the U-boat is raised and its log is found, but . . . Burt broke off his sentence as Ray Morrow, who was at the helm, cut back the engines. There was work to be done and Burt got right to it as the craft glided in toward the large red buoy marking the *U-853*. Pete hooked the eye bolt on top of the buoy with a pike and within minutes our diving platform was secured to the big steel ball. We hauled all the skin diving gear aft and began to suit up for the dive. Ray and Pete were to go first and when they returned in forty-five minutes, Burt and I would dive down the one hundred twenty-seven feet to the famed U-853.

After helping Pete strap on his air tanks and check his breathing gear, I heard him splash over the side. I watched him go down following Ray. Down and down they went till they were swallowed up by the black water.
April Twenty-Fourth
Richard Kentile, '62

On April twenty-fourth
The Lord his soul called forth.
So sudden was his flight
To the vision of sweet light.
Our hearts were rent by grief
Almost without relief
Save by the thought that he
From toil and sorrow free
At last attained the End
To which his will did tend.
Revered by all, both great and small,
To men he was all things, as Paul
Commands a holy priest to be.
Rejoice, weep not, rejoice, for he
Who lived in constant charity
Now contemplates the One in Three.

"Vita mutatur
et non tollitur
tuis fidelibus."
Spencer Monastery

Richard Kentile, '62

Dedicated to Saint Bernard
And to his sons at Spencer,
Also to the holy Bernard
Belov'd Bishop of Worcester

S  ilent secluded enclosure where prayer unceasingly ascends,
P  eace on all those Christlike men her reign extends,
E  difice sacred, reproach the giddy world for its dissipation,
N  arrate to it the wonders of peace and contemplation;
C  itadel of sanctity where all pursue perfection,
E  ducator of saints thy doctrine is "Serve God without defection";
R  epeat to worldly minded souls that holy exhortation.

M  assive is thy marble altar on which Calvary is renewed;
O  bsurely here men live their lives beneath the Holy Rood;
N  umeros are the hours of labor and oration;
A  t morn at noon at night arise the cries of impetration,
S  torming heaven pleading "Mercy, spare O Lord, all sinful nations."
T  hat which drew them here was thought of Christ's injunction.
E  ither serve Me or mammon! Which? I brook not heart's division!
R  ejoicingly they chose the Christ! Lips with seven words were fraught:
Y  our Face, Lord, since youth we've sought.
Briefings on Boredom

(The author chooses to remain anonymous lest he be ostracized even by himself.)

Are you a bore? From my own personal experience I've concluded that probably if you fear you are, you're not. If it never occurs to you that you might be, there's a hazardous chance that you are, for the most arresting trait of the bore is his unconsciousness of the fact that he is one. He is too self-satisfied, too insensitive, or too busy entertaining himself to be concerned with his effect on others.

The diversity of bores is enormous. One of the worst, or best, depending on the point of view, is the narrator who starts his story with his grandmother, explores every branch of his family tree, and ends up with remote descendants, while his listeners sit around in a state of courteous, helpless endurance.

I also shrink from the jokester bore: you have only to lay eyes on him to see "Have you heard this one?" breaking to the surface. We all know the hypochondriac bore who draws up symptoms from a yawning abyss and is never happier than when given a stitch-by-stitch account of that last operation. I dread too the checkmate bore—it is almost always a male—who interrupts the mildest statement with a "now wait a minute" and proceeds to put the offender in his right place. And there is the snob bore who manages to inject famous names into every other sentence. He often does know the people he talks about, but it's that old inferiority complex that make him bulwark himself with a vicarious importance.
Briefings on Boredom

The bore most often begins nauseating his associates with "I remember" and with special emphasis on the "I." So it's a good idea, when one finds oneself remembering too much too often—especially about the folks back home—to hold off. Take to heart the counsel of Thomas Fuller, who way back in the 17th century admonished: "Make not thy own person, family, relations of friends the frequent subject of thy talk. Say not, 'My manner and custom is to do this; I am apt to be troubled with corns; my child said such a witty thing last night.'"

Not every bore is talkative; there is the strong, silent bore. In his own household he glooms his family into an awestruck hush; at dinner parties he never opens his mouth except to put something into it. I once overheard a young lady who, seated next to a bore of this kind, ask briskly, "Are you going to entertain me, Mr. X, or must I give my mind to the food?"

Nor is every bore inanimate. We have all known the bright bore who appropriates the conversation and sweeps his listeners into a state of coma. To the bystander who recognizes the type, the presence of this bright bore can become intolerable. On the other hand, quite simple people can inspire others and by a little push of their genuine interest keep the social ball rolling. The familiar statement that good listeners make for good talkers is certainly true. By their lively interest, courtesy and sensitivity, they are the real life of the party, whereas the brilliant egotist often smothers it to death.

Of course it cannot suffice to be a good listener; if we all listened, we would live in universal silence. And indeed it is no kindness to encourage bores by too much
"politeness." A gentle but firm hand can sometimes prune a budding bore to a reasonable growth. My ex-girl friend once had her own system of signals by which she would warn me that I had told that story before or that (perhaps) I had talked long enough.

A common type of bore is one who has acquired mental and physical mannerisms or tricks of speech. His friends have to brace themselves to relive the shopworn cliché, the piercing whistle, the repeated "you know?" Recently I caught myself interjecting "I mean" in every other sentence. I set to work and have almost eradicated the irritating habit.

We often laugh at the bore; but ennui is no laughing matter. It is a serious, infectious, gripping sickness. Certainly it explains much marital unhappiness. Men and women, who during their days of the billet-doux and the valentine, gave of their best to keep each other happy and interested, slack off after marriage so that home becomes a dull place from which they are only too eager to break free. The grim toll of accidents during national holidays and vacations is at least partly due to the intoxication of speed and risk as an antidote to the real poison of boredom which is in ourselves.

Can the bore be cured? Yes, if the individual recognizes his malady before it becomes chronic. He must watch himself for symptoms and, once alerted to the danger, he must take measures against it. One of the best is to stay alive and interested, not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the world around him, and to contribute to them.

I know that after a hard day's work it is difficult not to relax; not to let one's mind, figuratively speaking, lie
around in its shirt sleeves. But no one is ever as tired as he thinks he is; and rest, properly understood, is a change of activity rather than a slump into passivity. It is no accident that the man who expends himself most, even in a dull job, is the man who has most left to expend in his own home. Never bored himself, he seldom bores others. In short, to be interested is to be interesting; to be alive oneself is to make others feel alive—and grateful.

A man who makes things in his workshop is less likely to be bored than the man who spends his evenings yawning his way through the comics. A man who teaches his children to play games in the back yard is happier and healthier than the man who sits glued to the television watching other men play games. A man who takes his children on country hikes and teaches them and himself something of country lore is much less likely to be bored than the man who rushes his family along the highway with droves of other escapees.

Often there is boredom in too much ease. We have been deprived of the hardships that kept our fathers on their toes, every faculty extended, and have acquired the notion that work, which is the salt of life, is a burden to be discarded at the earliest opportunity, leaving us with leisure in which to find out how poorly equipped we are to use it.

What we do, what we are, what we make of ourselves decides not only the quality of our own lives but that of those around us. If a man develops his talents, his capacity to use and enjoy the many new opportunities for growth within everyone’s reach, his family, his environment catch the fire from him. He may seem to himself but a cog in the mechanics of time, but he is also a master craftsman and a creator in the greatest of all arts—the art of living. As such, he will be neither bored nor boring.