

# Midnight Excursion

CHARLES BALL

"Are you asleep, Jack?"  
"No. These wide open spaces smother me. I wish we were back in the mountains where breathing is involuntary."

Both boys listened as a host of shrill-voiced frogs argued boisterously with the effeminate consistency of the rippling lake. The hot air seemed to be held in place by invisible walls and packed with merciless hands; yet it was labor to breathe.

"What time is it?"  
"About one o'clock, I guess."  
"Punch Grit and see if he's awake."

A shower of sand drifted down as the sag in the bunk above shifted to one side, and a sweaty brow crossed the broad shaft of white moonlight streaming through the screened walls.

"I'm awake," he muttered de-  
spondently.

"Is Mr. Bruce?"  
"He's the one that sounds like a circular ripsaw with the hiccups."  
"I wonder if he'd wake up if we slipped out?"

"Naw. Anybody that can sleep in this weather with pajamas and two blankets on can sleep through a tornado."

"Say, how about going for a moonlight swim?"

"Naw. I tried that last night. It's too warm—just like taking a bath."

"I wish we were across the lake at Crystal Beach, riding the roller coaster."

"Hey, let's go!"  
"Sh! Do you want to wake up 'Old Hoppy'?"

"Okay, okay! But he would at least stir up a breeze."

"You pipe down and listen to me. I've got an idea; we can put on our trunks and slippers, walk to the beach, get a rowboat, and go out in the middle of the lake where it's much cooler."

"I'm with you!"  
"Me, too."

"Okay. Now don't step in anybody's face as you come down . . ."

and don't slam that screen door!"  
"Are we going around the road or skirt the lake?"

"What's the matter? Are you nutty or something? It's over five miles by the road."

Jack strode into the curtains of Spanish moss.

"Jack, I think we'd better not go that way."

"Why not?"  
"I saw a lot of cotton-mouths hanging in the moss yesterday. One nearly dropped into the boat from a big cypress near camp."

"Aw, you're just a big chicken; it was probably just a harmless—"

A splash a few feet away interrupted him. "On second thought, if we stuck to the road we might get a lift."

## The Defeated

With blind eyes  
We seek  
Our aspirations,  
And with tottering bodies  
Languish  
Amid the indomitable forces  
Of chaos and fate.  
Thus, our visions  
Are dissipated  
Into the void  
And our fantastic desires  
Blown  
Like so many seed  
Before the tempest.  
Crushed to earth  
We struggle to rise,  
To draw ourselves a fraction nearer  
Our destination.  
But helplessly we lie,  
While distant trumpets reiterate  
Through the valleys  
The glory of the victors,  
Until loving death claims  
Our broken souls,  
And we revive our quest  
Once more.

BILL PARKER

"That's the best idea yet," Grit said as they

ly and calmly away from  
"The brush might be further on that we could much time anyhow," remaining looking back at his heels

All three were going pace, thoroughly discussing the advantages of "sticking to and trying not to act seconds later they were white sand almost to the

"Don't you think we reached the road by now?" Grit between pants.

"Yes," said Jack, as he a jog trot. "This land is can't tell for sure how come."

"I wish we could find a spring."

"I wish I'd worn enough to keep these blasted away."

"I wish you guys were griping."

"Guess you're right. Use our heads or we'll get lost!"

"Ha! That's a real laugh!"

Nobody laughed.  
Ninety dog-flies and a sandburrs later three tired naked figures dropped to

"I'm tired."  
"I'm starved."  
"I'm hotter than ever— as uncomfortable."

"We must be going in if I don't know where ing?"

"Do you?"  
"Sure."  
"Then where is the should've reached long ago"

"A few yards straight there?"  
"Then what are those there?"

"That's-- that's-- Crystal They all jumped to their

"I told you I knew what doing."

They all broke into a burst into camp as the sounded reveille.