

Tragedy Of Youth

MONTE BISHOP

As they rounded the corner, Skipper fumbled for his billfold. When they entered the pharmacy, Mr. Gimble peered at them from behind his thick bifocals.

"How about giving me change for a buck, Pop?" While Mr. Gimble counted out the change, Skipper glanced at himself in the big mirror that hung behind the counter. Nervously, he rubbed the short down on his chin, that promised to be a beard in the near future. As he surveyed the wiry, blond hair and freckled visage, he began to wonder what could be done to enhance his appearance.

"If only I was handsome like Carl," he mumbled to himself as he gratefully accepted the change Mr. Gimble held out to him. As he turned away from the counter, Skipper observed that Carl was already deeply engaged in conversation in the telephone booth.

"Mr. Gimble, may I use your private phone?"

"Well, if it's urgent, help yourself."

While walking toward the back where the phone was located, Skipper rapidly began reviewing in his mind the events of the year. He had been elected to the all-state football team, and the coach at Tech had offered him a full scholarship. He found the phone and dialed the number that had become so familiar. A buzz was the only response. The line was busy.

"If I go to Tech," he mumbled, "I will only get to see her at long intervals. On the other hand, if I could swing a scholarship at State, I could see her regularly."

Lifting the receiver from its cradle, again, he began to dial. This time he could hear the phone ringing.

"How is my favorite girl? . . . Look, I just wanted to ask if you are wearing my favorite color tonight? . . . What kind of change in plans? . . . Are you trying to tell me that you are going to the banquet with that string bean instead of going with me? . . . O. K., if that's the way you want it, there is only one

thing left for me to do. I cannot stand the agony of thinking of you with him."

With these words, Skipper slammed the receiver down and rushed out the backdoor. Dejectedly, he kicked at the pavement as he walked along. "How can I go to the banquet tonight?" he mumbled. After what seemed like hours, he came to the walk leading to his home. Slowly, he plodded to the front porch and slumped down on the front steps. With his chin resting on his folded hands, he sat thinking of what he must do. The idea seemed strange and foreign to this blond youth, but he knew that there was no way around it. She had had her chance. Now, she would be sorry. As these thoughts ran through his mind, Skipper pressed his face deep into the palm of his hand. The evening sun was sinking fast in the west. Now, was the hour. He could not wait any longer. Mother and Dad would be home shortly.

With grim determination, he arose and started into the kitchen. He walked, he rubbed his eyes, trying to think of how it could be done. Halfway through the door, the idea hit him. Dad's old razor would be the perfect solution. He would never use it again. Nervously, he glanced at the door as he hurried to the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. Time was running out. Mom and Dad would be home any minute. It had to be done. To relieve the dry feeling in his throat, he opened the door. A woman came over him, washed his face. Then, she took the razor from the chest. With grim determination, he studied the gleaming blade. His hand began shaking, but he gathered new courage when he saw the name on the handle. Judy. Now, she would be a man. With only a nick on the red blood began to flow. The door opening behind him. In a voice that seemed to come from the sky, Mrs. Burns screamed, "All right, Mr. Burns said in a voice, "Mary! control yourself. You have only a nick on the cheek. It might call it the nick of time. A boy's first shave marks the beginning of manhood."

Drink, My Soul!

Drink, my soul, while beauty yet quenches thy thirst
Lest, of such emotions, I dissolve to nothingness.
Only yesterday sedges and rushes escaped the eye as commonplace,
For season had caused refreshing flowerage to disappear.
Yet tonight, God awakens nature to beautify,
And a universe of cold white petals clothes the world.
Thrill, my soul, to cool, intoxicating freshness,
For tomorrow living creatures will stir from settled expressions
And amuse themselves.

—JULA MAE ROYAL