

# The Debut

OREN TRIPLET

The traffic was thick, and no one seemed to be in any kind of a rush except the young man in the little blue Ford convertible. Nervous perspiration prickled out along the sides of his face and in the palms of his hands. He wondered at the stupidity of every driver crammed into the wide streets of uptown New York, which now seemed no broader than an alley.

At last the trip was completed and with a few final lefts and rights, the Ford pulled to a halt in the alleyway behind Town Hall. Joseph Brent's moist hand quickly grasped the handle of the door; and in an instant he had unfolded his long legs, and was standing at the car's side locking it. Four or five long strides and he was at the stage door smiling at the doorman as he quickly strode by.

"Good luck tonight, Son," said the little bald man as he winked and crinkled up his wrinkled cheeks in a broad grin.

"Thanks a lot," replied the slender youth, "Say a little prayer for me, will you, Pop?"

"Sure thing, Son, sure thing," and the old man winked again as he turned back to checking a list thumb tacked to the bulletin board on the wall beside his tiny age-worn desk.

Joseph headed for a room at the end of the corridor. One twist of the shiny, brass doorknob, and he was inside the dressing room. He paused for a moment and looked at the knob. A thought flashed through his mind. "How many great musicians have opened this door? Will I be among them tonight?"

Quickly he pushed these thoughts from his mind and found his way to the stage which was already set for the concert. The long, ebony, grand piano sat silent-

ly in the center of the stage with its lid raised. He crossed the stage and once seated, he began to play the scales and arpeggios with which he always began each practice session. First the major scales, then the minor ones! Up and down the keyboard his fingers flew, firmly striking each key as they passed. As he became absorbed in his practice, his nervousness began to fade. Before he knew it, the time was 7:30 p. m., only forty-five minutes to go, so he returned to the dressing room and changed to evening clothes.

"Ten minutes till curtain time, Mr. Brent," said a voice through the door.

"I'm ready. I'll be right there," he called back.

Opening the door, he once again approached the stage. From the wing he could hear the people chattering and milling about as they sought to find their seats quickly. Then the house lights went down, and in a moment the curtain began to part, revealing the same stage and piano on which he had just spent the last hour and a half warming up. However, the stage was now bathed in a pale blue light with a white spotlight leveled on the piano stool, creating a large white ball on the wall at the back of the stage. The audience was completely quiet, waiting for him to appear.

He closed his eyes for a second, took a deep breath and stepped out on the stage. As he appeared, polite applause rose from the audience. He crossed the stage and seated himself at the piano. All signs of nervousness were gone; he was calm and relaxed as he began to play the soft opening bars of *La Campanella* by Paganini-Liszt. The notes rang out like bells as he deftly and artistically performed this magnificent work.

As he played, he forgot about the large number of people seated in the majestic Town Hall. He forgot he was even in New York; he was back at college diligently working for perfection in his practice room. His hands were cool

# Higher Air

LARRY FRANCIS

I would like to recall a certain moment in my life. I reached a great height and help whatsoever. I was at an early age and had set my mind on climbing to the top of a peak without the help of others.

I found it very difficult to climb at first because the ledges were so far apart, and I was unable to reach the next one. Finally I began to climb and each time would get higher. I had made plans for how I would reach the top without climbing without giving up. I headed back down. I was from one ledge to the other between efforts. I finished my journey and was on the first ledge. I rested a while then ventured on to the next ledge. So far I was successful. I finally got to the third ledge and then on the fourth I rested. Because of the steep fourth ledge, I rested a while longer. At last I reached the top. I was the proudest in the world. I had climbed my high chair all by myself.

and dry as they slid easily over the keyboard creating a smooth sound which caused the listener to listen more intently.

Suddenly he finished. He lifted his hands from the piano and he could hear thunder. But it was not thunder as he realized it was all those people applauding him at his Town Hall debut as a concert pianist. The sound grew louder and he heard voices shouting, "bravo, bravo." He stood as he did so, the applause grew louder. It poured down on his ears with a deafening roar. It thrilled him to his very soul. He stood for several minutes and took his seat again at the piano to wait for silence so that he could continue his concert.