

First Steps In The "New World"

—By MONIKA KOLAR

It was a most wonderful moment for me when I could leave the "Seven Seas" at last and feel solid ground, American ground, under my feet, after having lived on a swaying ship for ten days.

I arrived at New York, and my first impression was that everybody was really speaking American, a language I could hardly understand with my poor school-English, and that the Americans are most friendly and helpful people. I am sure my suit cases and I would have been separated if there hadn't been some nice people who helped me in the right bus and assured me that I need not bother about anything now. Till this moment I haven't seen anything of New York; when we arrived it was foggy, and one could see the Statue of Liberty and the skyscrapers of Manhattan only with great imagination. And even now, sitting in the bus and peeping through the windows, I got just a glimpse of New York and the beautiful buildings of Washington, D. C.

Our bus raced along the highways with great speed, even at night. At the first station we were welcomed by parents who were eagerly awaiting their European children.

We all went into the restaurant to gain some strength for the next hours of the ride. It was the first time in my life I saw plenty of food and had nearly to leave hungry, because I didn't know what to choose, having never seen this kind of food before. I was on the point of choosing dishes after the most beautiful color, when the women behind the desk, recognizing in what a mess I was, filled up my plate with things which tasted as good as the colors of the others were pretty.

At last we arrived at our destination. I wouldn't have dreamt of being welcomed as heartily by everybody. I am very happy and excited, but a little nervous too, coming into such a big country on the other side of the ocean, and quite alone; but you feel so comfortable at once when you see everybody trying to understand you and to help you, and when they don't mind when you say wrong things on wrong occasions. I never had the feeling of being away from home so far, because everybody treated me as one of his friends, not as a guest.

Since my first stay in Lexington I have met so many people and learned so many names that I often didn't know to which name I should put a special face. But obviously the others remembered me, because, when I was racing along the corridors of our school and trying to find room 14 in the new building, they guided me safely to the class I belonged. This school is a "little" bigger than the school I have been attending in Vienna and a lot different; but I enjoy it very much and I hope I will get familiar with it soon. I am so happy to be there, and every day I see more reasons why my friends had envied me so much. More and more I am realizing the privilege of being in America!

A Typical Day

By JEANNETTE TURNER

Get up at seven.
It's sure not heaven.
Get washed! Get dressed! Hurry!
My, oh my, what a scurry!
Hurry and eat. You're not going to make it!
Sometimes I think I just can't take it.
Finally, looking only half alive
At senior high school I arrive.
Study hall comes first. What a treat!
This is one course that's hard to beat.
Then comes English. I'm in a maze.
Let's see. Is this a clause or is it a phrase?
Third comes health. What a joy to play
And stop and rest at least once a day.
Algebra is fourth. This I really enjoy,
Although a few brains I must employ.
Next comes lunch. Boy, am I glad
After the scanty breakfast I had.
French is sixth. It's such a chore
To struggle from parapluie to l'amour.
Last is science. Here we study everything from ants
To the most modern electrical power plants.
At last 3:15 is here!
All together, let's give a cheer!
Then away to my job I go
Every day be it rain, sleet, or snow.
Ah, 5:30 at last. Now I can go home and eat.
Boy, it sure feels good to rest my feet.
But I can't rest long, there's homework to do.
It seems as though I'll never get through.
Now get washed. Get dressed. Get ready for bed.
I feel just like a huge hunk of lead.
Ah, finally comes sweet, restful sleep.
If only this feeling I could keep,
But I know it soon must end.
I'll have to do it all again.
But when all is said and done
In a strange sort of way, it's kinda fun!

And Away Beyond

—SUSAN KEATS SECHRIST

Bleak grayness of a rain-filled sky covered the city with a lingering depression. Water ran in countless little rivers off the dirty sidewalks filling the gutters with violent, rushing streams. Traffic, moving slowly, with a dull, muted noise could be heard from a distant direction; then, only rain and an occasional rumble of thunder. Monotonous days of dreary weather had imprisoned this city, ordinarily abundant with the hustled confusion of a busy metropolis; and now, for many blocks, a lone figure made the slush, slush sound of footsteps in the rain.

Funny how aloneness makes one suddenly small, maybe because of gigantic surroundings or the vastness of this rapidly moving maze of people, automobiles, under a jungle of towering skyscrapers. And still, there was the rain, steady — never stopping. Maybe too, deeper than all of these things and more profound there was an emptiness filled with loneliness an insuppressible longing. As he walked on, block after block, endless rows of broken, ugly brownstone houses paraded before him. Children, white and colored, laughing and crying, were playing in the streets. He had been one of those, one of the lesser ones because he wasn't one of the white, and he remembered — how he remembered: the ugliness, the filth, the insufferable feeling of being inferior even to those others who had only the color of their skin and perhaps life itself to be thankful for. Still he had envied them, and still he did. The envy had been bearable only because he knew that someday, somehow he would rise above the shame and the filth, and then he would be a person who was truly living, not just existing.

Diligence, unbelievable perseverance, and plain hard work had sent him through school, then with scholarships, college, and finally, to California to study at Granston, his goal since he had struck his first note on a piano. That had been his joy — music. He had never had his own piano, not until now, when it didn't matter.

That first year on the coast had been full of wonderment, strangeness, work and more work; and, at last, he had been rewarded with achievement and praise — only a little now and then. Equality belonged too, for there people had cared only about musicians, and music; and he was a musician, not somebody of another race to be looked down on, or to be indifferent to, but a man doing what he loved most and doing it with unimaginable skill. People had admired him, and he had found friends, not only in his work, but outside, too, where people were together because they liked each other and enjoyed being together. He had recognized security, happiness, and the warmth that comes from actually belonging, perhaps for the first time.

At the music conservatory concerts had been a constant highlight of each week of study. Everyone sat engrossed for hours listening to a variety of famous persons and occasionally to someone, perhaps not famous, but genuinely talented. Such a night with just a person as that was an undying memory to him. He had never been quite so deeply touched or inspired as he had been that night. He was only able

to sit and to try to recapture the loveliness of the hauntingly beautiful music he had heard. So he had merely remained seated as an appreciative audience had filed out; then, all was silent. Unable to move or to speak before, he had finally left his seat, and had walked to the piano, standing alone on the dark stage. His fingers had fallen softly on the keys, and a longing to play had engulfed his soul. So he had played . . . his song, the one he had written, slowly, gradually, the one that only he had heard. When the last note had resounded through the empty theatre, he turned to face an invisible audience. Then he had seen her, standing alone; she was hauntingly beautiful, too. He could only stare, spellbound with the night and the girl, who was partially visible through the moonlight that had cast a thousand tiny shadows and had made the world seem misty and unreal. She had finally spoken, softly, slowly, about the music and how she had stayed, unwilling to leave, and how she listened to him. Then he had looked away to the outside, to the glittering stars in a velvet sky, to the people, and everyone seemed to be a boy and a girl, walking . . . maybe to someplace important, but mostly just walking. He had crossed the stage abruptly and walked up the aisle until he stood next to her, and she turned to face him, a little puzzled at first; then, as if by some simple understanding, they had walked away together.

After this they had grown close, and occasional meetings had become long walks where they could be alone and where they could talk and enjoy being with the one that had become so terribly important. Both of them had smiled and laughed, maybe really for the first time. Of course their differences were wide: she had been born to the abundant treasures of life, his front yard was the slums; she had had everything of materialistic value, he had worked ceaselessly merely to stay in school; she was one of those fortunate ones whose skin was . . . but this couldn't matter, because no matter what her race, she had always lacked — just as he had — love. He had found a new happiness in his love for her; she, too, had let this strange new emotion grasp her very spirit.

His every thought now was Anna, for she had been and was priceless to him, and even the slightest remembrance of her sent him into a tormenting state of bitterness and antagonizing regret. Then after that everything was bearable because he thought of her again . . . lovely Anna, how delicate and precious she was — tall, no, not tall — willowy . . . she had worried about that . . . skin and her hair, long and falling loosely about her shoulders or pulled high atop her head, were like a faint burst of sunlight. She was slim, not skinny as she had so often imagined, and she was unquestionably beautiful — the way she had walked and talked, everything she had done made her beautiful to him, and he had adored her. He remembered her eyes too, blue, not like an ordinary blue, darker than that; and they had shone, and they had been open always to the world and to life itself. Lovely mysterious Anna, how he had grown to love her and how he still did.

She had loved him, too, and the ultimate satisfaction that soared through his very being had lasted only until he had had time to think; then, he had hoped against hope and fought the idea of this being wrong. Finally after days of walking, thinking, and more walking, he realized a terrible thing . . . he was right. Anna had known, too, that last time he had stood before her, and she had cried, not hysterically, but for a long time. He had smiled at her a last time, and finally he had left her.

Now he had come home, not to a home he loved, but somewhere that was far away. The already-dark days was yielding to the final darkness of night, and the city began to awake to the artificial life of neon signs and bright street lights. As he walked, he came to a bar, illuminated by a cheap sign glaring dimly through the night, and he waited for that same disgust of wrong and shame to fill his body. When it didn't, he made his way to the door. Through the glass he saw a sailor and a girl, ruined for him, in such morbid surroundings, and he backed away, into the rain. Not this; don't stoop this low; that would ruin the only other thing he had ever loved. Maybe music and a little ambition could fill his life. And someday he would be a musician, not just an ordinary musician, but a man whose one fervent desire was to play for the world to fall in love.

Then he walked on, and still, there was rain.

Editor's Note: Susan Sechrist's short story won first place in the O. Henry short story contest, and Tony Wike's poem won first place in the Richard Walser Book Club contest.

THE VIGILANT SEA

—TONY WIKE

High tide, low tide,
Each day and night they come,
And the sea makes known its
rhythm
Like the cadence of a drum.
A wave is seen as a drummer
boy;
The foam, his cap of white;
The beach, of course, the boy's
drum,
As he marches out of sight.
The shells are the guards that
protect the boy;
The dunes, the sentry wall.
The sea is the ceaseless army,
A fortress is it all.

How Would It Be?

—CAROL MEACHUM

How would it be without the
summer sun;
Or without the winter's thrilling
fun?
How would it be without the
cooling breeze
That weaves in and out of the
willow trees?
Without the hum of the busy
little bees?
Without a lively tune on the piano
keys?
How would it be without Mother's
loving arms?
Without your playful puppy's
mischievous charms?
Another question deserves more
than a nod,
'How would it be without our
God?'