

# Saturday Night Small Town

By A. R. D.

Avoiding his own eyes in the small, spotted mirror, the boy slicked back his hair with a wet comb, jerked the cuffs of a too-bright blue suit down over bony wrists, and stepped out into the night. Although the truck stood waiting, the boy paused to drink in a heavy draught of the chill, autumn air with its message of approaching frost. It was like taking a big bite from a crisp, green apple, sharp and intoxicating. Climbing into the driver's seat beside his mother and small, excited sister, Junie, he backed down the rutted lane to the highway.

\* \* \*

The town was lighted by a gaiety it revealed only once a week. Passing the square which contained the memorial to World War I's dead, the boy drew into the curb behind a wagon, where a small, coloured boy sat swinging his legs reflectively. His mother and Junie hurried happily off in search of dress goods, groceries, and gossip. After gazing disinterestedly in the window of Hogan's Dress Shoppe, where amid musty crepe flowers, flat, two-dimensional dummies, smiled with bright, painted indifference, the boy dodged across to the dingy bus station, where a group of young men his own age lounged carelessly about the entrance. They greeted him with enthusiasm, trading news and jokes, and postling one another good-humouredly.

A trio of girls approached, skirts high on their legs, lipstick, a crimson smear across their aware young faces. Their voices were raised in loud, self-conscious conversation as they passed their silent and grinning audience. A long, appreciative whistle drew a high giggle and a backward glance from the tallest of the three, a big-boned, freckled blonde, whose bright hair escaped from her bandanna.

Snickering, one of the youths nudged his nearest companion. "Daddy, buy me one of those!", he remarked loudly and not very originally, and the boy's laugh was boisterous and awkward. Ears burning, he moved away from the group with a muttered farewell.

A stocky, pimpled youth called after him, "Hey, Bill, going over to the dance?", in reply to which he flung back over his shoulder a noncommittal, "I dunno. Maybe."

Hands thrust deep in his pockets and head down, he strolled past the town's only theatre, the Bijou, which everyone pronounced "Bye Joe", and Davidson's Hardware, where a hand-printed sign proclaimed in slightly shaky red letters a plowing match. From a

partly opened door drifted the low, melancholy voice of a woman in the ageless, haunting words of an old song. His steps slowed and a poignant yet indefinable longing rose within him.

The winds of March that made my heart a dancer,  
A telephone that rings but who's to answer?  
O how the ghost of you clings.

With an eager reluctance, he crossed to the next block and entered the dance hall to join the crowd of pushing onlookers, composed mainly of the same young men who had been there last week and would be there next, who came to dance and remained to watch. This to the secret irritation of the girls, who wooed them with quick, sly glances or open, inviting smiles.

Over shoulders, he saw HER, head back, eyes smiling into those of her partner. Then the piece was over and she was alone. Thrusting down the familiar panic which threatened to engulf him, he made his way through the throng until he stood before her, and with a face suddenly stern, asked "Dance?" The welcoming smile she turned to him slipped a bit as she saw Bill and explained that Jed would be "back in a sec with cokes." With a foolish grin and a stuttered, "Uh—thanks. Uh—", the boy backed away, colliding violently with a chair. Her laugh followed him all the way back along the main street through the gay shoppers, and into the truck.

\* \* \*

"Look Bill, my new dolly. Isn't she pretty? Look Bill!", piped Junie's childish voice as she held out the toy insistently for her big brother's inspection. Violently he turned and shouted, "Shut up! Can't you see I'm driving. Shut up!" In sudden fright, Junie began to cry.

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## My End Is Run

**Editor's Note:** A very clever satire reached our desk this week which we thought would be of interest to our readers. This re-printed take-off on Mickey Spillane appeared in the Wisconsin "Octopus" and was written by Merl Edelman.

A bell woke me. I smashed the alarm clock and put three slugs in the front door before I realized it was the phone. I lit a cigarette and made my way to the next room, cursing every ring that shot through my throbbing head in rhythmic reminder of the night before. I picked up the receiver.

"It's 10 a.m. Good morning," a feminine voice purred.

I cursed her and hung up. A cat meowed. I picked it up by the tail, walked to the window and watched it spiral to the ground eight floors below. A rat behind me sighed with relief, and I crushed it with my heel. Then I put my shoes and socks on.

Just like the cluttered streets outside. Rancid with the smell of too many people, this room, too, was a stinking jungle. It would ask no quarter, give none.

"What are you gonna do with me?" she said.

**She Was There**

I spun around. She was smiling, her unpainted lips full and moist, parted just enough to reveal the even pearls beneath. Her eyes were not eyes at all as they grabbed my soul and begged me to become a wild panting beast, an animal to shout to all the forest that here was my mate, and he that doubted would soon be roasting over a spit. Her flawless hips, her ankles and her throat! If she had less on she'd have been under ether.

I rolled my lips back over my teeth. Most people shuddered when I did that. I was ugly. There were no mirrors in the room. I hated the sight of me.

"You're cute," she said.

I took a swig from the office bottle. It was flat. I cursed and brushed the ink from my teeth, still looking at her.

"Barry de Korpses, detective, aren't you?" she cooed.

I slapped her across the face and threw my coat around her. She laughed and lit up a spud, then blew smoke in my face. I coughed and spit blood on the floor, still looking at her.

"Someone's following me," she said. I want you to kill him."

I slapped her again and she giggled. I wasn't a murderer, I told myself. But I knew I'd do it. I knew that once I saw the guy I'd get the urge and then... I told her to beat it but she knew she had me. She gave me a check. There was a sound in the hall. The door opened. He was slimy from head to foot, fat and sneering. He had a gun and he had a look on his face that said it was

too bad that an innocent sucker like me had to die along with her, but he'd enjoy it anyhow. He laughed.

Before he realized I'd ever seen a gun, my .38 was in my hand. His trigger finger moved, but it was ten feet away from him and heavy. He looked down at it. I shot off his kneecaps so he could have a better look, gave him just enough time to know he'd figured me wrong and blew his face off.

**She Lit a Spud**

The woman took a long drag on her Spud.

"You slob," she chided.

"Shut up," I told her. "You walk in and I kill a guy." I grabbed her by the throat.

"Who was he?" I demanded.

"What did he want?" "Don't think too harshly of brother Phil. He's really quite mild. It's just that he found out I murdered mother and stole his share of the inheritance." I crushed the shot glass in my fist. "My name's Laura Morris," she said in a suddenly small voice.

She was too fine a woman for me. Defending a scheming rat who'dav soon see her dead, just because he was her brother.

"That mess on the floor has a twin," she said. "He's the brains, I have a date with him tonight. It was the only way I could think of to put him where you could take care of things."

"At your apartment?" I asked, taking down her address and sensing the kill.

"Yes," she sighed, knowing I'd be there and it would soon be over. Then she left.

It was my last 50 cents, but I threw it on the bar and gulped down the jigger of Scotch. I threw the glass through the bar mirror and left. I was loaded and I loved it. I wanted to kill him. I wanted to bare his guts and play a tune on them with a knife. I leaned against a street lamp.

Right know he was probably running his filthy hands over Laura. I wanted to cut holes in his soles with a can opener and put hook worm larvae in the wounds. A blind woman sang "Rock of Ages" as she waved her tin cup. I slapped her across the face and pocketed the coins.

I couldn't stand it. I had no business letting Laura go through with it. I hailed a cab, told the driver an address a block from her apartment.

"Let you go for five bucks," the hack said when we stopped.

I grabbed him by the throat and, swaying to the irregular sound of the idling motor, I dragged him outside, opened the hood and fed him into the fan until his shoes crashed through a nearby window.

I went up the fire escape to the

roof of her apartment building. The skylight led to her kitchen. I quietly lowered myself in. Through the crack in the closed door I could see him slobbering his greasy lips over her as she calmly puffed a Spud, waiting for me.

**She Puffed a Spud**

I took a Thompson sub from the broom closet and walked in behind them. He heard me and spun around. I took his head off just above the collar.

She blew a smoke ring.

"Must you always be so sloppy?" she laughed. "C'mere."

I threw the Thompson down and pulled her to me. There was a scream. It was me. The Spud was still in her mouth when I kissed her.

Then a guy walked in. It was her kid brother from Apesite U. He was young and big and had a small strip of tape on one cheek.

He was wearing a dark blue sport coat, gray pants, white shirt, and maroon bow tie, a Tartan jerkin and white bucks. Around his neck he wore a yellow ribbon.

"Who are you?" I asked him anyway.

"Zeta Beta Tau," he said with a sneer as he chewed his pipe and ran a hand casually along his blond crew cut.

"So what?" I snarled, uninterested in the gambling feats of his ancestors. But not wishing to disturb the already messy floor, I restrained myself.

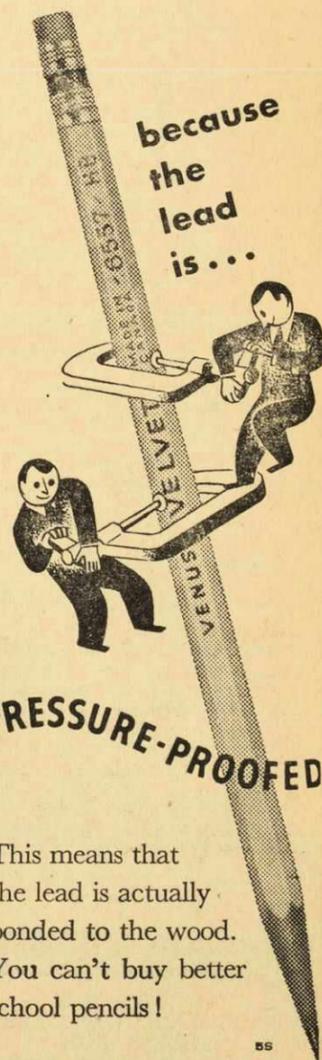
"See that tower over there, Bud?" I said, pointing out the window.

He walked over and leaned out. One swift kick did it.

Before I went home I gave Laura back the check and promised myself to see more of her.

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