

No flagrant violation or disobedience of orders was there, instead the inauguration of a petty little system of nagging that embraced every indignity Munford could think of. And the range of his attack was from profound and exaggerated attention and politeness to the utter and complete ignoring of the very existence of such a person as Alan Burton, foreman of Bridge Gang No. 3. While the gang, taking their cue from Munford, would shift from one extreme to the other with a precision and significance that cut deeper into a man of Burton's high-strung, nervous temperament than any other form of torture they could have devised.

Three times during three days Burton, who was afraid of no man or aggregation of men, took the bull by the horns and struck Munford a violent blow in an effort to bring matters to a head. On the first occasion the gang watched the action with a gasp of mixed pity and admiration—looking for Burton's instant annihilation. But Munford, with a bit of a laugh, only reached out and grasping Burton's neck held him wriggling, helplessly, impotently, at arm's length. "You got to grow, boy; just keep quiet now, I ain't going to hurt you," he taunted. And the gang promptly lost their faint appreciation of Burton's nerve in their relish of the ridiculous figure cut by the white-faced, raging foreman.

It was dirty work, and deep down in his heart Munford knew it. But his better nature no sooner manifested itself by sundry pricks of conscience than it was smothered beneath the new sense of authority and