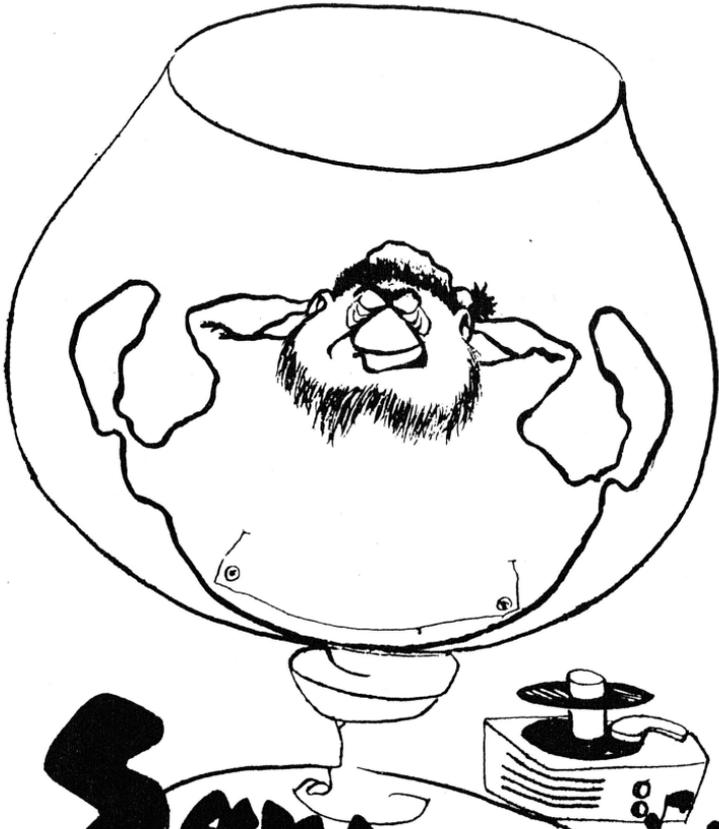




Showme

Supplement



Santa Bab!
#SEN



Number Two

To Encourage Student Writing

Biff

You knew the room better than you know yourself. But that was ridiculous — when did you ever really know yourself?

Outside the clouds were vomiting snow.

Inside, the light needed fixing—but didn't Biff say he'd fix it. Couldn't see what you were writing when it flickered like that.

Damnit though, for \$40 a month it's not as bad as you thought it would be. Could you really run into a dump up on the near north.

But it was good to have it all in one room; you never did like to move much in the winter anyway. Needed another table in the middle though -- wasn't right to have all those beercans getting in the way of the typewriter -- made it hard to think - and you knew that this was the story that had to come off.

Where the hell was Biff anyway? Didn't he tell you he was going to Lou's to pick up some beer? Probably with some broad -- the jerk.

* * *

Remember the night you first saw that grubby little bar? Intimate, small, good jazz, cheap women, stiff liquor -- no spot for a writer who knew that rejection slips didn't taste like scotch.

Outside a deathly white was smothering the world. It was Christmas Eve.

"Got a drink for me, Jimmy?"

"Hell, boy, I've got a business to run -- you know I can hardly pay the rent every month. Already you owe me. . . ."

On Christmas Eve yet!

You know that was your cue to light out. The only trouble was that everything you had was in hock, and the whole world was beginning to do somersaults. The combo started to dixie up Begle Street Blues and you got up to split.

"Dammit,, give him a scotch -- it's on me."

He was about six feet tall, gaunt, sunburned, with a hard look carved on him. His clothes were simple -- he might have been mistaken for a prospector out west -- but here on the near north side you thought he was just another oddball. What the hell though, you'd accept a free scotch from a Communist.

"You're thinking wrong, bud. You looked like you needed it more than I did. Quit looking at me like that and drink it. Name's Biff."

You always were too friendly for your own good. Three scotches later you find yourself talking to the first guy you'd ever met who'd sold for money. Hadn't you always imagined authors living in penthouses, dragging jaguars and getting their kicks from good-look-

in' blondes. You never would have figured this guy.

“Yeah, I was up there with the best of them at one time or another. Right now I've hit a dry spell -- can't seem to get started again. Sometimes you get like that. When you begin to push yourself

kept silent and just stared.

It didn't take much to convey the idea that your headache was not only similar -- but worse. You didn't know whether he thought you were a crackpot -- frankly you didn't care.

Two poverty stricken authors



all hell breaks loose and you don't write naturally -- you can't get the feel of what you're trying to create. Do I make myself clear?"

You didn't mean to laugh, but when you did he must have thought that you were crazy. He should have slugged you but he

meeting in a bar -- sounded like a plot for the stinkin' movies -- but what the hell, you had no where else to go.

“Look buddy, my name is Biff and I've got an idea. You say you've never sold -- I say I've sold but can't get started again. Drop

me a minute."

You were about to cut out, but figured maybe this guy has an angle so you nurse the scotch and listen.

"The way I figured it is maybe if both of us work on the same idea, we can get somewhere.

Look at it this way -- you're nowhere now and you don't figure on going anywhere in the near future, right? So what can you loose?"

The hell of it was he was right.

"Keep talking, you got me listening."

"You noticed him nervously fondle his last cigarette and you lit it for him. The combo began playing the opening bars to Basin Street Blues.

"Look, I think this might be a way out for both of us. I've got a plot, a good one, but I'm afraid I might ruin it like the others. I need a writer's mind to help me. I need someone who can think and write like a hunted animal. You help me out and I'll cut you in 50-50."

You sensed that for the first time you had met a person who was on the level and had something to say.

"Okay, buddy, I probably need my head examined, but I'll listen. Before you start in on this project give me a little background. Let's get out of this hole, it's giving me a headache."

The air felt good for a change. It was about 3:30 a.m. and the clubs would be closing up soon. A scappel-sharp stillness cut the

air-light from the stars that had shown down on another scene 2,000 years before seemed bored at man's backwardness . . . it was Christmas day

You found that you and Biff agreed too easily. Biff had sold and was hungry again. You were just hungry. And so it wasn't hard to agree on an apartment. . . the next step was the plot.

Maybe there was something to this Christmas garbage.

"Alright. Biff, we're settled -- now give it to me straight."

"Look," Biff started, "Imagine yourself an average married business man with two brats to support. What if the pressure of your business suddenly turns you into a schizophrenic. One night you sneak out while the family's sleeping and you commit a fiendish murder -- cut up a woman waiting for a bus. The next morning you read about in the papers. You gasp over your morning coffee and your wife comments that only an insane man could have committed this inhumanity. You agree, never once realizing that you are talking about yourself."

You drank your beer and listened.

"There's only one catch -- you're a cop, a detective, and that morning you're assigned to the case.

"We could describe his wild, fantastic dreams of the re-enactment of the crime, never once realizing that he is actually dreaming about himself. Finally, after meticulously placing together pieces of the crime, one night in his study he comes upon the startling realization that there can be only one answer -- he is the murderer."

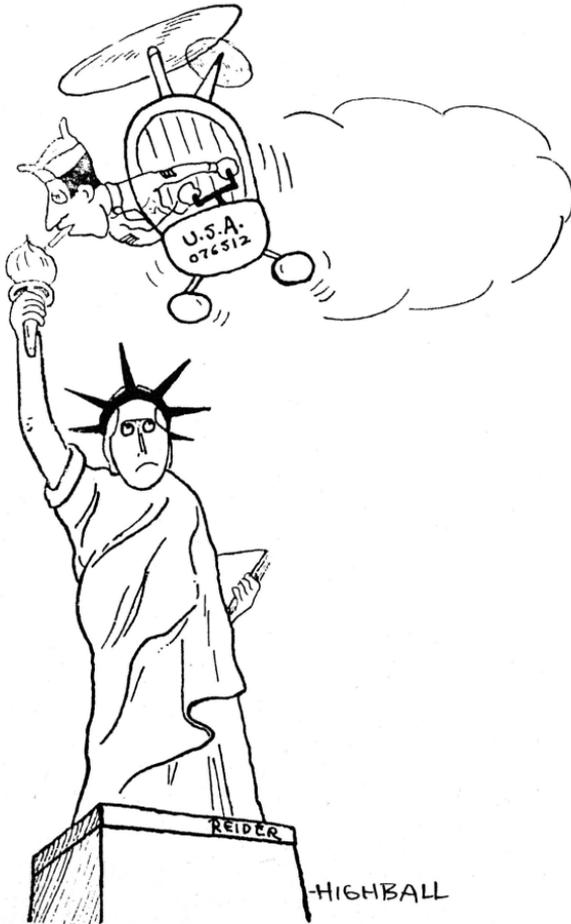
You noticed that Biff was breathing harder as the excitement of his tale wore on. A neon light across the street kept blinking on and off, throwing grotesque shapes across his face.

“Now comes the crux of the story, He realizes if he gives himself up, his wife and family will be disgraced, not to mention what would happen to the career that had taken him years to build. Night after night he walks the floors - terrified by what might happen if he falls asleep. Finally, as the investigation drags on, his

attitude towards his family and colleagues take on the appearance of a highly strained wire under pressure of too much weight.”

You finish your quart of beer and notice cold beads of sweat on Biff's forehead.

“After rejecting the idea of any sort of psychological help, one night the situation explodes. There is another ghastly murder, only this time it isn't perpetuated by our detective friend, but by a total stranger for an entirely different motive. Our friend doesn't know this however, and panics, think-



ing that he did it in one of his fits. There is still no suspicion that he committed the first murder.

Matters had gotten so bad that in the following months he begins blaming himself for every minor criminal occurrence. Eventually he quits his job and divorces his wife. I haven't figured out the ending yet -- how's it sound so far?"

Damn, you sound as if you've really been workin' on this bit -- yeah, I'm with you -- we can start on it tomorrow."

You lie there on the pull-out and and the night starts to get colder. It looks like Biff won't be back for an hour or so yet -- in a way you're glad.

You've been working on this "thing" for six weeks now and what little money you had is beginning to run out. Yet, you realize that this is the one you've got to score with. After years of aggravation if this one doesn't make it

But what's really been on you is Biff's attitude the past few weeks, especially since you've gotten into the meat of the story.

You've got to try to understand a few things that just don't jell.

You began to notice the strained look on your companion's face as you progressed further into the story. At each turn of events he would get up and nervously walk around the room, always looking out the window at the street with a wild blank stare.

But then, around the fourth week during the writing of the important murder scene, Biff became so emotionally disturbed that he

had to pop a hypo. It took quite a while to quiet him down. You recall that this was the beginning of the first of a series of nights when he would leave after dinner and stay out half of the p. m.

The first thing you noticed after this all-important climax in the story was that Biff's emotional stability was gradually deteriorating into a state of complete mental and physical exhaustion. It was becoming increasingly hard to complete work on the novel.

And then suddenly, with a terror you had never experienced before, you realized that all the pieces in your new pattern of life began to fit together. A vague nausea filled your head.

The intimate details of the plot - the scenes so minutely described - the characters sketched as if they were personal friends - it is all too real. There could be only one answer to Biff's peculiar behavior and the fantastic story you were working on.

Biff was the murderer you had been writing about.

It was now a matter of self control and pacification. Control of yourself during the hours you would be working with Biff and pacification of him during his tantrums as the story of his life unfolded on your typewriter.

* * *

You lay there waiting for the creak of the stairs telling of the return of what now the most important person in your life. From now on you would sleep in the same room, eat at the same table, work with the same person whom you now feared and respected to a point moving you to tears.

But it wouldn't be long -- a week or two. You must endure even if you were cognizant of the horrible fact:

Biff was the schizophrenic you had been writing about. Somewhere there was a grave with his victim lying in it. Somewhere there was an abandoned family. It was too late to turn back. Your last hope in life was your own consummation.

You lay on your cot and wander about many things -- but mostly about two crazy lives that happened to cross -- and then you fall asleep.

After a few minutes you awake and your eyes catch a pile of ashes in the corner. You catapult across the room and tear at a note book beside a six week pile of burnt dreams.

Biff is dead.

Biff committed suicide.

Stunned, you wander into the swirling whiteness, knowing that in a matter of time the papers would be screaming of a mysterious body found in a bloody river.

You were naive -- how else could it have ended? For Biff, life had ended on that fateful night. The book that he had wanted to sanctify himself with had become his tombstone. You who would die only once had lived with another who had known death a thousand times.

As you step outside, the wind slaps at you rudely. The door to Jimmie's was closed and it was always pseudo-warm inside.

"Make it straight Jimmy."

"Things still pretty rough? Sold anything yet?"

"No, but I think I'm on a pretty good kick. Listen, what ya' think of a respected public official in a midwest city who suddenly murders."

R. L. S.



"How many hearts have you broken with that great big beautiful eye?"

There Must Be Somewhere

The fetal infant was fixed to a post;
Movement was limited.
The neonate flayed his stubby arms
Skyward, screaming and scared.
It was wet.
They fed him.

Wee tot now.
Junior's a good boy.
"Mustn't do, mustn't touch."
Tsk-tsk.

Send him to school.
Let him play.
"Young man, it's after class for you,
You've been naughty today."

Teen-ager . . . good years. Unrequited
Love, ball, lessons.
"We have rules here, lad,
Obey them."

The University . . .
This might be it.
"You yourselves are responsible for your
Conduct; however we do not
Condone such . . ."

There must be someplace
Where man can . . .
Where man . . .
Where?

The army.
O God.

Marriage, a family, closeness.
A man.
"Careful hon,
The children."

A life-time gone by;
Going faster now.
Fight, old man, fight.
You'll show them yet.

There must be someplace
Where man can . . .
Where man . . .
Where?

The twentieth cigarette
Is left.
Who will strike
The twentieth match?

*(Anonymously printed in the PIER ILLINI, student newspaper of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, May 28, 1956.)*



PLEASE! Pass the meat, Pa.

Medley

The beach — an August night—
 Behind me, raucous people—noise personifies
 The city: gaudy glittering light.
 Before me, water blends in black infinite sky
 Reflecting this my city.

All sense of time and thought
 Are swallowed in eternity. I cease to cling
 To pointless questions meaning naught.
 The workings of my modern brain now rest and sing
 In tune with this my city.

My mind for now enslaved,
 I burrow sensuous toes in mounds of clinging sand.
 The gentle slap of ragged waves
 Is mingled with the sound of screeching tires on land:
 The song of this my city.

N. L. S.

Disaster on the 5:15



By Jim White

The train rushed headlong into the east, its operator oblivious to the impending disaster awaiting it on the tracks ahead.

Rounding a bend and entering a tunnel, the black beauty was given a full throttle by the engineer. As the train broke out into the light again, the engineer was reflecting on the magnificent power of this mechanical beast of burden at his command. Just a gentle flick of his hand on the throttle and . . . but, wait . . . up ahead . . . What the! . . . But, too late, the sickening screech of brakes and the deafening thunder of twisting steel as cars dominoed and buckled, careening wildly and jumping the tracks.

The engineer was the first to speak again:

“Aw, sis, why can’t you keep your dolls away from my track?”

The End.

the cocktail party

Distorted rhythm is the hollow theme.

The deadened eyelids burn with garish light
Reflected from a dozen mirrored sights
Which echo back the whitened ceiling's gleam.
Implicit is the pattern of the dream

That wards away the shadows of the night.

The room resounds, so falsely erudite,
With phrases blending in oppressive schemes.
Adagio waiters pass with trays, redeem
The often-emptied glasses. Appetites

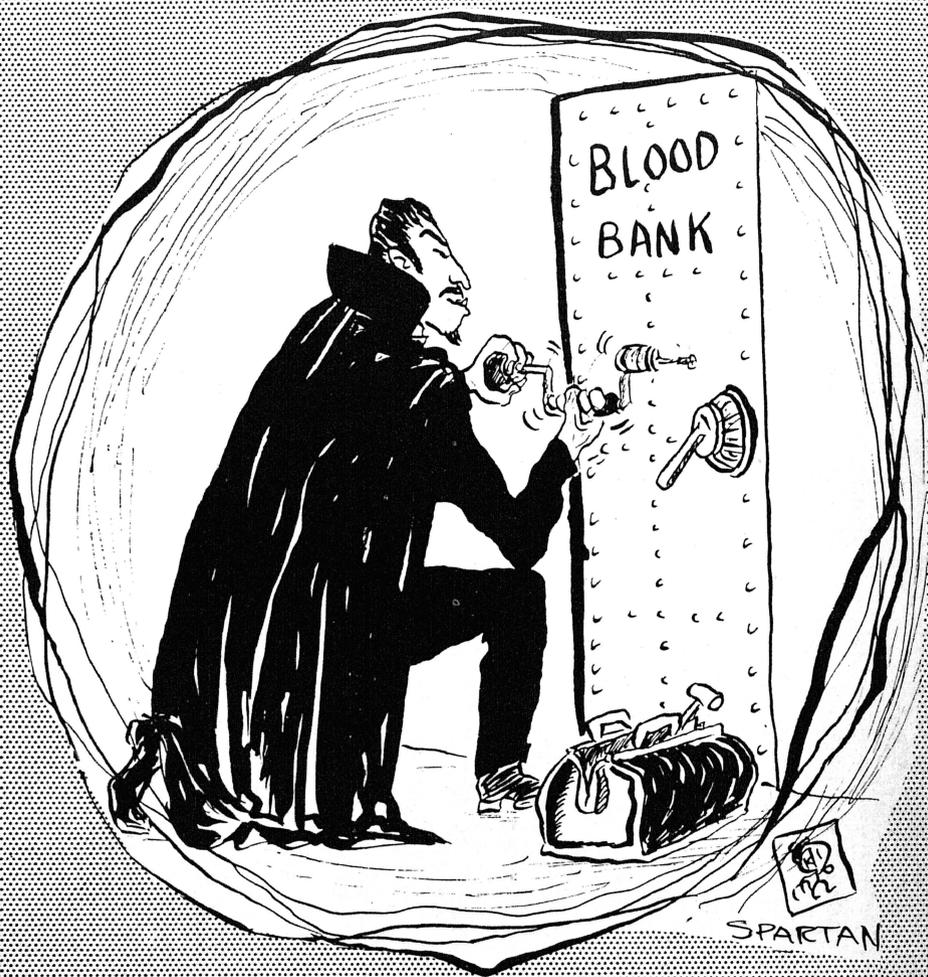
Excited by the burning heat of gin,

And hands that dampen bare and powdered flesh.

The people chatting, drinking, laughing now
Are but the shells of painted mannequins,
And later will disintegrate, enmesh
Themselves in lies and chant their empty vows.

N. L. S.





SPARTAN