

# Sweet Dream

At the moment I am flailing my arms about in an attempt to rise above a claustrophobizing crowd of youthful humanity. It is massed in front of a large glass case, full of cornstalks; and I escape by climbing the casing and sitting on a small wooden perch. (I believe I knocked off its occupant, an animal with a look of condemnation on its bill.) The swarm below me suddenly flies off down the halls, as if by centrifugal force.

I think I am to be rescued by the little curley headed lady in the long black coat, who enters across from me, carrying a shopping bag-of-plenty. But she scoots on by, waving first at me and then at two silver-haired men who step authoritatively from a door: "Hiya! Hiya! Hiya! Would you like to have a party?"

Now I am approached by a man floating past on water wings and jauntily cocking his head at my predicament. He remarks, "I defy you to make that difficult!"

A drowsy-looking lady advances out of the darkness on my left, saying meditatively: "I don't want to put a damper on your fun, but . . ."

But I am to be actually saved by a firm-stepping fellow in a Pendelton shirt carrying a ladder. Well! He's knocked me off and tenderly replaced that . . . fowl instead.

However, now I stand before a row of judicial-type heads who chant: "Will you please be seated." I collapse in a chair. An oratorical voice towers over me: "What were you doing dashing from the annex, swathed only in a wet gym towel and slutching a copy of *Literature and Life*?" Echoing from somewhere a sweet feminine voice wafts in, "Hurry girls! Upstairs! Upstairs!" So I run out and up a flight of stairs.

All is bizarre and I'm trying to place myself. This must be the third floor of some institution. A procession of kiddies files from a nearby room, bearing offerings and reciting: "Whan that Aprille with . . ." I ask the lady with them where I am. She ponders and contributes, "Well, yes, perhaps, but, you know, some authorities would disagree." I am deserted.

From the next room a voice of true charm proclaims, "I want to make it perfectly clear how I feel about interlinears"

Uncomprehendingly I blunder down this passageway, not even stopping when a man in a sweat shirt grabs for me, abruptly demanding, "Where do you think you're going? This is a study hall!"

Worked to a frenzy I bolt from him directly into a woman bedecked in orange and black who has been proceeding briskly along. (Is she fifteen or forty-five?) "I—uh—was preoccupied," I offer as I rebound. She grins (fifteen) and observes definitively: "The unexamined life is not worth living—anyway," (forty-five).

I reel on from this to a decorous lady who asks leadingly, "Have you heard my strawberry story yet?"

But all of these people fade, and a woman—attractive and topped with blondness—grasps my shoulders, banging my head with her lethal purse and saying, "It's nothing personal, but . . ."

Next I discern that I am strapped to a familiar, yet unique, type of seating apparatus. There is a board of worn condition on it, but it is composed mostly of steel bars and wood splinters. Above me is a glaring U-shaped illumination. Nevertheless, I shiver as breezes and snow blow across me through cracks in the wall.

Passively I must submit to a series of parading faces and footsteps. They inscribe their pronouncements upon me indelibly:

A smiling crew-cut man passing out a test as his bow-tie bobs: "I don't want to be unfair, but . . ."

A tall man with a reagent bottle in his hand: "Carry on futher, class."

A little old lady at a lecturn: "That's a **perfect** example of a passive periphrastic in indirect statement supply **esse**."

A tall romantic male at the blackboard: "Well, this problem didn't work out well, did it class?"

A petite young lady popping across my view in a sprightly manner: "You don't have to be so picaYUNish!"

A slow-speaking man pausing at the stand: "The plain fact is, just thought I'd tell you a little joke to wake you all up."

"Great joke," I am thinking, as he grins slyly at me. A woman with her coat and a purple bucket-shaped hat on is coming toward me with a knife. "You aren't afraid of me, are you?" she asks. As she severs my bonds I fall free. A very kindly lady speaking in short-hand helps me to my feet and pushes me firmly out of the room, saying, "Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet shall keep you from your homework."

I am swept up in the sea which seems to ebb and flow within these walls. Half-conscious, I am carried to where it yells and sings incoherently: "O Come All Ye Faithful," and "Iron 'em out," and "Cartwheel, Cartwheel!" and "Long live Dylan Thomas!"

Thence its irresistible force flows on, and I am on the crest; I am soon deposited outside in a snowdrift (The blizzard of '60).

Jolted by a steady clanging, I find that I must now leap from the white drift of my sack; erase my Vergil book; and, finally, turn it in.