

This story is not finished but its prose and dialogue run more smoothly than in most of the other stories

The teacher, a lean, nervous, little man stood in front of the window and looked towards the classroom, vacated and empty except for an oversized boy who was slouched in his chair, staring absently at the floor. Outside the door a final slamming lockers echoed through the hall and the last sounds of ~~many~~ adolescent voices giggling and chattering inanely disappeared down the steps. And the teacher who had stopped talking for a moment suddenly began again as if the final shuffling of feet down the steps had been his cue.

"Twenty years old. . . . Twenty years old and in the eighth grade. It's an injustice, that's what it is. It's an injustice to you and to the other members of this class."

The boy did not say anything, nor did he move. Out of the corner of his eye he could see the teacher, a dark silhouette dwarfed against the high classroom window. He could see the man nervously running his fingers through his thinning hair, then making jerky effeminate movements with his hands as he spoke.

"You know that you could be expelled for what you did today. Did you realize that?"

The boy still didn't move. His long blondish hair fell carelessly into his eyes and he ~~was~~ and he was trying to blow it back into place. His eyes were still on the floor. He had his ~~hands~~ hands folded loosely across his chest and they moved slowly up and down in the slow rhythm of his breathing.

"Of course you didn't realize that, nor did you care. This may be the first year that you have been in my classes, but I know what you are like. Your record goes back a long ways, beatings, insolence to your teachers, truancy. I just don't understand it, though. I have talked to your mother and she just won't change her mind about your education. She is going to have to be made to realize that a secondary education the type that is given to the others is not for you. Perhaps if you were expelled, she might be made to realize that. As it stands now you would never make through high school."

The teacher reached into his pocket and pulled out a small, black, oblong thing. He pressed a button and a shiny flash of steel shot out.

"Don't you realize that you could be expelled for this, that you will be expelled if I take it to the office?"

make no
The boy did not move.

"How can I reach you. What do I have to do to make you understand. How can I make you stop doing the things that you do. David, I'm not going to expell you. I not going to turn this knife in. I

The teacher, a lean, nervous little man in front of the window

am going to try to talk to your mother again and try to get her to help me.

The boy suddenly turned, jerked his head around with a fury to meet the dark apprehensive little eyes of the teacher. The words seemed to die in his mouth and the man stepped back against the window for support. . . . You have no father, David. I could help you. I will go and call your mother right now "

" Shut up, damn you, shut up, shut up! "

" David! "

" Shut up, shut up! "

" You forcing me to do something that I don't want to do. "

The teacher started edging along the wall.

" Don't call my mother. Don't you say a thing to her. "

" You insolent young man. "

" You jus' don' call my mother. "

" I'm sorry, but you have asked for it. "

" Shut up! "

Suddenly the boy was up out of his seat. The teacher was backing away along the edge of the wall.

" You sit back down there till I say you can get up. Your being held after class as punishment and you have to obey what I say. "

There was more fear than anger in the teacher's words, the words came loud and fast at first but then tapered off to only the movements of his pale lips. The little man held his ~~xxx~~ arm out in front of him as if he were carrying an imaginary shield instead of a shivering elbow.

" Get back to your seat. "

Leaves and birds. Leaves or birds, the wind blew before him. Fat cold robins looked in silence at him and the leaves scraped across the side walk in front of him. The light was red and a truck squeaked to a stop and two men whose faces he could not see threw out a couple of newspaper bundles, and then they were gone and the light was green. But he did cross the street, not right away. Down the street the truck stopped again, but the truck didn't start off right away. He watched the men, whose faces he could not see moving the sacks of papers to the back. And then it was gone. A bus stopped and the door opened. He did not look at the driver's face which was tightened in a look of annoyance. He stepped away from the curb and the bus rushed off in a smell of black fumes which faded quickly to intermingle with wood smoke. The light was red again.

Hey, David, whutchya say?

The boy was already on his knees, his black stained fingers working deftly with the bundles.

Oh, nuthin.

Whutchya doin over in this part of town.

Just walkin, I guess.

Walkin! Hell, I got to do that for a livin. I just can't see nobody walking for the fun uv it. Hell, know I can't. Where's your motor cycle.

I'm fixin it.

They tell me your a real whiz with them things.

I can fix em if somedin go wrong.

The boy quickley worked the wares off the bundles and had thrown them out into the street where the others were, many long since pressed into the tar when it was warm. Now the leaves scraped over them in the wind.

Hey, David, you sick or somedin? The boy had just looked up for the first time. " You look sick as hell. "

It ain't nutin.

Hell, man, you sure look like some

Can I fold one.

Fold what. . . . one of these? Your crazy (oh god, I meant)

Could I just fold one.

Hell, yes, if you want to. Hell you can fold all you want. Here . . . no, not that way . . . no, no not that either. . . the top folded in . . . like that . . . ya see? Great. It looks beautiful. I couldn't of done better myself.

I want to do another one now
" Could I do another? "

" Sure here's five. "

The boy was bent over his papers again. He pushed five papers to the side, then started folding the ^{them} papers lengthwise, so that he could fit them in his bag and ^{fold} fold them while he walked.

" I got two hundred to deliver today," he said without looking up. Sundays is difernt, but I got my work cut out for me. I have to leave the other stack here and come back and get 'em when I ^{head} head that way. That's so I don't have to carry the whole load. "

" Frankie. "

" Sometimes it ainst so bad though, cause some of the old women see me out here totem all them papers around and the get to feelin sorry for the poor little whimp and they give me stuff to eat, and sometimes even tip me, but that don't happen ofen. "

" Frankie, could I come with you today? "

" Naw, you better git on home, you gonna catch a cold like you are, besides if Mr Leach, he's the route manager, catches us I'll probably catch hell for it. "

" Can I come just this once. I don't feel like goin home just right now. "

They given you a hard time at school again? . . . well, hell, runnin away aint going to get nuthin accomplished. "

" I know it, but I kinda done somdin that . . . "

" Hell, they didn't give me any extras today. I got to talk to Leach about that. Those old biddies over on Clovis Street never can find the paper, so they call in first thing and I catch hell for it. I'll just tell 'em its leaches fault. "

" I'll carry that other bundle for ya, and you won't have to come back and get it. "

" Aw, hell, I couldn't ask you to do that. "

" I can do it easy. "

The boy folded the last of the first bundle into his bag, then stood up and adjusted the weight which already seemed too much for him.

" Ok, Ok, common. I'll catch hell for this too I guess, "

The big boy stooped to pick up the other bale of papers, but the little kid stopped him.

" Don't sweat that. We'll get it comin back, besides it'll get your

shirt dirty. "

The big ^{big} stood rather stooped, his arms hanging limply at his sides, his mouth hanging slightly open. The wind blew his blond hair into his eyes, but he didn't try to smooth the hair back. He just stood there, not looking at the boys face, but just staring at his sooty hands already quickly folding the newspapers.

" Well, ~~xxxxxx~~ come on, lets get. . . . no, not that way . . . over here. . . . Wait a minute. "

The newspaper boy stared at the side walk for a moment, as if making a decision.

" Leach will give me hell if he sees you carrying this, but its better than you freezing to death. I know you can carry this bag ten times better than I can and the damn thing'll keep you warm. Here put it on "

The boy shifted the weight from his shoulder and let the bag drop to the sidewalk. " Yeh, balance it on your shoulder like that. . . Yeh, that's great. . . . Come on. "

The teacher, a ~~tall~~, lean, nervous man stood in front of the window and looked towards the class room, all empty except for an oversized boy was slouched in a chair, staring absently at the man's feet.

" David "

The boy didn't move. He didn't take his eyes off the teacher's feet and out of the corner of his eye he could see the silhouette move its nervous hands through thinning hair.

" David, are you listening to me? "

" Yuh, I'm listenin' "

" Say ' Yes, sir, I am listening' Go on, say it. Oh I can't do a thing with you. "

" Den why don' you jus' gimme them licks; I got 'em comin don' I? "

" That's not why you're here and you know it. "

" I don' somthin wrong ain't I? Well, den I got 'em comin. "

" What can I do to mke you understand. You don't seem to respond to kindness and you don't even respond to punishment. It's not just the matter of your beating up one of your classmates. Even a person who's . . . well everyone can be taught respect and kindness. "

The teacher paused, hoping for the boy to say something, but the boy didn't take his eyes off the floor. He had his hands folded loosley across his chest and they moved slowly up and down in the slow rythm of his breathing.

" So you are not going to say anything are you. Oh, if I could only tell what is going on in that mind of yours, then maybe I could do something for you. / "

" I didn' mean to hit 'em. I jus' "

" You just couldn't control yourself. That's one of the things that is wrong with you, one of the things that is going to be your downfall when you get out in society. I have faith in you, though, David. I know that you don't learn as fast as the other boys and girls. I realize that, but I still have great faith in you. "

" The boy still didn't say anything. "

*His long blond hair fell loosely into
his eyes*

The teacher, a tall, lean, nervous man stood in front of the widow and looked towards the