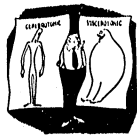


ured tones I should throw the weight of my considerable authority into the scales against Youth or Modern Art. My voice, I think, would be ruminative and rumbling. When it became necessary to rebuke presumption my jowls would shake with stately disapproval. I should be paternally jocose to the daughters of the richer families. Unhappily, no amount of deliberate character-adoption will blot out the memory of the past. I should never forget that in my cheery, emaciated, sensible days I should have considered my new self an appalling old man, and I should recognize this view as right.

Sheldon has a third category, physically described as Mesomorphs and temperamentally as Somatonics. As these are large-boned, strong-muscled heroes, I do not think that anything I do about tobacco will get me into their class. It is not one I find attractive. Cerebrotonics, in Huxley's words, "suffer acutely from the unrestrained bellowing and trampling of the Somatonic." So, I should imagine, do Viscerotonics, who must find bellowing and trampling very disturbing when they are ceremoniously eating in common.

It seems to me that neither the callous and competitive Somatonics nor the grim and self-searching Cerebrotonics would make nice friends for me, still less make good models. Unhappily, I am now coming to feel that even the merry Viscerotonics are not wholly admirable. Apparently they go in for telling everybody they meet exactly how they feel, and resemble — according to Huxley — liberal Protestant clergymen. If this be true, I am wrong in thinking that in the good old days I belonged to this group. Even when I was chain-smoking twenty hours a day there was nothing faintly clerical about me. I am much more likely to have categories of my own. I think that for many years I must have been a skinny and lighthearted Nicotonic and that probably my present condition can best be described as Megalomelancholic.



DER ARME DOLMETSCHER

by KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR., is a native of Indianapolis who left Cornell in 1942 to serve as an Army combat intelligence scout. He was captured in the Battle of the Bulge and spent five months in a Dresden prison camp. He is now working for General Electric in Schenectady and writing a novel in his spare time.

I WAS astonished one day in 1944, in the midst of front-line hell-raising, to learn that I had been made interpreter, *Dolmetscher* if you please, for a whole battalion, and was to be billeted in a Belgian burgomaster's house within artillery range of the Siegfried Line.

It had never entered my head that I had what it took to dolmetsch. I qualified for the position while waiting to move from France into the front lines. While a student, I had learned the first stanza of *Die Lorelei* by rote from a college roommate, and I happened to give those lines a dogged rendition while working within earshot of the battalion commander. The colonel (a hotel detective from Mobile) asked his executive officer (a dry-goods salesman from Knoxville) in what language the lyrics were. The executive withheld judgment until I had bungled through *Der Gipfel des Berges fu-unk-kelt im Abendsonnenschein*.

"Ah believes tha's Kraut, Cuhnel," he said.

The colonel felt that his role carried with it the obligation to make quick, headstrong decisions. He made some dandies before the Wehrmacht was whipped, but the one he made that day was my favorite. "If tha's Kraut, wussat man doin' on the honey-dippin' detail?" he wanted to know. Two hours later, the company clerk told me to lay down the buckets,

for I was now battalion interpreter.

Orders to move up came soon after. Those in authority were too harried to hear my declarations of incompetence. "You talk Kraut good enough foah us," said the executive officer. "Theah ain't goin' to be much talkin' to Krauts where we're goin'." He patted my rifle affectionately. "Heah's what's goin' to do most of youah interpretin' fo' yu," he said. The executive, who learned everything he knew from the colonel, had the idea that the American Army had just licked the Belgians, and that I was to be stationed with the burgomaster to make sure he didn't try to pull a fast one. "Besides," the executive concluded, "theah ain't nobody else can talk Kraut at all."

I rode to the burgomaster's farm on the same truck with three disgruntled Pennsylvania Dutchmen who had applied for interpreters' jobs months earlier. When I made it clear that I was no competition for them, and that I hoped to be liquidated within twenty-four hours, they warmed up enough to furnish the interesting information that I was a *Dolmetscher*. They also decoded *Die Lorelei* at my request. This gave me command of about forty words (par for a two-year-old), but no combination of them



would get me so much as a glass of cold water.

Every turn of the truck's wheels brought a new question: "What's the word for Army? . . . How do I ask for the bathroom? . . . What's the word for sick? . . . well? . . . dish? . . . brother? . . . shoe?" My phlegmatic instructors tired, and one handed me a pamphlet purporting to make German easy for the man in the foxhole.

"Some of the first pages are missing," the donor explained as I jumped from the truck before the burgomaster's stone farmhouse. "Used 'em for cigarette papers," he said.

It was still dark when I knocked at

the burgomaster's door. I stood on the doorstep like a bit player in the wings, with the one line I was to deliver banging around an otherwise empty head. The door swung open. "Dolmetscher," I said.

The burgomaster himself, old, thin, and nightshirted, ushered me into the first-floor bedroom which was to be mine. He pantomimed as well as spoke his welcome, and a sprinkling of *danke schön* was adequate dolmetsching for the time being. I was prepared to throttle the further discussion with *Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten, dass ich so traurig bin*. This would have sent him padding off to bed, convinced that he had a fluent, albeit shot-full-of-*Weltschmerz*, Dolmetscher. The stratagem wasn't necessary. He left me alone to consolidate my resources.

Chief among these resources was the mutilated pamphlet. I examined each of its precious pages in turn, delighted by the simplicity of transposing English into German. With this booklet, all I had to do was to run my finger down the left-hand column until I found the English phrase I wanted, and then rattle off the nonsense syllables printed opposite in the right-hand column. "How many grenade launchers have you?" for instance, was *Vee feel grenada vairfair habben zee?* Impeccable German for "Where are your tank columns?" proved to be nothing more troublesome than *Vo zint cara puntzer shpitzten?* I mouthed the phrases: "Where are your howitzers? How many machine guns have you? Surrender! Don't shoot! Where have you hidden your motorcycle? Hands up! What unit are you from?"

The pamphlet came to an abrupt end, toppling my spirits from manic to depressive. The Pennsylvania Dutchman had smoked up all the rear area pleasantries, comprising the pamphlet's first half, leaving me with nothing to work with but the repartee of hand-to-hand fighting.

As I lay sleepless in bed, the one drama in which I could play took shape in my mind. . . .

DOLMETSCHER (to BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER): I don't know what will become of me, I am so sad. (*Embraces her.*)

BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER (*with yielding shyness*): The air is cool, and it's getting dark, and the Rhine is flowing quietly. (**DOLMETSCHER** seizes **BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER**, carries her bodily into his room.)

DOLMETSCHER (*softly*): Surrender.

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(Enter BURGOMASTER.)

BURGOMASTER (brandishing Luger): Ach! Hands up!

DOLMETSCHER and BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER: Don't shoot!

(A large map, showing disposition of American First Army, falls from BURGOMASTER'S breast pocket.)

DOLMETSCHER (aside, in English): What is this supposedly pro-Ally Burgomaster doing with a map showing the disposition of the American First Army? (He snatches .45 automatic pistol from beneath pillow and aims at BURGOMASTER.)

BURGOMASTER and BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER: Don't shoot! (BURGOMASTER drops Luger, covers, sneezes.)

DOLMETSCHER: What unit are you from? (BURGOMASTER remains sullen, silent. BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER goes to his side, weeps softly. DOLMETSCHER pauses significantly, suddenly points at BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER.) Where have you hidden your motorcycle? (Turns again to Burgomaster.) Where are your howitzers, eh? Where are your tank columns? How many grenade launchers have you?

BURGOMASTER (cracking under terrific grilling): I—

(Enter Guard Detail composed of Pennsylvania Dutchmen, making a routine check just in time to hear BURGOMASTER and BURGOMASTER'S DAUGHTER confess to being Nazi agents parachuted behind American lines.)

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller couldn't have done any better with the same words, and they were the only words I had. There was no chance of my muddling through, and no pleasure in being interpreter for a full battalion and not being able to say so much as "Merry Christmas."

I made my bed, tightened the drawstrings on my duffel bag, and stole through the black-out curtains and into the night.



THE STARS AND I

by R. P. LISTER

IMMENSE the stars are, and immense the sky,
And very, most exceeding small am I;
Sometimes I think, as through the night I lurch,
That I am like a tiny flea in church.

Yet other times I seem extremely big,
A kind of mammoth, or at least a pig;
Then, I conceive the stars as very small—
Or else I do not see the stars at all.

Wary sentinels directed me to Battalion Headquarters, where I found most of our officers either poring over maps or loading their weapons. There was a holiday spirit in the air, and the executive officer was honing an eight-inch bowie knife and humming *Are You from Dixie?*

"Well, bless mah soul," he said, noticing me standing in the door, "here's old 'spreken zee Dutch.' Speak up, boy. Ain't you supposed to be ovn at the mayah's house?"

"It's no good," I said. "They all speak Low German, and I speak High."

The executive was impressed. "Too good foah 'em, eh?" He ran his index finger down the edge of his murderous knife. "Ah think we'll be runnin' into some who can talk the high-class Kraut putty soon," he said, and then added, "Weah surrounded."

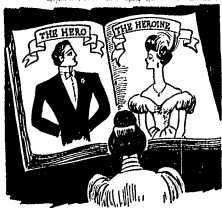
"We'll whomp 'em the way we whopped 'em in Nawth Ca'lina and Tennessee," said the colonel, who had never lost a maneuver. "You stay heah, son. Ah'm gonna want you foah mah pussnel intupretah."

Twenty minutes later I was in the thick of dolmetsehing again. Four Tiger tanks drove up to the front door of Headquarters, and two dozen German infantrymen dismounted to round us up with submachine guns.

"Say sumpin'," ordered the colonel, spunky to the last.

I ran my eye down the left-hand columns of my pamphlet until I found the phrase which most fairly represented our sentiments. "Don't shoot," I said.

A German tank officer swaggered in to have a look at his catch. In his hand was a pamphlet, somewhat smaller than mine. "Where are your howitzers?" he said.



THE NEW MALLARKEY

by PEG BRACKEN

PEG BRACKEN is the pseudonym of Mrs. Roderick Lull of Portland, Oregon. Her verse, articles, and stories have appeared in many magazines.

THERE are more tricks to the glossy fiction trade than the casual reader probably thinks. One of the writer's big problems, as he creates his beautiful, brave, lovable characters, is making them beautiful enough and brave enough, and still keeping them lovable.

The fact is, times have changed. Today's sophisticated reader will no longer buy yesterday's heroine, who walked in virtue, her eyes blue as the sky over Naples, with cheeks that shamed the rose. He is equally unconvinced by yesterday's hero, that big handsome broad-shouldered curly-haired package of incorruptibility.

A thing called Reader Identification has set in. The reader knows, deep down, that *he* is not as beautiful or lovable as that, and furthermore he doubts whether anyone is.

Thus, the twin horns of the writer's dilemma are distressingly clear. The writer must, to put it bluntly, lay off the mallarkey. But he knows, too, that his feminine readers will refuse just as flatly to identify themselves with a thick-waisted heroine or one who has a front tooth out; nor will his masculine readers stay long with a potbellied hero.

It is encouraging to be able to report that writers have solved the problem—not with the faint praise which damns, but with the faint damn which praises. For example: "Brad looked at Pam. She was too thin, her cheekbones too high, her eyes too wide apart. . . ."

Now, there is Reader Identification with a hey-nonnie. Every woman

ACCENT ON LIVING