

**P**ROF SAID LANDRY died of hate, that self-hate kind that everybody (meaning everybody human) seemed to have. He said that's also why so many laughed.

Me, I don't know. It could've been that. But it could've been because that was his last good shirt he was wearing.

He tore it where everybody was always tearing them, on the Lower Belt. He was working point on our side of the slagline, trying to poke loose a clod that had gotten stuck on the runners in between Belts. It was jumpy duty trying to reach in between there, what with the Upper going one way carrying the ore cubes and the Lower dragging the slag back the other and all the time watching that the tip of your slagpike didn't get snatched into the gears. We were always a lot more scared of the Upper, since it was head-high and all and I imagine that's what Landry was doing — watching out for his eyes — because he had his head sucked down so tight into his shoulders that he edged tummy-first into the Lower edge. A prong snagged his shirt and tore the whole front of it loose just like that.

No big deal, really. We had all had that happen to us working point. And it wasn't like he was hurt himself. It was just the shirt. I figured he would just cuss and kick like everybody else. But he didn't. He went nuts.

First he let out this scream you could hear from one end of the Beltline to the other, over the sound of scraping pikes, over the voices and the furnace — even over the rattling Belts themselves. Then he put a boot on the Lower and hopped right up on the Upper, kicking cubes off and jabbing his pike into the beltfab.

*So Love*

# The Bluenose LIMIT

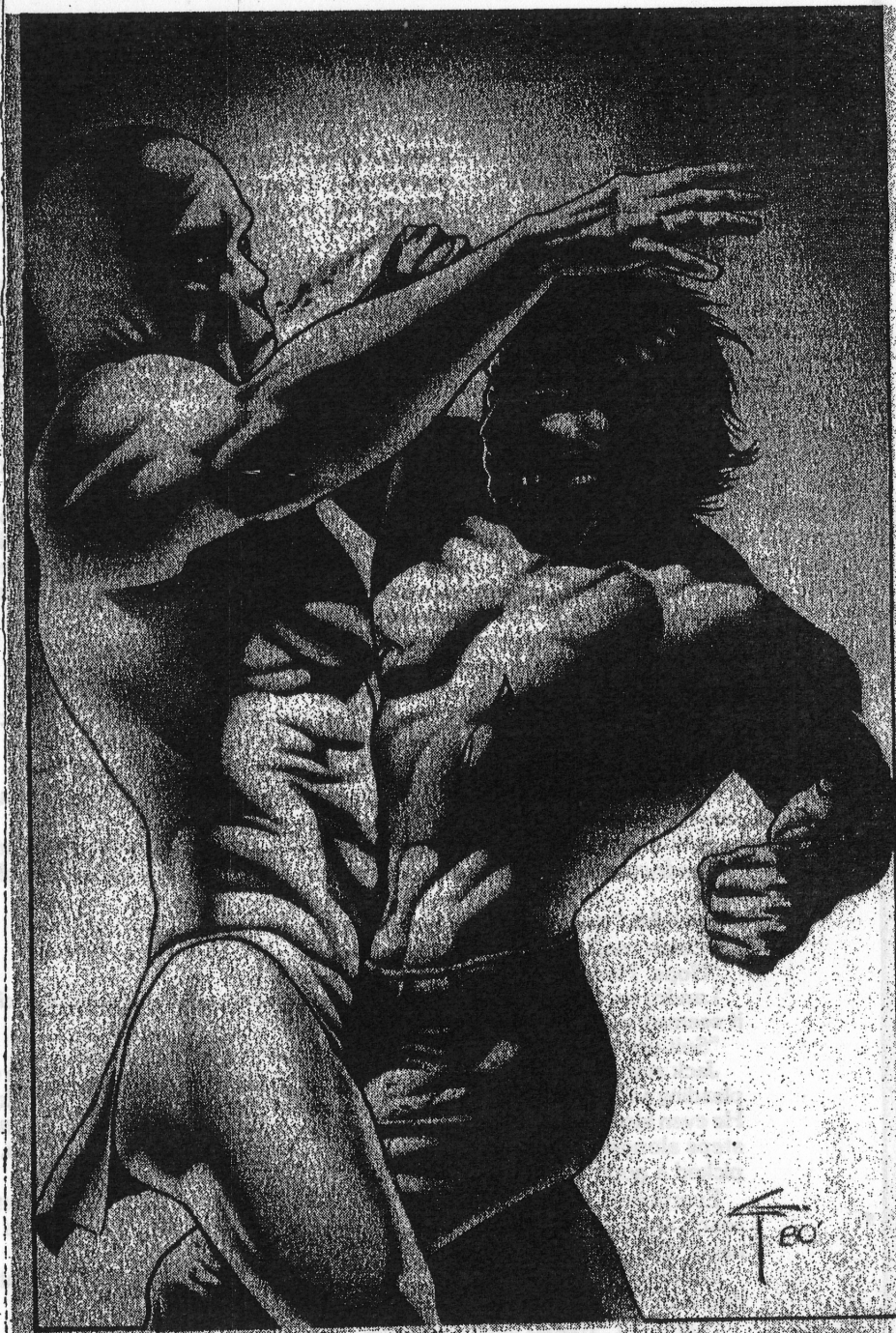
*God bless,*  
**John Steakley**  
*John Steakley*

It was funny at first. Everybody stopped scraping and followed along beside him, laughing and cheering and yelling catcalls. The Prof, working pointback like always (because of his age), was closest and when he cupped his hands and yelled: "Ahab Landry strikes!" everybody laughed all the louder. Even Landry laughed at that, but I think it was just to make it look like he was less into it than he really was.

Because he was serious. I could tell. He was all red-faced and puffing like mad, bounding along on the rollers and stabbing away like beltfab was his worst enemy. And I'll be damned if he didn't punch a hole clean through — a good six-inch gash.

Everybody cheered like mad then. We screamed and clapped and held our pikes up over our heads and I figured that was that, Landry had made his point.

But I guess he hadn't. Because he didn't even slow down. He just kept on poking and prodding. Made me nervous, watching him still at it like that.



Illustrated by Gary Freeman

It got to Prof too, who yelled, "Well done, Landry! A clean kill and a clear victory!" while leading another round of applause and just generally trying to wind things up.

I don't think Landry even heard him. He kept stabbing away and punched another hole.

"Hey, Landry! Going for a hotfoot?" yelled Bart from beside me while motioning towards the furnace with his pike. Everybody laughed. "Hothead, more like it," popped Avery. "Gonna roast his ass if he don't move it." Most everybody laughed at that too.

It was still fun then.

About then you could feel the heat. We had already gotten that close. Landry felt it, too. But all it did was speed him up. He punched another hole alongside the others.

We were starting to see his plan. He was trying to rip holes in a line so as to tear the whole Belt loose and jam it up when it went over the hump and across the furnace gears. But there wasn't near enough time — everybody could see that. Hell, I was surprised that he'd done what he had. I guess I'd just assumed that since beltfab couldn't burn, it couldn't be ripped. Or maybe I just figured we couldn't touch anything built by Blues.

Prof was getting real edgy. "C'mon, Landry," he said in a nervous voice, "enough already. Get off there!" But he was drowned out by a bunch of others yelling stuff like, "Ride 'em, Landry!" and "Over the hump!" and still laughing.

Landry was looking a little frantic, glancing back over his shoulder at the fire all the time. But he didn't stop. He just made another hole.

The heat was getting pretty intense. Other people were getting nervous, too. The guys shouting, "Jump!" outnumbered the ones shouting, "Ride 'em!" But not by much.

Jack appeared finally, cutting off my view for a second with that huge back of his. He shouldered everybody aside and stuck an arm up to Landry.

"Time's up, Landry," he said firmly.

Landry recognized that voice. He glanced down briefly. "Just a couple more," he said.

Jack was pissed. "One more like Hell! You got ten meters to the hump!"

Landry glanced quickly back at the glow. "Catch me," he said, still stabbing away.

"Bullshit," snapped Jack. "Jump now or burn."

"Catch me," said Landry again, stabbing.

"Nope. Now."

Landry sort of erupted. His face got even redder and his voice was so vicious it seemed to be ripping its way out of him.

"Suit your damned self, then!" he snarled and ripped at a gash.

Jack stared. Then Landry looked back down again, but different, like he was pleading and something passed back and forth because Jack suddenly nodded. He even kind of smiled — like the old Jack. Then he trotted on ahead down the steps alongside the hump, scattering people with those big shoulders. He picked a good spot on the safety rail and waited. His face was blank.

Everybody crowded down beside him into the heat, leaving him room to reach and all, but not wanting to miss a thing. Some of us were maybe too eager. But, dammit, it WAS exciting. And God knows, it was new.

Landry, his face pouring flickering sweat, punched one more hole. That left him with only a couple of inches to go. He tensed for one more thrust.

"Landry!!!" roared Jack, sounding final.

That seemed to snap Landry out of it. He looked down, nodded, and dropped his pike right then, just as the Belt slid over the hump and down. Landry bent his knees . . . Jack's giant hands reached up . . . Landry jumped . . .

Only he didn't.

I couldn't see for sure. Maybe a pant leg was snagged in the rip or maybe a boot. Whatever, he was stuck tight.

Now I would've screamed like Hell and I think anybody might have, at that. But all Landry did was shake his head kinda disgusted-like and say: "Typical," and then he was into that white-hot maw.

Except for the fire-roar, there wasn't a sound. We stood there, stunned. Sweating, and breathing through our mouths. Jack slowly put down his arms.

Then Wallace, a real prick, said: "Just as well. Somebody woulda turned him in for doing it anyway."

I felt like hitting him, but I didn't. Nobody did. We just went back to work.

At 6:58, two minutes before quitting time, the Belt snapped.

LITTLE PAULIE was there at the schoolyard fence. "Hi, Hughie! How ya doin', Hughie!" he yelled to show off for the other four-year-olds who'd probably get smacked for calling their fathers anything besides Dad or Pop. It made me feel good to see how such a small thing could please him so much and it was the least I could do. Or maybe the most, seeing as how I still hadn't told him I wasn't his real father. And wasn't going to, either.

When I picked him up, he snuffled his little face against my chest to get the most Cleaner smell out of my overalls.

"I love Cleaner smell," he said like always. "Don't you, Hughie?" And, like always, I said I did. But I hated it. Like everything else Blue.

We had to detour around Mall East on the way home. I couldn't see why over the barriers and Blues never bother to give reasons. Had to walk all the way to Pitt East Square before doubling back.

There was a Blue there.

He sat in an open hover looking bored and watching the crowds padding by a couple of stories or so beneath him. Lots of the crowds were watching him back. Except for tapes and the like, most people had never actually seen one, even after five years.

He was a big one, even for them. Eight and a half feet, easy. Call it eight or nine hundred pounds. And all of it that damned baby blue. I shivered a little when I saw him. It wasn't just the size that spooked me, or the color. It wasn't even them looking so human.

Nope, what got to me was them being so goddamned pretty.

I had once seen a whole hoverload touring the factory and there hadn't been a single ugly in the bunch. All gorgeous, all bored, and all naked except for those little skirt-things of theirs. Like having the statues roaming around loose in the museum flexing at the tourists.

It had scared Hell out of me. It still did.

Paulie loved 'em, though. Said something about blue being a friendly color and brought out a whole slew of pix he had collected showing Blues playing with smiling human children. Paulie ate that up, sitting for hours looking at them spread out on the floor. Sometimes he would trade pix with other kids in deals too complicated for adults to understand.

I hated the pix, of course. I had a particularly bad nightmare over the one showing five kids sitting astride each bicep.

Paulie had fallen asleep on my shoulder. I knew he would've wanted me to

wake him up for the sight of a real-live Blue. But I let him sleep. Didn't even look myself when we passed underneath. Seemed to me we spent too damn much time looking up to them as it was.

Still, there was Paulie's future to think about . . .

Damn, but I hated to think of my boy as one of those little bluenose punks. But if he was going to have it any better than me, what choice was there? It was damn near unheard of to get anywhere without some Blue's help. Oh, maybe if you were a genius of some kind or the son of one.

Paulie wasn't either. So, to find a decent place in the world, Paulie would need to please a Blue.

To be a bluenose, sucking around 'em and fawning over everything they said or did like house pets. Well, I hoped he'd turn out to be a successful one, at least. Bad enough having to crawl without getting anything out of it. About the only thing I had to be glad of was that I didn't need to do that. I couldn't go much further down, so why be a puppy?

Of course, Prof said we were all bluenoses, not just those first traitors or the more current slime. Every day we stayed alive under their rule, he said, we'd each get a little more blue there. Said the next generation wouldn't mind a bit. They won't know any better and, besides, most of them will be too busy doing it to think about it.

Well, maybe that's good. Better for Paulie not to be ashamed of himself all the time like a lot of folks. And why shouldn't he? Hell, he wasn't even around Before. He had nothing to try and forget.

But I did. I had to forget the world as it was, when men still ruled the Earth and I was a steelworker instead of a slob that scraped up slag dust for an automated robot.

But little Paulie shouldn't mind. He never knew an Earth without Blues. He'd get along. No choice.

Just the same, I knew I hoped like Hell he would refuse. And felt ashamed for hoping it because Paulie was a good one who deserved more than slag. It wouldn't be fair to let on to him about how I felt. It was a Blue's Earth nowadays, like it or not.

ANN ELBOWED her way through the crowded tables and put the steaming plates down before me. Then she leaned over Paulie's side of the booth to wake him up with what they call a butterfly kiss. Paulie, playing possum (and with me under strict oath of secrecy), jerked up at the first gentle touch of her eye lashes across his cheek and threw his arms around her neck.

Ann shrieked: "You little ambusher!" and countered with his most dreaded nemesis: precision tickling. Never remotely equal to that, Paulie jumped away to the far side of the booth, giggling madly.

"Can't take it, huh?" she challenged, feinting a bit. Paulie shook his head warily, holding his arms to his sides to protect vital areas. She sat down on the edge of the seat. "Miss me, Paulie?" she asked, continuing with the next stage of their greeting. Paulie shook his head curtly from side to side as always.

Pouting, she asked: "Not even a little bit?" Paulie shook his head even harder, but a grin had begun to peek out of the corner of his mouth.

"Ann!!!" shouted the manager of the diner. All three of us cringed a little. Ann sighed and stood up, pushing the hair from her eyes. "Eat it all up, you," she ordered Paulie. She only said: "Hi, Hughie," to me, but as she did she rested her warm hand on my shoulder. I managed something back and then watched her fight through the smoke and noise to the next order. I could've watched her for

days. Even in that filthy waitress uniform, she was beautiful. Sometimes I would imagine that Paulie's mother had been something like Ann.

WILLIE AND RAY from the slagdump crew sat down beside me at the bar and started bet-talk about tomorrow's Games. Seemed that a Blue was supposed to attend in person. Each man had a different opinion about what that meant easy-moneywise.

They ended up betting two credits, not on the results of events, but on whether or not a certain event (The Choice of Three) would be held at all.

"Ain't no way," said Willie, "that anybody'd be dumb enough to sign up for that. Hell, it's bad enough facing three locals one after another. But trained Blueteamers? Shit."

"Somebody'll chance it," replied Ray. "The prize is just too tempting."

"What tempting? It's same as always: ten credits if you live and your choice of opponents after. Same as any Sunday."

"But a Blue's gonna be there, Willie. And he'll have that slimy little bluenosing mayor sniffing around him. Even that pig mayor will have to fight a three-winner if he's challenged. And who wouldn't like to mash *that* little squat?"

"Dammit, Ray. There ain't gonna be no three-winner 'cause there ain't no body around can beat three Blueteamers back-to-back."

"Wait a minute. I didn't say they'd win. I said they'd try, is all."

"Not even that."

"We'll see."

"Damn right."

I wondered if either one of those two experts had ever so much as considered actually entering the Games. Not likely. Not even single-duel, much less Choice of Three. I had thought about it once, years ago. Before Paulie. I entered single-duel, but chickened at the ramp. Did learn one thing, though: Willie and Ray were stupid to think it had anything to do with guts.

It had to do with being too tired.

Suddenly I remembered that Landry had told me he was going to fight tomorrow. I wondered if that's what his "typical" was about.

Our bunch started wandering in. I waved and talked a bit and drank, of course, getting the most of my one night a week. Paulie slept soundly in my arms, unaffected by the swirling Saturday night blabber.

Later on, Prof, on the stool beside me, leaned forward against the bar and raised one finger in that actor way he's got when spouting beer-talk. Mearning Blue-talk.

"What could the President have done? He had no real power."

I don't remember who he was talking to except that he was fat. "Huh?" he replied. "The President of the United States was the most powerful dude in the whole world!"

"Then why," asked Prof, "did the Blues kick him out to make do like the rest of us?"

"'Cause he wouldn't sell out to those Blue bastards like those other greedy bums. He was too straight to do that."

"Nonsense," replied Prof pleasantly. "The fact is, the President had nothing to sell. Only the people with real clout — industries, unions, oil companies — could cash in on the Takeover."

"And they sure as shit did," whined the fat man. "In one helluva big hurry."

"Too true," said Prof, taking a long sip. "May syphilis strike them all."

"I still think the President told 'em no," said fat, getting misty-eyed.

"Then why didn't they kill him like the others who refused?"

"Uh . . . he was too big for that."

Prof laughed. "My dear fellow, no President of our choosing has been that big since the nineteenth century. No. The President was simply ignored. I doubt that he suspected much more than the rest of us suckers. Remember all those lovely Rose Garden toasts about the Brotherhood of the Stars? He was just as gullible as the rest of us. Even made that pitiful speech about sending air strikes if the Blueships didn't stop landing." Prof sighed. "I don't think he realized even then that it was all over."

That was Prof's basic Saturday night. His theory was that the Blues grabbed up the really powerful handful of men and women who actually ran the world. They snatched them months before anyone else ever heard of the Blues. Then they offered them the moon in return for aiding the inevitable, but not necessarily bloody, Blue Takeover. Prof figured the two meteors that struck about that time were really demonstrations of Blue muscle to help prove their point to the captives. Plus the obvious threat.

"So," Prof would say, "they sold us out, Hughie. They spread the word that the Blues were mankind's big break, while dismantling our armies and communications systems. That's how they took over so fast, Hughie. It's the only way they could have. You can't enslave an entire planet overnight without a lot of busy nights beforehand."

I said I still didn't buy it. Those folks could've done something! They could've faked it on the ships, then spread the alarm when they got back to Earth. Prof would smile at this.

"Why, Hughie. To ensure even more humans killed?"

"It'd been worth it to beat 'em."

"Us? Beat Blueships and Blue weapons?"

"Well, we might have."

"We might. But those powerful few didn't believe we could. In fact, I imagine they truly believed that they were helping Earth. That they were making the best of the inevitable."

"Best is right," I said sourly. "Lookit those bastards living good."

"Only the icing, Hughie. But probably the deciding factor at that. If mankind is sure to lose, why must all men lose?"

I would always steam a bit then, knowing it figured that way. But not liking it.

I once asked Prof straight out: "Do you think we had a chance to stop them?"

"I don't know, Hughie. I just don't know. Probably not."

"Still," I insisted stubbornly, "we should've tried."

"We fucking sure should have!!!"

When I looked quickly over at Prof, I saw he was looking way into the distance with a pair of eyes that looked dead as Hell. When Prof would talk like that it made me wonder about who he had been Before and about how come he was working slagline with the rest of us when he was so smart and all?

Was he hiding? Was he one of those people who were offered so much to betray us? And did he refuse? Tell 'em to shove it?

Whenever his eyes and voice did that hard trick of his, I wondered about that. But I never asked him. Nobody did. Those days, what difference did it make?

ANN CAME in still wearing her waitress uniform. Nobody had dress-up clothes anymore, of course. Except for bluenoses. But it seemed tougher on women.

Jack wasn't with her for some reason. She searched the room a bit for him, then headed toward me. She smiled that smile she had that always made me sit

up straight, then took the stool beside mine. For just a second, I pretended that there was no Paulie in my lap and that she'd come over to be with me. She sighed a small sigh of fatigue and gently stroked Paulie's brow. Still fast asleep, he clamped a tiny hand around one of her fingers. She looked up to see if I had seen it.

I looked away in a hurry, embarrassed at what I'd been thinking.

I could feel her watching me. Probably she knew. Or could guess.

"Where's Jack?" I asked, covering up.

"I don't know. He's supposed to meet me. Hasn't he been here?"

"Not tonight. Come to think of it, I haven't seen him in here in four or five Saturdays. Funny."

She managed to shrug and nod and look beautiful all at once. "Something's wrong, Hughie. I know there is. Something's happened to get to him."

I told her about what had happened to Landry that morning. That seemed like part of it.

"Yes," she said in a voice so low I could barely hear her. "I think that could . . . But this has been going on quite awhile. Almost as if . . . Hughie? What was he like Before? Was he very different?"

I laughed. "God, yes," I said and thought back, remembering how he had been at first and how much he had meant to all of us. "Jack Crow was the best guy to know and work with that anybody's ever seen, Ann. Always so damned friendly and cheerful and . . . I don't know . . . Positive. He could warm up the air three feet around just grinning. For working guys like us, it was a big deal to be around somebody like that, even Before. He had everything — looks, smarts, ten-ton muscles. He could've done anything he wanted to do. You know?"

She nodded, smiling. But she didn't know what it had meant to us to know that he had picked our profession, our factory, our life. The man loved being a steelworker, was proud as Hell of it. That made us proud too. Glowing.

Inside of a month, he was every man's hero. Mine too.

"And never ashamed!" I blurted, laughing back.

"I beg your pardon?" asked Ann, confused.

"That was it with Jack. That was the whole deal, really. Once somebody asked him what his Philosophy of Life was and you know what he said? He said: 'I ain't ashamed.' Most of the guys thought he was just fooling around. And he sorta was. But he'd said it dead straight, Ann. Damn, bet he wasn't more'n eighteen at the time."

Ann looked a little startled. "Eighteen? But it's only been eight years, hasn't it, since he's been here? Hughie, he looks forty!"

"Yeah. He took it bad, Ann. Couldn't believe it had happened without anyone even . . . you know."

She nodded. She knew. We all knew.

I went on. "He took off a couple months later. Gone over a year. He looked a lot different when he came back." I caught myself unnecessarily shifting Paulie's position, stopped it. "He didn't joke anymore, or even talk sometimes. Other times he . . . he'd get real mad all of a sudden-like and . . . hurt people. He never did that Before."

Her right forefinger, incredibly soft, rose to my face and fingered my scar — the big one where the jawbone had poked through. Maybe Jack confused her. But was there anything she didn't know about me?

"But you don't hate him for it, do you, Hughie?"

"No."

"You still care about him. You always have."

"Yeah."

"Even after . . ."  
"Yeah. Even then."  
"Why, Hughie?"

I shrugged, said: "I don't know." And I didn't. Not then.

There was a sudden, bone-jarring crash as the double doors burst open half off of their hinges and there stood Jack, drunk and swaying, between them. And he was covered from head to toe with slag dust.

He looked awful. As he stomped loudly across the room, I saw that his face was a pale grey underneath the grimy coating of slag dust and sweat. His eyes were blood red with what could have been just sadness and fatigue but made me think of panic. When he pounded his fist on the bar for service, he splattered its surface with fat drops of blood. Ann gasped when she saw the nasty gash on his wrist and reached out to cradle his hand.

"My God, Jack! What happened? Your hand . . . your clothes . . ."

He pulled his hand out of her reach with an awkward jerk. He patted his filthy pants with it.

"So what, woman? That's just slag dust. Part of the job I do. Part of my valuable service to God and the Blues. What — are you ashamed of being seen with a slag scraper?"

"No, Jack," she said quietly.

"Good for you. I ain't ashamed either. I love being a scrap iron janitor! Anything to help."

His beer appeared on the bar. He grabbed it, downed it, with one gulp. His elbow shoved against a guy beside him.

Jack spun, growling. His face got taut, his fist shot up . . . He held himself, barely. He didn't kill the guy. Didn't even hit him, somehow. Instead he just leaned against the bar, both hands clamped tightly to the cushion. He looked at his feet, breathing deeply. And trembling.

"Jack," said Ann gently, "let me take you home and get you . . ."

"Hell, no, woman," he said, standing up straight. "I've got business here." He pounded his fist on the bar again.

"Announcement, fellow janitors!" His bellow turned every eye in the room to him. "A toast to our former foreman, Landry. Who gave his life today just for the hell of it. Drink to his memory."

I took a small sip. I don't know how many others drank. Probably everybody. Jack drained half his second beer with one swallow. Then he saw that everybody was watching him.

"So how the hell are you, gentlemen? On this fine Saturday night? Been gone awhile, myself. But everything looks like before. Same pale faces. Same bad beer. Same stupid, worthless arguments too, I bet. Huh, Prof? Anything different this time?"

"Not a thing, Jack," Prof said evenly.

"That figures."

"Glad to have you back, though," Prof continued. "Where've you been?"

"You know goddamned well where I've been, Prof." Jack looked at him then, really looked at someone for the first time. And Prof looked right back. Right into pain. "I've been at the slag burner, Prof," Jack continued hoarsely. "Where the hell else can a man get to be this way? What else but that stinking Blue rat-hole would vomit such filth on a human being?"

Ann tried to grab him again, to stop him. To end the agony of it. But he pushed her away. He stalked over to the biggest empty table in the middle of the room. He grabbed the edge of it with one hand and dragged it over to the bar, scattering chairs and pieces of fractured mugs. He plopped down on it and

stared at Prof from no more than a couple of feet away.

At the far booths, conversations lamely shuffled ahead. Nobody wanted to hear.

"Don't you know why I went back, Prof?" Prof was silent. "Well, don't you? Don't you all?" His voice cracked. He was pleading. Ann turned away.

"Yes, Jack," Prof said at last. "Tell us why."

"For Landry, of course. For his slag pike. He dropped it under the belt, you know, just before it burned him alive."

It got real quiet. Dead still in the whole place. And Jack started to cry.

"I was gonna rip it outta there, Prof. You know? You know, Hughie? Rip it outta there and bust the shit outta everything doing it, too. I was gonna strip those gears, Prof. I was gonna bash the whole assembly, right into the concrete! I . . ."

He broke off suddenly with a sob. He dropped his mug. He covered his face with his hands. His back heaved.

Just when I knew I wasn't going to be able to take it one more second, the whimpering stopped and Jack lifted his head.

He looked worse than ever. Tears poured from his eyes, making tiny pink lines across his blood-smearred cheek. His voice was small for him — too small, dammit.

"I couldn't get it out! I tried! I tried with all I could! All my everything, and I'm strong, Prof . . ."

"I know, Jack," whispered Prof.

Jack lifted one of those huge arms and rested his hand on Prof's shoulder and looked him in the eye and needed — God, how he needed! — an answer.

"Prof, how could he do such a thing? How could we get so excited about it? Prof . . . how? Is throwing it away the only use we got left?"

And then he fell. Tears and muscles and need and pain — all of it slid to the floor. It took forever.

Paulie stirred in my arms. He moaned and stuck his little hands inside my shirt. But he didn't wake up. I took a wet napkin and wiped a drop of blood from his cheek.

PROF STOOD holding Paulie while I helped Ann get his clothes off. Then we both stood and watched while she dabbed away at the grime with a damp rag.

"Goddamned Blues," I muttered, for something to say.

"It's not the Blues," replied Ann calmly, just as if we'd really been talking. "He could take that, I think."

"It's us," said Prof, simply.

"Huh?"

She turned to me: "He loves us so much, Hughie."

"Sure," I said uncertainly. "I know that."

"Not just the three of us. All of us. People, dear, all the . . ."

"Man," said Prof flatly. "He loves Man. We despise ourselves, but he loves us still." He sighed. "It's killing him."

Ann began to weep quietly.

I didn't like any of this. "Aw, he'll be okay, Annie! You'll see." I knelt down and put a clumsy arm around her shoulders. "He'll cheer up," I said.

She turned her face to look at me, those soft eyes peering and pleading like Jack's, and said: "How?"

I TOOK Paulie's fingers out of his mouth and put his arms back under the covers. Then I gave him a pat on the bottom for luck before climbing out onto the fire escape next to Prof. We lit cigarettes and opened beer. It was very late.

Only one person was out, an old man. We watched him hurry down the sidewalk and across the street without looking at anything but a moving spot a couple of steps ahead. He disappeared a few seconds out of the lone streetlight on the next block. And then the streets were completely empty. Dark, quiet, cold.

Maybe he hadn't been all that old after all.

"He'll get better. Won't he, Prof?"

"Jack is dying, Hughie," he replied without looking at me.

"Aw, come on, Prof."

"He's dying. Like all the rest of us. But . . . sooner. And worse, because he sees it happening."

I couldn't stand this anymore. "Look, Prof. Things aren't so great, but . . ."

He cut me off cold. "Why didn't we fight them, Hughie? Why didn't we fight?" He still wasn't looking in my direction.

"Huh? 'Cause it was all over, wasn't it?"

He turned to me at last. "Was it? Or did we just let it go? Oh, God, Hughie! Are we so puny that we'd just let it go?"

I didn't have a damn thing to say to that. I just sat there.

After awhile, he went on:

"We didn't fight. We said it was over and cursed the Bluenoses and blamed it all on them, but . . . we didn't fight!

"We grovel to them for everything, hating ourselves when we do it — hating others more for doing it better and getting more — and still we grovel. Hate. For the traitors, for the rest of the bluenoses, for ourselves. So much hate, Hughie!

"But what happened to the hate for the Blues? Where is that?"

"Shit, Prof," I replied, surprised. "Everybody hates 'em."

"Do you, Hughie? Why? Because they won? Because we lost to them?"

"Hell, yes! Both."

"But tell me, Hughie, do you trust them?"

"Do I what?"

"Trust them. Do you believe what they say?"

"I don't know. I guess so. I never heard of them lying to anybody."

"What about us, though? What about a neighbor? Could you trust him not to lie to you? Or worse, to maybe turn you in for extra liquor credits if he caught you . . ."

"Just a damn minute! You . . ."

"It happens, Hughie," he said gently.

I looked at him. I sighed. "I know."

"We all know. We don't trust ourselves anymore, Hughie. We haven't since that day when the Blues took control and we all looked around to see who was fighting back and do you know what we saw? Ourselves. Our own cowardly selves looking back and waiting for someone else to make the first move."

"But dammit, it's the Blues!" I shouted, hating this.

Prof ignored me. "Hughie, haven't you ever wondered why the Games are so popular?"

"What?" I tried to calm myself, still feeling rotten. I thought about his question. "People are bored and . . . I don't know, kinda tense all week and . . ."

"And so they decide to kill one another on Sundays? No, Hughie. Not tense. Furious. Enraged. Hating that neighbor we don't trust."

"That's why we go to the Games. We go to see those bastards suffer for what they did and didn't do and something else: for what we did and didn't do. A little bit of each fan, Hughie, is there to see himself killed."

"But . . . well, Rome had the Games and they weren't . . ."

"Rome was the capital of the world. Her Games, even the minor ones, were the ultimate in spectacle. Ours are nothing more than shoddy little slaughters held in any parking lot or pigpen available. It's not spectacle. It's not sport! It's . . . it's self-abuse."

"Goddamn us, Hughie! Why didn't we fight back? Why don't we now?"

I blinked. "Now? We wouldn't have a chance!"

"So what?"

IT CAME on me out of nowhere, halfway through the second year — just when I had thought the worst was past me.

I was still down, of course. Going everyday to a factory run for the Blues by their machines that had always before been run by Man.

By men. By me.

But I did it. Six days a week I did it. I cleaned up after the Blue machines and if I felt we were all like cattle sometimes, I just gritted my teeth and told myself to hang in there, that I would get used to it.

By halfway through the second year, I thought I had. Not happy. But day to day and head down and holding on.

Saturday night. Got Cleaned. Got all my credits. It was a chilly beautiful night and I put on my very best clothes. Went down my sidewalk and into the door of the pharmacy on the corner I had always passed before. Three boxes of sleeping pills — half my credits.

It was windy when I got back outside. I went into the alley to die warm.

Paulie was there. He was wrapped in a brown army blanket and an old shirt. His "bed" was a pile of old magazines wadded up in the center of an old tire. He was about one. He was smiling. A note pinned to the blanket said, "This is my dear little Da . . ." before I stopped reading.

I picked him up and walked away, leaving the pills, the blanket, and the note. It started raining on the way home, so I held him inside my shirt, against my skin, all the way.

I DREAMED MY hand was caught in the Lower Belt. I was going to scream, but I woke up instead. Something still had me by the middle finger of my left hand.

"Company! Company's here!" chirped Paulie.

I opened one eye and sighted down my arm slowly, not wanting to lose my balance, and there stood my bright-eyed, sadistic, child, gleefully yanking my knuckle with both hands.

"Hi, Hughie! Company's here."

I groaned, burped, looked at the clock. 10 a.m. Sundaywise, it was dawn.

Paulie dropped my hand and scooted out of sight, saying: "I'll get 'em," over his shoulder. I started to call to him, but gave it up. I rolled back over instead. I had a special hangover and knew it couldn't happen to me.

Paulie didn't drink. He bounced back into the room dragging Prof by the coat. "It's Prof!" he yelled happily.

I started to growl something but Prof cut me off.

"Sorry to wake you, Hughie. But I wanted to catch you before you went to the Games."

I mumbled something about not going to the Games. He looked surprised. He sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Don't you go to the Games?"

"Not for a couple years now."

"Really? Hm."

"What did you want?"

"I wanted to say goodbye."

That woke me up. I sat up, stared at him. I reached out blindly for a cigarette. Paulie handed me the pack. I thanked him, patted him on the head, still not taking my eyes off Prof.

He looked different. He looked tired, of course, since he obviously hadn't been to bed yet. But he was holding it well. His eyes were bright and clear. His white hair was combed back over his ears with a flourish. He was excited.

More than that. He was . . . determined.

I knew already, seeing him. But I asked anyway: "Will you be back?"

"No."

I nodded. "We'll miss you."

He smiled at that. "And I'll miss you, too," he said, reaching out and mussing Paulie's hair affectionately.

I sat and smoked while he rough-housed a bit with Paulie. Then he smiled at me again. "Tell everybody," he said.

I nodded again. "You leaving now?"

"This afternoon."

I nodded again. I didn't know what to say. Or, at least, I knew what to say but not how to say it. But I wanted to tell him. I wanted to try.

I tried to speak but there was a lump in my throat and my eyes were getting hot.

"I know," he said suddenly. He patted me on the leg. His eyes were shining too. He stood up. We shook hands. And then he was gone.

"Where's Prof going?" Paulie wanted to know.

"To fight," I replied, which was true. I didn't say "to die," but that was just as true.

"Oh," said Paulie. He didn't understand. But at least he had an answer, which was the main thing. He went off to play.

I tried to go back to sleep. But I kept seeing Prof when he shook my hand. And then I kept seeing him on the fire escape the night before. I could hear Paulie in the next room and the people laughing and stirring in the building and on the street. I wanted to get up and go see Prof and talk to him. But I knew I didn't have anything to say.

I dozed. When I woke up it was almost noon. For some reason, I thought of the Games starting in about an hour. And then for some other reason, or maybe the same one, I had a huge desire to go.

I sat up. I hadn't been to the Games in years. Hadn't wanted to. But, all of a sudden, I couldn't miss it.

The Goldbergs were great people with a little girl who was sweet on Paulie. Paulie would gripe, but I knew he loved spending time playing with her toys and pretending not to be interested. Only the Goldbergs weren't home. Ike Craig offered to take Paulie, but his family was always so sad-looking, even for our sad building. I thought of Ann.

She opened the door looking bright and cheerful. And lovely. She did her bit with Paulie and then sent him off to the kitchen goody-hunting. I asked about Jack.

Her eyes clouded briefly. Then she smiled.

"Mr. Crow was feeling much better this morning, thank you. He was up an hour ahead of me."

She glanced at me, saw my question.

"We didn't discuss last night. Didn't really talk at all before he was dressed

and gone."

"Where'd he go?"

She shrugged delicately. "A mystery. He didn't say. Just kissed me hard and spanked me bye out there on the stoop, right out in front of God and everybody!"

I grinned. "You think he's okay, then?"

She averted her gaze. "I told you how he was."

I couldn't leave it be. "You know what I mean, Ann. Do you think he's going to get over it?"

She looked at me. She was smiling but it was a struggle.

"He hasn't got a prayer," she said calmly and went into the kitchen after Paulie.

I left the two of them together a few minutes later. I didn't mention Prof.

THE ARENA took up an entire city block and held almost ten thousand people. It was one of the biggest in the area, because it was a big city and because we had a pretty good local team. The building held a bus depot. Before and still looked like it, I guess. But it always reminded me of one of those old Mexican bullfighting rings. The faded wooden fence that ran all the way around it was covered with posters of local fighters. And the front entrance was made up of four arched tunnels surrounded by fluttering pennants and rows of vendors hawking homemade snacks from homemade carts. The way we were herded in there, with our shabby clothes and the vendors screaming, looked like something that should have taken place a hundred years before with a different people.

I recognized a few of the people around me in the mob. It was a crowd like any sports crowd. But more eager, more anxious. And definitely happier. Everyone around me always seemed to be laughing going into the Games. They were happier than ever today. It was bright and sunny, which helped. But more than that, a Blue was there.

I got a good seat. I was about fifteen rows up the first tier and right in the middle so I could see both the Gate and the Bluenose Box with no sweat. It wasn't called the Bluenose Box. It was called the reserved section and supposedly anybody could sit there who was willing to spend the credits. But nobody but a bluenose was rich enough, no matter how willing. Everybody in the bleachers always hated everybody in there.

Especially today, when only the bluest-nosed people in the city were there, showing off their wealth and position and easiness around the Blue. They laughed and chattered and smoked cigars. Their women flashed jewelry and pretty teeth. Not one of them took his eyes off the huge chair in the center of the box or off the giant who so easily filled it. Because nobody, bluenose or otherwise, was really easy around one of Them. About then I realized that it was the same Blue I had seen in his hover the day before. He sat in his chair the same way, too. Huge, serene, uninterested . . . my every fear.

The mayor, sitting beside him (just like Ray had said), stood up and went to the mike. He introduced the Blue and then the Gate opened and the fighters marched out. First came the Hometeam, then the only two independent entrants, then the "guest" entry, the Blueteam. They were really something, those Blueteamers. Only one of the nine was average-sized. The rest of them towered over the other fighters. Everything about them was intimidating, from their highly-polished swords to their deep blue tunics, and I wouldn't have been surprised if the entire local bunch had run away right then. Too bad they didn't.

After the usual ceremony, the mayor announced the opening match: three Hometeamers vs. three Blueteamers. The Blueteamers saluted their boss and waited. The hometeamers took every second allowed checking over each other's weapons and psyching themselves up. By the time the match started, the locals were higher than kites. They all but flew forward.

It was a slaughter. And a quick one. I don't think the Blueteamer suffered a scratch among them. The crowd cheered just the same, with individual fans spouting some shit about how you couldn't knock talent like that, no matter what side it was on.

The Blueteamers saluted and disappeared through the Gate. The crew came out to haul off the bodies and spread new sand in the circle. Then the mayor announced the next match: single combat — Blueteamer vs. independent entrant.

The poor local was so scared that his sword shook. He circled the Blueteamer, a big red-headed man twice his size, several times before flinging himself forward, swinging and shouting. He died, beheaded, without striking a single blow.

Still, there was applause.

I understood, then, what Prof had meant. I felt the hate. From the man beside me, from the woman in front of me . . . Hate for the Blueteamers, for the mayor, for the crowd, for ourselves, for being there in the first place. Prof was wrong, too. Because I hated the Blues just as much. This one, anyway, who sat there being bored by dying men.

It only took one man and a handful of sand to clean up. The mayor announced that the next match would be just like the last: single combat — Blueteamer vs. the other independent entrant. The second local man had seen what had happened to the first. He marched to the center of the ring without glancing at his opponent. He took a deep breath, saluted formally, and tried to back down. There was quite a bit of laughter. A couple of people jeered. But no one offered to take his place.

The scum mayor didn't even bother to hide his amusement when he informed the local that, since no one else was willing to fight in his place, the match would continue as announced. The local, a dark, lean kid of about twenty, didn't move. The mayor repeated himself and ordered the kid to fight. The kid still didn't move. The mayor looked nervously at the Blue, who was showing no more interest than before, then ordered the Blueteamer to attack.

"Please," the kid begged, his voice strident with youth and terror. "Please, Sir." He raced across the ring and stood, trembling, right beneath the box.

He was talking to the Blue.

We couldn't hear his voice from there, but we knew what he was doing. He was crying.

The Blue stared blankly down at him for several seconds. Long enough to give the kid some hope. But then he looked away and gestured curtly, casually, for the Blueteamer to get on with it.

"Nooo!" screamed the kid when he heard the footsteps behind him. He staggered to his feet. He threw himself against the wall beneath the box. He sobbed loudly. He stretched his arms over his head, towards the Blue, beseeching pitifully.

The Blue ignored him. He didn't even look down. The Blueteamer started forward again. When he got to within a few steps, the kid screamed and ran. The Blueteamer was right behind him. The kid fled towards the crowd barrier. Just before he got there, he tripped. He was too terrified, I guess, to pull himself back to his feet. Instead, he tried to crawl through the barrier, through the rail-

ing. He got stuck. Or maybe he just froze. But when the Blueteamer stood over him at last, he didn't move. The sword, shining brightly, rose to strike, the crowd tensed forward, the kid screamed in horror . . .

And Jack Crow, seated less than three meters away on the very first row, stood up and said: "Hold it!"

The Blueteamer froze and, like every other living creature in the place, looked at Jack.

"Who the hell are you?" growled the fighter.

Jack stepped up to the barrier and faced him. "Step away from him," he replied calmly. Firmly.

The Blueteamer's eyes flickered toward the box, then back to Jack. "And if I don't?"

Jack's voice was dead flat. "It will hurt," he said.

Jack was bigger. A lot bigger. And he meant it. The two of them stared back and forth from a foot away, the kid lying forgotten between them. And then, with a snarl of raging hatred, the Blueteamer swung out with his sword.

Jack's rocklike fist slammed him right between the eyes with a sound like a big truck hitting a big tree. The Blueteamer was two meters away before he hit the ground. Jack stepped over the barrier and strode towards him. The Blueteamer got halfway to his feet before Jack hit him again. It sounded worse the second time. Jack strode forward again, grabbed hold of an ankle and the collar of the blue tunic, and threw the man against the Gate.

The crowd, stunned before, began to murmur. There was scattered applause. The mayor leapt to his feet and grabbed the mike.

"What do you think you're doing?" he snapped.

Jack turned slowly and faced him across the width of the ring. "That's one," he said bluntly.

The crowd gasped around me. They saw it instantly. The mayor was a little slower.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"That was one," repeated Jack in a cold, clear voice.

The mayor understood it, now. He glared at Jack threateningly. Jack met his gaze calmly. "Very well, whoever you are," said the mayor at last. "Very well." The mayor touched a switch on the console before him. The Gate opened seconds later. Another Blueteamer appeared, looking like he had just thrown his gear together. The fighter paused when he saw his teammate lying still in the sand. He muttered something to someone inside and a couple of the guys from the crew appeared to drag the first man away. Then he turned his attention to Jack.

"You do this?" he asked, gesturing over his shoulder to the busy crewmen.

Jack snorted disgustedly. "You see anybody else?" He walked over and picked up the first man's sword, then stepped to the center of the ring and waited.

The mayor introduced the Blueteamer as Garrison, then asked for Jack's name. Jack gave it to him without comment. Equally casual, the mayor described the circumstances of the match along with Jack's prize, should he win. Then he offered Garrison one hundred credits for a quick victory and sat down.

The people in the crowd looked at one another. Jack's prize was only ten credits. "Typical," muttered somebody beside me who couldn't have known why I stared at him.

The match began. Garrison began immediately to circle Jack, testing his opponent with sharp jabs and twisting feints. Jack, no swordsman, but no idiot either, crouched low, keeping his blade on Garrison all the while.



Seeing Jack's inexperience made Garrison cocky. He began to toy with the end of Jack's sword, not bothering yet to go for the kill. When Jack tried his only clumsy lunge, Garrison laughed and parried at the same time, flipping blade against blade with offhand, insultingly deliberate, expertise. He never saw Jack's left hand coming until it had his sword arm by the wrist. By then it was too late. He was jerked forward helplessly, groin-first, against Jack's upsurging boot. Moaning horribly, sword flying, Garrison catapulted up and back through the air before crashing sideways onto the sand where he lay gasping with his hands between his legs.

Jack picked him up and threw him halfway through the Gate with a thunderous din of splintering plywood slats.

"That's two," he said simply.

The crowd exploded into wild cheering and deafening applause that went on a long time. "Just one more to go!" I heard several people shout. Then they would point to the mayor and drag their fingers happily across their throats. There was no doubt in their minds as to who Jack would pick to fight if he could beat the third and last man. They could already picture the most hated of all bluenoses crawling.

I guess the mayor could see it, too. He spent a long time on the phone to somebody behind the Gate. He looked like he was furious with whomever he was talking to. Mostly, though, he looked scared. He wouldn't look at Jack, who stood staring at him from the center of the ring.

The mayor's long consultation was worth it. They guy who finally came out was a for-real giant. He was huge, bald, and carrying the biggest sword I had ever seen.

The crowd got quiet in a hurry, seeing in a second that the last Bluetearer was a good three inches taller than Jack, and maybe thirty pounds heavier. This was going to be a lot different.

It was. Jack almost died in the first five minutes. The giant had beaten him back so quickly that he lost his balance and fell against the barrier. Jack must have banged his head against one of the bars or something, because he just sat there for a second without moving. Then he shook his head and looked up in time to see all his enemies smiling.

All his enemies. Not just the bald giant, rushing forward to kill him. And not just the mayor, leaning forward with eager beady eyes. The Blue was smiling, too. I don't know if anybody else even noticed. But I saw it and Jack sure as Hell did, I know. It was a vicious, cunning smile. A slight curl of a great blue mouth on a great blue face. It was unforgettable. It scared me.

It made Jack mad. He was something horrible when he got back to his feet. He wailed away at the giant with wild swooping swings that ended in ear-splitting clangs and bursts of sparks. The giant was off-balance for good after the first collision. Jack's blows were just too powerful and they came too fast for the giant to have a chance to do anything but block them. Jack could have gotten him in the first ten seconds if he hadn't kept doing the same thing over and over. He didn't try to change his tactics, though. He just pounded away at the giant's head, blow after blow. Maybe Jack didn't know what else to do.

Or maybe he just didn't care about doing anything else but smashing that bald head. Maybe killing the guy wasn't enough. Maybe he had to crush him.

He did just that. He backed him against the wall beside the Gate. He battered him to his knees, then kept on and on until he had broken the giant's guard, then his sword, then his arm. Jack didn't stop, didn't even slow down, until that huge bald head was a fractured, splintered mess. It was a bad thing to see.

Too bad, in fact, for the crowd. They were too stunned to cheer. They just

stared.

Jack snapped out of it a few seconds later. He dropped his sword on the body and whirled to face the box. Then he stalked across the sand to a spot just below the mayor and stood there, hands on hips, smiling a coal-black smile.

"I'll give you five hundred credits to pick somebody else," said the mayor in a nervous, trembling voice.

That woke the crowd up. They laughed.

"A thousand," upped the mayor when Jack didn't react. The crowd laughed some more at that and even more when the bid went to two thousand. Then five thousand. Then eight thousand, five hundred.

"It's all I have," implored the mayor and the laughter peaked.

Jack laughed too, at that. He laughed as he held out his hand and laughed as the money was counted out and laughed as he tucked it away in his belt and walked off. He stopped laughing abruptly, when he looked at us. He stopped our laughter too, with a blazing glare of withering disgust.

Looking and feeling like scolded children, we settled down at once. And waited, while he stood at the barrier and scanned back and forth across our faces. It was no better when he finished his examination and laughed again. It wasn't a pleasant sound.

"So who is it, you want to know! Huh? Who's next, right? Whom do I chose now?"

We cringed under his incredibly brutal, angry tone.

"Who, indeed?" he said and spat into the sand between his feet. When he lifted his head back up, his face was red with blind, uncontrollable rage. "Who?? I'll tell you who!!!" he shrieked. He spun around back toward the box and pointed a shaking finger dead center at it and shouted:

"You!! You, you Blue motherfucker! You! Get your blue ass down here and fight!"

No one spoke. No one moved. No one breathed. For what seemed like a long time, the Blue just sat there, coldly eyeing Jack. Then he stood up, all eight and a half feet of him, and vaulted over the box wall onto the sand.

And, without hesitation, it began.

Something big happened, then. Something more important than anything else.

It started when Jack pointed at the Blue. It faded a little when we saw that the Blue was really going to fight.

But it shot back up when, after a blue-fisted blow that would have killed a steer, Jack got back up.

Still, no one spoke. Not then. Not yet. But we moved with his every move. Jack's fists were mirrored thousands of times by our own, as they struck the enemy time and time again. We all ducked beneath that tremendous, hurtling, forearm. And we all gasped when it made its shuddering impact. But only Jack felt the awesome concussion. Only Jack felt the pain. Only Jack fell sprawling onto the sands.

And, bleeding visibly, got up a second time.

So astonished by this was the Blue, that he was left completely unprepared for attack. Jack's thundering roundhouse right actually knocked the enemy back.

Our cheering, our screaming, our hoping — they all started at that instant. And through it all, our love for Jack, our heartbreaking affection for him, never dimmed.

It took the Blue almost half an hour to kill Jack. Even as bad as he looked then — covered with blood and bruises, his shattered collarbone jutting horribly —

we thought he might still get up. And for a full minute, we waited, unmoving, for that very thing to happen. The Blue waited with us.

But Jack never moved again.

So then we knew. It was over. What had to be, was. The Blue had won like we all knew he had to and Jack was dead and, okay, okay, we're impressed and leaving quietly. We made ready to go. The Blue was going to leave, too. But before he did, he gave Jack's body one last, contemptuous, kick.

We rose. We were screaming. We were surging forward. The barrier collapsed beneath our mass. For several moments all became blurred until . . .

We were cheering again and dancing in the sand. Some of us hugged one another. Others held pieces of the Blue high over their heads and laughed.

Nothing else in my life could match it. Nothing could even come close. Not Jack, not Ann. Not even Paulie.

We were all so goddamned proud to learn that even we, cowards and blue-noses all, had a limit.

Soon, too soon, the jubilation ended and the fear returned. People began leaving quickly. I found Jack's body beside the barrier right where the kid had lain in panic. What had happened to *him*? Or did it really matter?

I looked at his face, holding it between my hands for several moments. Then I released him and kissed his bloody forehead. I found the fortune still folded inside his belt. I kissed him again.

For once, I knew just what to do. I headed home.

Ann took one look at me and gasped. I didn't move, didn't speak, while she searched my eyes.

"Jack?" she asked at last.

"He was great," I replied.

Prof was just leaving when the three of us arrived at his place. I had thought I might have to persuade him to let us come along, or at least tell him what happened. But one look at my excited face was all he needed. He clamped a hand on my shoulder, kissed Ann, and offered to carry Paulie the first hundred miles.

WE ARE never completely safe. Not even here. For the jungle can both kill and feed. Though it hides us, it also swallows us. And always the Blues, circling above. They caught us last night when we crossed the *Negro*. Many were burned. Paul says it was over two thousand people, children and old ones mostly. If he is right, and he usually is, then I was very lucky indeed. Still, that is a great many friends to lose.

Some went back today, more than on other days. They cannot live without a permanent home, even if it isn't theirs. They cannot live without a regular supply of food, even if they are just being fed. They cannot live without safety, even if it is prison.

They cannot raise their families, they tell me, while hiding in the jungle. They tell me that I don't understand that some people must have security. But I do understand it.

Some people must have the Blues.

But few have fallen so far. Most of us stay, for though we are tired and hunted and very often frightened, we are free.

And we are growing. ●

## John Steakley

1951 - Cleburne, Texas, a Leo starts

1961 - Major Event - first erection

1962 - Major Events -

(a) Moved to Dallas, the big city

(b) Read first book - "Red Planet", by

Robert A. Heinlein

1963 - Major Event - second erection

1969 - Major Event - College Education discarded in favor of adventure and romance as bandit in Bolivian Highlands. High Crusade forcibly aborted when first partner, then money, then nerve, drop behind. Education resumed with loss of less than two weeks for the entire round trip to Guatemala and back

1970 - Major Event - \$150 earned selling term papers to fellow students demonstrates not only existence, but true significance of new-found literary aptitude

1972 - Major Event - Movie treatment, "Vampires For Blood and money" sold for \$800

Career Goal #5 - Oscar for best Screenplay by 25

1973 - Major Event - Graduation from Southern Methodist University with a full half-credit hour to spare. Temporary financial necessity of entrance into mundane world of commerce is made bearable by the surprise discovery of a genuine aptitude for the position of Owner's Son.

1975 - Major Event - Move to Hoorayfor-

Hollywood, California. The combined assets of youth, courage, talent, and a small family loan, are brought to bear against the very core of the Movieland Rat Race with the sort of fierce determination that can only mean one thing: Superstar

1977 - Major Event - Back to Dallas

Career Goal #6 - The Ability, by 1980, to look back and laugh at recent events

1979 - Career Goal #7 - Science Fictioneer

Major Events

(a) SF Short Story #1 is rejected. All 12 copies are returned within a week. Five copies are back within three days. One is only gone an hour.

(b) SF Short Story #2 is rejected. In an attempt to better focus on the market, only seven copies are sent out. Eight are returned.

(c) SF Short Story #3 is "The Bluenose Limit". It is so clearly a masterpiece that the editors of "Amazing" require a scant seven months to decide to buy.

See what happens if you just hang in there?—Ed

