

ALSO BY DELMORE SCHWARTZ

*Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge*  
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# IN DREAMS BEGIN RESPONSIBILITIES

*and Other Stories*

Delmore Schwartz

*Edited with an introduction by James Atlas*

*Foreword by Irving Howe*

A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK



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# IN DREAMS BEGIN RESPONSIBILITIES

## I

I think it is the year 1909. I feel as if I were in a motion picture theatre, the long arm of light crossing the darkness and spinning, my eyes fixed on the screen. This is a silent picture as if an old Biograph one, in which the actors are dressed in ridiculously old-fashioned clothes, and one flash succeeds another with sudden jumps. The actors too seem to jump about and walk too fast. The shots themselves are full of dots and rays, as if it were raining when the picture was photographed. The light is bad.

It is Sunday afternoon, June 12th, 1909, and my father is walking down the quiet streets of Brooklyn on his way to visit my mother. His clothes are newly pressed and his tie is too tight in his high collar. He jingles the coins in his pockets, thinking of the witty things he will say. I feel as if I had by now relaxed entirely in the soft darkness of the theatre; the organist peals out the obvious and approximate emotions on which the audience rocks unknowingly. I am anonymous, and I have forgotten myself. It is always so when one goes to the movies, it is, as they say, a drug.

My father walks from street to street of trees, lawns and houses, once in a while coming to an avenue on which a street-car skates and gnaws, slowly progressing. The conductor, who has a handle-bar mustache helps a young lady wearing a hat like a bowl with feathers on to the car. She lifts her long skirts

slightly as she mounts the steps. He leisurely makes change and rings his bell. It is obviously Sunday, for everyone is wearing Sunday clothes, and the street-car's noises emphasize the quiet of the holiday. Is not Brooklyn the City of Churches? The shops are closed and their shades drawn, but for an occasional stationery store or drug-store with great green balls in the window.

My father has chosen to take this long walk because he likes to walk and think. He thinks about himself in the future and so arrives at the place he is to visit in a state of mild exaltation. He pays no attention to the houses he is passing, in which the Sunday dinner is being eaten, nor to the many trees which patrol each street, now coming to their full leafage and the time when they will room the whole street in cool shadow. An occasional carriage passes, the horse's hooves falling like stones in the quiet afternoon, and once in a while an automobile, looking like an enormous upholstered sofa, puffs and passes.

My father thinks of my mother, of how nice it will be to introduce her to his family. But he is not yet sure that he wants to marry her, and once in a while he becomes panicky about the bond already established. He reassures himself by thinking of the big men he admires who are married: William Randolph Hearst, and William Howard Taft, who has just become President of the United States.

My father arrives at my mother's house. He has come too early and so is suddenly embarrassed. My aunt, my mother's sister, answers the loud bell with her napkin in her hand, for the family is still at dinner. As my father enters, my grandfather rises from the table and shakes hands with him. My mother has run upstairs to tidy herself. My grandmother asks my father if he has had dinner, and tells him that Rose will be downstairs soon. My grandfather opens the conversation by remarking on the mild June weather. My father sits uncomfortably near the table, holding his hat in his hand. My grandmother tells my aunt to take my father's hat. My uncle, twelve years old, runs into the house, his hair tousled. He shouts a greeting to my father, who has often given him a nickel, and then runs upstairs. It is evident that the respect in which my father is held in this household is tempered by a good deal of mirth. He is impressive, yet he is very awkward.

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## II

Finally my mother comes downstairs, all dressed up, and my father being engaged in conversation with my grandfather becomes uneasy, not knowing whether to greet my mother or continue the conversation. He get up from the chair clumsily and says "hello" gruffly. My grandfather watches, examining their congruence, such as it is, with a critical eye, and meanwhile rubbing his bearded cheek roughly, as he always does when he reflects. He is worried; he is afraid that my father will not make a good husband for his oldest daughter. At this point something happens to the film, just as my father is saying something funny to my mother; I am awakened to myself and my unhappiness just as my interest was rising. The audience begins to clap impatiently. Then the trouble is cared for but the film has been returned to a portion just shown, and once more I see my grandfather rubbing his bearded cheek and pondering my father's character. It is difficult to get back into the picture once more and forget myself, but as my mother giggles at my father's words, the darkness drowns me.

My father and mother depart from the house, my father shaking hands with my mother once more, out of some unknown uneasiness. I stir uneasily also, slouched in the hard chair of the theatre. Where is the older uncle, my mother's older brother? He is studying in his bedroom upstairs, studying for his final examination at the College of the City of New York, having been dead of rapid pneumonia for the last twenty-one years. My mother and father walk down the same quiet streets once more. My mother is holding my father's arm and telling him of the novel which she has been reading; and my father utters judgments of the characters as the plot is made clear to him. This is a habit which he very much enjoys, for he feels the utmost superiority and confidence when he approves and condemns the behavior of other people. At times he feels moved to utter a brief "Ugh"—whenever the story becomes what he would call sugary. This tribute is paid to his manliness. My mother feels satisfied by the interest which she has awakened; she is showing my father how intelligent she is, and how interesting.

They reach the avenue, and the street-car leisurely arrives.

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They are going to Coney Island this afternoon, although my mother considers that such pleasures are inferior. She has made up her mind to indulge only in a walk on the boardwalk and a pleasant dinner, avoiding the riotous amusements as being beneath the dignity of so dignified a couple.

My father tells my mother how much money he has made in the past week, exaggerating an amount which need not have been exaggerated. But my father has always felt that actualities somehow fall short. Suddenly I begin to weep. The determined old lady who sits next to me in the theatre is annoyed and looks at me with an angry face, and being intimidated, I stop. I drag out my handkerchief and dry my face, licking the drop which has fallen near my lips. Meanwhile I have missed something, for here are my mother and father alighting at the last stop, Coney Island.

### III

They walk toward the boardwalk, and my father commands my mother to inhale the pungent air from the sea. They both breathe in deeply, both of them laughing as they do so. They have in common a great interest in health, although my father is strong and husky, my mother frail. Their minds are full of theories of what is good to eat and not good to eat, and sometimes they engage in heated discussions of the subject, the whole matter ending in my father's announcement, made with a scornful bluster, that you have to die sooner or later anyway. On the boardwalk's flagpole, the American flag is pulsing in an intermittent wind from the sea.

My father and mother go to the rail of the boardwalk and look down on the beach where a good many bathers are casually walking about. A few are in the surf. A peanut whistle pierces the air with its pleasant and active whine, and my father goes to buy peanuts. My mother remains at the rail and stares at the ocean. The ocean seems merry to her; it pointedly sparkles and again and again the pony waves are released. She notices the children digging in the wet sand, and the bathing costumes of the girls who are her own age. My father returns with the peanuts. Overhead the sun's lightning strikes and strikes, but neither of them are at all aware of it. The boardwalk is full of people dressed in their Sunday clothes and idly strolling. The tide does

not reach as far as the boardwalk, and the strollers would feel no danger if it did. My mother and father lean on the rail of the boardwalk and absently stare at the ocean. The ocean is becoming rough; the waves come in slowly, tugging strength from far back. The moment before they somersault, the moment when they arch their backs so beautifully, showing green and white veins amid the black, that moment is intolerable. They finally crack, dashing fiercely upon the sand, actually driving, full force downward, against the sand, bouncing upward and forward, and at last petering out into a small stream which races up the beach and then is recalled. My parents gaze absentmindedly at the ocean, scarcely interested in its harshness. The sun overhead does not disturb them. But I stare at the terrible sun which breaks up sight, and the fatal, merciless, passionate ocean, I forget my parents. I stare fascinated and finally, shocked by the indifference of my father and mother, I burst out weeping once more. The old lady next to me pats me on the shoulder and says "There, there, all of this is only a movie, young man, only a movie," but I look up once more at the terrifying sun and the terrifying ocean, and being unable to control my tears, I get up and go to the men's room, stumbling over the feet of the other people seated in my row.

### IV

When I return, feeling as if I had awakened in the morning sick for lack of sleep, several hours have apparently passed and my parents are riding on the merry-go-round. My father is on a black horse, my mother on a white one, and they seem to be making an eternal circuit for the single purpose of snatching the nickel rings which are attached to the arm of one of the posts. A hand-organ is playing; it is one with the ceaseless circling of the merry-go-round.

For a moment it seems that they will never get off the merry-go-round because it will never stop. I feel like one who looks down on the avenue from the 50th story of a building. But at length they do get off; even the music of the hand-organ has ceased for a moment. My father has acquired ten rings, my mother only two, although it was my mother who really wanted them.

They walk on along the boardwalk as the afternoon descends

by imperceptible degrees into the incredible violet of dusk. Everything fades into a relaxed glow, even the ceaseless murmuring from the beach, and the revolutions of the merry-go-round. They look for a place to have dinner. My father suggests the best one on the boardwalk and my mother demurs, in accordance with her principles.

However they do go to the best place, asking for a table near the window, so that they can look out on the boardwalk and the mobile ocean. My father feels omnipotent as he places a quarter in the waiter's hand as he asks for a table. The place is crowded and here too there is music, this time from a kind of string trio. My father orders dinner with a fine confidence.

As the dinner is eaten, my father tells of his plans for the future, and my mother shows with expressive face how interested she is, and how impressed. My father becomes exultant. He is lifted up by the waltz that is being played, and his own future begins to intoxicate him. My father tells my mother that he is going to expand his business, for there is a great deal of money to be made. He wants to settle down. After all, he is twenty-nine, he has lived by himself since he was thirteen, he is making more and more money, and he is envious of his married friends when he visits them in the cozy security of their homes, surrounded, it seems, by the calm domestic pleasures, and by delightful children, and then, as the waltz reaches the moment when all the dancers swing madly, then, then with awful daring, then he asks my mother to marry him, although awkwardly enough and puzzled, even in his excitement, at how he had arrived at the proposal, and she, to make the whole business worse, begins to cry, and my father looks nervously about, not knowing at all what to do now, and my mother says: "It's all I've wanted from the moment I saw you," sobbing, and he finds all of this very difficult, scarcely to his taste, scarcely as he had thought it would be, on his long walks over Brooklyn Bridge in the revelry of a fine cigar, and it was then that I stood up in the theatre and shouted: "Don't do it. It's not too late to change your minds, both of you. Nothing good will come of it, only remorse, hatred, scandal, and two children whose characters are monstrous." The whole audience turned to look at me, annoyed, the usher came hurrying down the aisle flashing his searchlight, and the old lady

next to me tugged me down into my seat, saying: "Be quiet. You'll be put out, and you paid thirty-five cents to come in." And so I shut my eyes because I could not bear to see what was happening. I sat there quietly.

V

But after awhile I begin to take brief glimpses, and at length I watch again with thirsty interest, like a child who wants to maintain his sulk although offered the bribe of candy. My parents are now having their picture taken in a photographer's booth along the boardwalk. The place is shadowed in the mauve light which is apparently necessary. The camera is set to the side on its tripod and looks like a Martian man. The photographer is instructing my parents in how to pose. My father has his arm over my mother's shoulder, and both of them smile emphatically. The photographer brings my mother a bouquet of flowers to hold in her hand but she holds it at the wrong angle. Then the photographer covers himself with the black cloth which drapes the camera and all that one sees of him is one protruding arm and his hand which clutches the rubber ball which he will squeeze when the picture is finally taken. But he is not satisfied with their appearance. He feels with certainty that somehow there is something wrong in their pose. Again and again he issues from his hidden place with new directions. Each suggestion merely makes matters worse. My father is becoming impatient. They try a seated pose. The photographer explains that he has pride, he is not interested in all of this for the money, he wants to make beautiful pictures. My father says: "Hurry up, will you? We haven't got all night." But the photographer only scurries about apologetically, and issues new directions. The photographer charms me. I approve of him with all my heart, for I know just how he feels, and as he criticizes each revised pose according to some unknown idea of rightness, I become quite hopeful. But then my father says angrily: "Come on, you've had enough time, we're not going to wait any longer." And the photographer, sighing unhappily, goes back under his black covering, holds out his hand, says: "One, two, three, Now!", and the picture is taken, with my father's smile turned to a grimace and my mother's bright and false. It takes a few minutes for the picture to be

developed and as my parents sit in the curious light they become quite depressed.

## VI

They have passed a fortune-teller's booth, and my mother wishes to go in, but my father does not. They begin to argue about it. My mother becomes stubborn, my father once more impatient, and then they begin to quarrel, and what my father would like to do is walk off and leave my mother there, but he knows that that would never do. My mother refuses to budge. She is near to tears, but she feels an uncontrollable desire to hear what the palm-reader will say. My father consents angrily, and they both go into a booth which is in a way like the photographer's, since it is draped in black cloth and its light is shadowed. The place is too warm, and my father keeps saying this is all nonsense, pointing to the crystal ball on the table. The fortune-teller, a fat, short woman, garbed in what is supposed to be Oriental robes, comes into the room from the back and greets them, speaking with an accent. But suddenly my father feels that the whole thing is intolerable; he tugs at my mother's arm, but my mother refuses to budge. And then, in terrible anger, my father lets go of my mother's arm and strides out, leaving my mother stunned. She moves to go after my father, but the fortune-teller holds her arm tightly and begs her not to do so, and I in my seat am shocked more than can ever be said, for I feel as if I were walking a tight-rope a hundred feet over a circus-audience and suddenly the rope is showing signs of breaking, and I get up from my seat and begin to shout once more the first words I can think of to communicate my terrible fear and once more the usher comes hurrying down the aisle flashing his search-light, and the old lady pleads with me, and the shocked audience has turned to stare at me, and I keep shouting: "What are they doing? Don't they know what they are doing? Why doesn't my mother go after my father? If she does not do that, what will she do? Doesn't my father know what he is doing?"—But the usher has seized my arm and is dragging me away, and as he does so, he says: "What are you doing? Don't you know that you can't do whatever you want to do? Why should a young man like you, with your whole life before you, get hysterical like

this? Why don't you *think* of what you're doing? You can't act like this even if other people aren't around! You will be sorry if you do not do what you should do, you can't carry on like this, it is not right, you will find that out soon enough, everything you do matters too much," and he said that dragging me through the lobby of the theatre into the cold light, and I woke up into the bleak winter morning of my 21st birthday, the windowsill shining with its lip of snow, and the morning already begun.

"Do you have a light?" asked a middle-aged man who was also waiting for a taxi and holding a brand-new cigar in his mouth.

"No, I have no light," said Jasper.

## SCREENO

For three hours, Cornelius Schmidt attempted to raise himself from the will-lessness and despondency which had overcome him. He tried to read the *New York Times*, which today contained the long obituary of a great man, the only kind of story that could awaken any interest in him. He played records on his portable victrola, first a string quartet by Haydn, and then, tiring of this with the third record, playing certain singing records of a celebrated movie actress. But to no avail: the music was lifeless as his own spirit. He then resorted, as often before in such a mood, to the icebox, making for himself a fat sandwich out of materials which would have otherwise not appealed to him. Having eaten the sandwich, he seated himself by the window and watched the quiet October evening rain soundlessly falling through the bright arc of the street light downstairs, four floors below, and pocking and wrinkling the glittering puddles. Automobiles passed with the frying sound which tires make on wet streets. Cornelius took down a volume of poetry of which he was very fond and tried to read it. A poem of his own slipped from the book. He read the first few verses and shuddered, thoroughly disheartened. Drenched by such a tasteless, colorless mood, there was only one refuge, one sanctuary: the movies.

He left a note for his mother on the kitchen table, donned his trench coat, and departed. Anticipation of the movie to be seen already began to rise in his breast. People in the huddled posture which rain enforces passed him as he walked to the business



avenue where stores shone wetly and brightly in the rainy night. Two boys were standing outside a candy store and trying to get chewing gum from the box beside the newsstand. Cornelius, in his rising spirits, was tempted to stop and afford them the benefit of his childhood talent for such efforts, his ability to make the machine give freely by a certain trick. But he knew that the boys would merely be shy, or afraid of him, and perhaps even antagonistic. At the age of twenty-five, he said to himself, I am neither here nor there, and can no longer expect to return with ease to the world of the young, that cruel zoo inhabited by a special kind of animal.

He came to the arcade of the movie house, reading the titles printed in electric bulbs framed by other lights which raced backward and forward along the arcade.

JOHN BOLES AND EVELYN LAYE  
IN ONE HEAVENLY NIGHT ALSO  
SPENCER TRACY IN FREEDOM  
SCREENO TONIGHT \$475 CASH

The presence of the new lottery annoyed him, for it meant an interruption in the flow of movies while the stage was lit and everyone looked about dazedly. At such times, Cornelius slouched far down in his seat, ashamed for some reason to be at the theatre alone, as if it were a confession of a lack of friends and engaging activities. But Spencer Tracy was an actor who had often pleased him by an absolute unself-consciousness, and Cornelius wished also to permit himself to be moved by the operetta music. Decided, he walked toward the box office, as a stream of people came out of the darkness of the theatre, looking like sleepwalkers.

At the door the uniformed ticket taker gave him a card on which was printed a kind of checkerboard, having in each box a number. It was obviously the old game of Lotto, the object being to get five numbers which were successive either horizontally or vertically or in a diagonal. In the center, amid numbered boxes, was a box entitled GRATIS; the management gave this box to the audience.

Cornelius completed his examination of this card while

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walking on the eerie soundless plush carpet of the stupendous lobby, from whose lofty top great chandeliers hung. In a moment, he was in the midst of the ghostly evening of the theatre; two thousand entranced persons stared toward the white and black screen, ignorant of all else. A harried usher led him to an aisle in the middle of the theatre and hastily departed. Once free of the usher, Cornelius walked further down, blind in the soft darkness after the recent blaze of chandeliers, and after some trouble found himself the kind of seat he wanted, one in the middle of the aisle, where he would not be disturbed by those who wished to depart.

Located in his seat, and comfortable at last, Cornelius directed his gaze toward the screen. The newsreel was on, and the cavalrymen were leaping high barriers, flying upward from the saddle at the apex of the jump and the settling back again, all of this performed with no little grace. The unseen voice, the commentator who always made Cornelius remember the Oracle at Delphi, was saying: "Uncle Sam does not intend to be unprepared." The scene shifted suddenly, to the accompaniment of sad and heavy music. Flood pictures were shown; a family departed from its almost submerged frame house in a rowboat, the young son of the family clutching his dog in his arms. The face of the dog and of the boy was shown in a close-up. The bleak and baffled look of the dog charmed the audience. Everything moved slowly in the slowly moving water. The commentator stated his sentiments in a histrionic baritone: "Nature shows its might on the Ohio. Thousands are left homeless by the cruel and raging waters." And then with a montage of archetypal newsreel scenes (West Point; a batter swinging; Roosevelt at the microphone; an actress descending from a train) and a martial music which came to a ringing close, the newsreel was ended. The theatre lightened and a well-dressed young man came upon the stage before the screen, carrying a microphone with him. The uniformed ushers followed him. In the corner stood a round red poster to which golden discs were attached. When you turned the disc over, the amount of money you had won was revealed by the dollar sign upon the disc.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," said the young man, speaking into the microphone with a knowing and efficient tone. "The management is again glad to offer prizes for the winners in SCREENO. Again we are offering \$425 for anyone who gets SCREENO with the first seven numbers called. If no one is so

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fortunate, then we will add \$25 to the amount and next week the sum will be \$450. Besides this, \$50 in prizes will be distributed tonight to the first ten people who get SCREENO. Now as soon as you have five consecutive numbers, either horizontally or vertically or in a diagonal, please call out loudly and clearly and come down to the stage. Then you will place your disc on the board and you will win some part of fifty dollars. Remember now! five numbers in a row! horizontal, vertical, diagonal. Good luck to all of you! And remember that everyone can't win."

True enough, said Cornelius to himself.

The theatre fell into a semi-darkness, not the movie darkness, but one in which discreet lights shone on both sides of the theatre and both sides of the stage. A white and pink clockface flashed on the screen. It was, in fact, like a roulette wheel, and had numbers running from 1 to 100. In the center was a pointer, which suddenly began to whirl furiously about the clockface, and then slowed down, and then stopped.

"Ninety-nine!" said the businesslike yet airy young man in an authoritative voice. An usher wrote down the number upon a blackboard to the right of the screen. The pointer spun again, at a tremendous pace, so that it was almost a moving blur for a moment, and then clarified into its arrow-like straightness. The actual wheel was, of course, in the projection room.

"Fifty-four!" said the young master of ceremonies, simulating a dramatic tone.

"SCREENO!" cried a voice from the balcony in a mocking voice, while everyone laughed, for obviously no one could have SCREENO as yet.

"I am sorry, ladies and gentlemen," said the young man in an affable voice, "but we will have to ask you not to be humorous about this. After all, money is involved, and there has been much confusion in the past because various people insisted upon trying to be funny."

"All right, Senator," cried the same balcony voice, and the audience laughed again. Meanwhile Cornelius had become very interested. He had both of the first two numbers and had marked them by pushing his finger through the soft cardboard of each box. It would be curious indeed, he said to himself, if I won. Probably no one here could make better use of the \$425. But I have never been lucky and I am certainly not a prize-winner.

The pointer was revolving again. "Thirty-nine!" announced the young man. The audience was not yet warmed up, because too few numbers had been called for anyone to be on the verge of winning. Cornelius, however, also had this third number and was pleased no little by the course of events.

"Forty-nine!" announced the young man.

"Raspberries!" cried the same voice from the balcony.

"Please!" said the young man in a tone of unctuous and good-natured irony, "I must ask you to restrain yourself, my dear friend in the balcony. Otherwise we will be forced to suppose that you are intoxicated, and since there are more suitable places than this for those in that state, we will have to ask you to leave. Your money will be refunded."

"I won't go. I've been kicked out of better places than this," said the balcony voice. The young master of ceremonies signalled to one of the ushers, indicating the necessity of action. Cornelius had paid little attention to the disturbance, for the number forty-nine was on his card also. He needed only one more number in order to win, and was enormously excited. He felt that something was about to go wrong; good fortune was always too precarious, too contingent, too arbitrary an event to be, in truth, good fortune. *Non forat ullum illaesa felicitas*, (unbroken prosperity is unable to bear any evil—if I have translated Seneca correctly). The disturbance from the balcony impressed him immediately as a possible source of reversal and he turned a resentful face toward the balcony, faced forward again, and waited for the pointer to turn again. It did.

"Eight!" cried the young master of ceremonies. A hasty glance convinced Cornelius that he did not have the number. Two more chances to win the big prize, and buy fifty volumes in the Loeb Classical Library. The pointer turned weakly this time.

"Fourteen!" cried the young man into the microphone which made his voice even more official than otherwise. Cornelius did not have the number. He assured himself that the game was a fraud, that the management was obviously not going to permit anyone to win so much money and that the whole business would obviously be controlled in the projection room or by arranging the numbers on the cards. There was only one more chance, a drop in the ocean. He slouched back in his seat, chiding himself for his great excitement.

Meanwhile the pointer was turning quickly, and then weakly. "Twenty-five!" the master of ceremonies called out.

"Twenty-five! Twenty-five!" said Cornelius to himself, and then, finding the number on his card as the fifth consecutive horizontal number, he rose in his seat and shouted:

"SCRENO!" in a too loud voice which broke, and began to issue from his aisle, tripping over the feet of the people seated near him, some of whom were solicitous of his walk, and eager to provide good advice as he passed. The attractiveness of the winner shone in him.

"Twenty-five! Twenty-five!" said Cornelius to himself. "My age! My gold mine!" He felt the eyes of the whole immense audience upon him as he walked to the stage and the self-consciousness which had always tortured him made him walk with too careful steps.

An usher took his card, and checked it with the numbers on the blackboard. The young man came over to oversee the usher. It seemed as if something was wrong, someone had miscalculated, to look at the young man. The checking was done several times. Very bureaucratic, said Cornelius to himself. Recovering, as the checkup proved that Cornelius had indeed won, he shook Cornelius's hand and the whole theatre lighted up.

"Lucky fellow," cried the balcony voice, amusing the audience again, by the envious tone in his voice.

"Congratulations," the young man said, "the sum of \$425 is yours." He led Cornelius before the microphone. "Now before I pay you, will you tell us your name and address."

"Cornelius Schmidt," whispered Cornelius (the whisper, but not the words resounded in the microphone). "845 West 163rd Street."

The young man repeated this information into the microphone as if it were a matter of great importance.

"Cornelius Vanderbilt," shouted the balcony wit, "Park Avenue."

"And what do you do?" the young man asked both Cornelius and the microphone, as if no one could do anything which would not come under his authority.

"Oh," said Cornelius, "I do many things," into the microphone.

The audience laughed, and Cornelius, pleased, grinned in

spite of himself. But he was uneasy. He did not wish to tell the truth, that he was a writer, for he was an unknown writer, and besides the profession always appeared to him as seeming peculiar and anomalous to others. On the other hand, he did not want to say he was unemployed, his usual subterfuge, because that also seemed a shameful admission. And then he was ashamed of himself, angered at himself for not wishing to tell the truth, for being ashamed of a noble calling, so that he forced himself to the other extreme, and specified his kind of writing and told the functionary that he was a poet. He knew this would be equivalent to sissy or bohemian for some of the audience.

"Mr. Schmidt is a poet," announced the young man untuously, patronizingly, and then, desiring to be humorous himself, he spoke cutely into the microphone:

He's a poet,  
His feet show it,  
They're Longfellow's!

The audience roared as the young man drew out the last word with a triumphant tone, and Cornelius blushed and wished he were elsewhere, and became extremely angered at the young man, who had previously merely annoyed him. As a matter of fact, Cornelius's feet were by no means small, and, becoming still more self-conscious, he tried to withdraw his shoes somehow from public view.

"I am sure we would like to hear one of the poems of so fortunate a young man," said the official young man. He was trying to delay matters until one of the ushers could bring enough money from the box office to pay Cornelius. "Please," he said, "recite some verses for us."

"Oh, no!" said Cornelius firmly, backing away. The young man gestured to the intrigued audience which then began to applaud in unison to express its desire to hear Cornelius recite his verses.

Angered again, and in his anger going again to the other extreme, Cornelius decided to recite for them. All of his happiness in winning had disappeared, and a mood of stubborn resentment had come upon him.

"Very well," he said harshly into the microphone. "I will recite some appropriate verses for you." Changing his tone to one of serious and dramatic import, and permitting a certain implication of tiredness, illness, and despair to creep into his voice, he began:

Think now

History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,

Guides us by vanities. Think now

She gives when our attention is distracted

And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions

That the giving furnishes the craving. Gives too late

What's not believed in, or if still believed,

In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon

Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with

Till the refusal propagates a fear.

He ended appalled at himself, as if he had made a shocking confession. But he saw that his effort was a failure for his tone had been false, too serious. The audience had been silenced and puzzled by the verses, but the young man, curiously enough, had been impressed.

"Are those your own verses?" he asked.

"No. I wish they were," said Cornelius. The audience awakened at this and laughed.

"Those verses were written by the best of modern poets," said Cornelius, "a man named T. S. Eliot, whom all of you ought to read." Even in saying this, Cornelius knew that this advertisement was a foolish thing.

The usher arrived with the money just as the persistent balcony voice called out, "Let's go on with the show," and the audience began to clap again, wishing to have its chance at the other prizes.

But then, as the money was delivered to the young assistant manager, and he began officiously to count it out, shuffle it, and arrange it, before paying Cornelius, a hoarse and disused voice cried from the balcony:

"SCREENO! SCREENO!"

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A silence fell upon all, and all turned backward to look for the author of the impassioned outcry.

"SCREENO!" came the voice again, this time nearer, as the new winner approached the stairs from the balcony to the orchestra. The young assistant manager and the ushers looked at each other in dismay. Something had obviously gone wrong, for usually no one won the jackpot; two winners was inconceivable and would lead to bankruptcy. Someone was going to lose his job because of this.

In a moment, the new winner was on the stage. He was a small and slight old man, carrying a violin case and wearing glasses. In his unpressed black suit, he looked very much like a waiter in a cheap restaurant. He was completely out of breath, completely beside himself. An usher took his card from his quivering hand and began to check it with the numbers on the blackboard. The young assistant manager came over to superintend the checking, obviously hoping for some mistake. Meanwhile, Cornelius stood by suddenly ignored, having nothing to do. He had not yet been given his money, but was blissful with ideas of its expenditure.

"If the manager loses all this money," said one usher to another, "it will be the biggest collapse since the Fall of the Hapsburgs."

"My name is Casper Weingarten," said the old man, unmasked, intruding himself upon the huddle of the assistant manager and the ushers. He was very nervous, very excited. "I am a musician," he said, but no one paid any attention to him, except Cornelius.

And then the young assistant manager came over to the old man and, holding the card up, showed him that he had not won, that he had mistaken a 7 for a 1 because the print had been on the left-hand side. "Perhaps you'll win one of the other prizes," he said, courteously, "since you already have four numbers in a row."

"You mean I don't win?" said the old man. "Why not?" he said, having understood nothing of the explanation. His mistake was explained again, while he stared at his card.

"No!" he said loudly. "This is a 1, not a 7. I win. Give me my money." His voice was weak and now that he raised it, it was curiously pathetic, and like the voice of an angry child. And to make matters worse, he began to cough.

"My dear man," said the assistant manager, resuming his

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official tone, "I am sorry but you are mistaken. You have not won. You have mistaken a 7 for a 1 because the print was faint. After this, all of the cards will be clearly printed, so that such mistakes cannot occur."

Cornelius came over to look into the matter for himself. He took the card in his hand and looked at the number in question. The old man looked at him, and then turned to the assistant manager, saying:

"Give me my money! I have won!"

"You are being very unreasonable," said the assistant manager, beginning to look harassed. The audience now began to clap to indicate its desire for proceeding with the rest of the game. The assistant manager explained what had happened to the audience with great care and tact.

"Give me my money!" shouted the old man, as the young man was speaking to the audience.

"Please return to your seat," he said to the old man, "so that the game can go on."

Meanwhile Cornelius had looked carefully at the number in question and decided that the assistant manager had no ground for deciding that the 1 was a 7. There was a blur beside the upright bar of 1 which might conceivably have been meant to be the horizontal bar which completed the 7, but the faintness of the blur was not sufficient to justify the assistant manager.

"Look here," said Cornelius tactfully to the assistant manager, "it seems to me that you can only assume that this is a 1. The blur is too faint to make it a seven."

"I know it is a 7," said the assistant manager angrily, and when he said that, Cornelius recognized immediately that he was so sure because the cards had been prepared in advance to obviate the possibility of two winners of the jackpot, or even one. Seeing this, Cornelius began to feel sick and angry, as he always did when confronted with fraud or cheating.

"All my life I've been cheated," said the old man, wringing his hands. "Give me my money." An usher took his arm, as if to lead him from the stage, but the assistant manager deterred him, unwilling as yet to resort to force.

"Look here," said Cornelius firmly, "either you pay him or I am going to speak to the audience about this." In reply, the assistant manager began to pay Cornelius, counting the money with

clipped tones as he placed it in Cornelius's hand. The old man grabbed the assistant manager's arm when he finished, saying:

"Where is my money? Don't cheat me, I've had hard luck all my life."

"My good man," said the assistant manager, "Your hard luck is not my fault, nor this theatre's responsibility. Please do not cause a disturbance. Now if both of you will leave the stage, we can go on with the other prizes and with the show."

In answer, the old man sat down upon the stage, looking grotesque there, with his head turned up. "I will sit here until I am paid," he said tearfully.

The scene was becoming unbearable for Cornelius. The old man seemed to have decided that this money was as important as his life. As far as Cornelius was concerned, he had been cheated. This was too much for Cornelius.

"I am going to tell the audience about this," said Cornelius.

"No, you're not," said the assistant manager, but Cornelius reached the microphone before the assistant manager could get there.

"Listen!" said the assistant manager, in a wearied breathless panicky voice, "I'm going to lose my job for this. Have a heart."

This new object of sympathy made matters even more complex for Cornelius. But then he looked toward the old man seated on the floor. He had begun sobbing, and he had taken off his glasses, wet by his tears, and was drying them with a rumpled handkerchief.

This sight decided Cornelius. He grasped the microphone and addressed the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the management refuses to pay this man the sum which he has won, claiming that his card was badly printed. This is only a pretext. I have examined the card and there is no justification for the management's claim. The management is trying to welch on its obligation."

The assistant manager stepped forward immediately to reply. Cornelius's speech had obviously had a genuine effect.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this young man may be adept at poetry, but he cannot see what is directly in front of him. He is attempting to take advantage of the management's generosity. Not satisfied with having won the sum of \$425, he is trying to get a similar sum for someone he has just encountered. Meanwhile it

is becoming late, and if this stage is not cleared immediately, it will be necessary to postpone the plans for the remaining prizes. The operator in the projection room is a union man and cannot be persuaded to remain a moment overtime; and since we cannot postpone pictures, we will have to postpone the remaining prizes unless these gentlemen leave immediately."

"You're a fine manager," cried the balcony wit.

But the audience was won over, for no one wished to lose his chance at the remaining \$50. There was a murmuring of voices and someone cried out:

"Go home and give us a chance."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the old man in a broken voice. He had arisen upon seeing the effect of the manager's speech. "These people are trying to cheat me. I have won. I am a musician. I would not do anything dishonest even if I am only a musician in a restaurant," sobbing, "this has always happened to me when something good should have happened. There was a quarrel at my daughter's wedding, the happiest day of my life. Now I have to live with my daughter-in-law," and still sobbing, "I could have my teeth fixed with the money. They have been bad for years. Don't let them cheat me."

A counter-reaction spread, although the vulgar reference to teeth had been unfortunate. Cornelius was prepared to commit any act in order to bring a halt to the old man's sobbing: scenes, rows, disturbances in public places had always had a direct solar plexus effect upon him.

"This is a bottomless pit," said one usher to another.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the assistant manager, "although we are convinced that we are right, we are ready to put this whole matter into the hands of a committee of three objective members of the audience."

"Oh," said Cornelius to himself, "they are going to start the whole objective and subjective business again."

There was a pause while three members of the audience were solicited to act as judges. The assistant manager, still attempting to maintain his benevolence, offered free theatre tickets for the following week as reward for jury service. A dentist, a lawyer, and the owner of a haberdashery store came forward. The dentist, a sympathetic man, immediately offered to fix Weingarten's teeth

cheap, for a nominal sum. The old man ignored the offer, offending the dentist.

"Give me my money," he said weakly, almost an echo of his former voice.

The committee was given the disputed card and went into a conference in a corner. But before they had been there long, an enterprising usher found another card on which the 1 had been printed with a blur next to it. The card was brought up to the stage and in a moment everything was settled once and for all.

The assistant manager announced the discovery. The lawyer announced the committee's decision. The audience applauded, satisfied that justice had been done. Casper Weingarten sat down on the stage again. Cornelius looked helplessly about him, and the audience began to clap and hoot.

"Why don't you go home," said one.

"Call a cop," said another.

Cornelius stepped forth and said, painstakingly, "Can't you see that the fact that two cards have the same blur on them proves nothing. It may be a 1 in both cases. You are permitting yourselves to be deceived."

But the audience had decided once and for all. It was now intent upon going on with the game and then on with the show, and answered Cornelius by hoots and whistles. The ushers came forward.

And then, threatened by the ushers, Cornelius made the worst mistake.

"Be logical," he said angrily, "don't be hopelessly middle class about this. The management is trying to cheat an old man."

"This poet is a radical," said the assistant manager, seeing his opportunity to win a complete victory. "You heard what he just said: middle class. He is a radical."

"C.I.O." called the balcony wit, with a rising inflection on the O, as one would say "I'll be seeing *you*." The audience goggled, enchanted by this, and the cry was taken up immediately.

"C.I.O. C.I.O. C.I.O.," came various voices throughout the house.

Cornelius recognized that nothing more could be done with the audience. He went over to the old musician, still seated upon the floor and drying his glasses again, for he was still weeping.

"Look, old man," said Cornelius, "there's nothing to be done about this. You'd better come with me."

"No," said Weingarten, categorically.

Cornelius meditated with himself for a moment and then said: "Listen, I will give you half of the jackpot. Come on before you're arrested."

"Call a cop," cried the same voice that had previously made this suggestion.

"No," said Weingarten, "I don't want your money. I want mine. Give me my money," he said towards the assistant manager. Cornelius considered matters with himself again and came to a decision. Easy come, easy go, he said to himself, and then he told the old musician that he could have the whole jackpot. The manager protested immediately, but Cornelius took the bills from his pocket and began to count them out and give them to the musician, who accepted them with a guilty look and trembling hands.

The audience saw what was happening and applauded vigorously, not because it was genuinely moved, but because it felt that it ought to applaud. Such applause is heard at public gatherings when an abstraction too vacuous is mentioned or tribute is paid to a man long dead. The assistant manager, trying to move in on Cornelius's credit, came over to shake hands with Cornelius. Cornelius, tempted to reject the proffered hand, accepted it because he wished to cause no further disturbance.

The old man had risen and come over to Cornelius.

"Thank you very much for your kindness," he said in the estranged voice of those who have been weeping or overexcited.

"Not at all," said Cornelius formally. Both descended from the stage together.

"We will have to forego the remaining prizes until next week," said the assistant manager, "but the fifty dollars will be added to next week's total, and there will be a hundred dollars in prizes besides the usual jackpot. In addition, two four-star pictures will be playing."

The theatre darkened as Cornelius and Weingarten walked to the exits, the film went on with all its soft floating figures and pleasing movement. How much actuality, after all, can an audience stand in the course of one evening?

"Are you going my way?" said Cornelius to Weingarten.

"No, I think I'll see the rest of the show. Thank you very much, much obliged," he said, still weighed by guilt.

The problem now, said Cornelius to himself as he walked through the soft carpeted lobby, is to keep this from my mother, who will consider me quixotic, as indeed I am. But how small a price for the sense of generosity and dignity which I now have, even though the act was forced upon me by my maudlin sympathy for the old man. Probably I have been foolish, and yet how reasonable I feel at present, and how joyous.

Saying this, in his joy, he issued into the chill and disorder of the street, the fresh air and different light striking him. The rain had ceased, but a thick fog had come upon the city. And as he walked home through this fog, in a pure enjoyment of his feeling, Cornelius recited to himself this poem by a fourteenth-century Scottish poet, halting sometimes in the middle of a line because he did not remember it too well, or halting in order to correct his imperfect accent:

Be merry, man! and tak not sair in mind

The wavering of this wretched world of sorrow!

To God be humble and to thy friend be kind,

And with thy neighbors gladly lend and borrow:

His chance to-night, it may be thine tomorrow;

Be blithe in heart for ony adventure;

For oft with wise men, 't has been said aforewar,

Without gladness availis no treasure.

Mak thee gude cheer of it that God thee sends,

For wand's wrack but welfare nocht avails.

No gude is thine, save ony that thou spends;

Remanent all thou brookis but with bales.

Seek to solace when sadness thee assails;

In dolour long thy life may not endure,

Wherefore of comfort set up all thy sails;

Without gladness availis no treasure.

Follow on pity, flee trouble and debate,

With famous folk aye hold thy company;

Be charitable and humble in thy estate,

For wardly honour lastes but a cry;

For trouble in earth take no melancholy;

Be rich in patience, if thou in goods be poor;  
Who lives merry he lives mightily,  
Without gladness availis no treasure.

So saying, joyous, with a sense of having done proudly what he wanted to do, and with the fog hiding from him most of the street and surrounding his head, he came back to his house and the room where he would be once more alone.