

They had to defeat Babbitt to win the title, because Babbitt and Thomas had played to a tie, and Thomas had lost an early season game.

And they won. It was a hard bruising game, but Ronnie furnished the spark for the victory. He ran 31 yards for one touchdown and passed for the other. He didn't want to take any chances on having the extra point tries blocked, so he ran for both extra points. Babbitt missed one of their extra points, and that was the ball game—14-13.

After the game, Ronnie was waiting for the kid. "You brought me luck, Kid. All eight of those points are your responsibility just the same as if you had scored them."

The kid took the helmet and smiled up at his buddy happily as the students took Ronnie on their shoulders for a ride to the gym.

That night, the students were still exhilarated over the victory over their old rivals. The excitement still had them restless. When Ronnie came up to visit the kid after lights out, many of the boys were still up and talking. Occasionally a shout echoed through the halls, but Ronnie and the kid were oblivious to the noise.

Suddenly the kid's door flew open, and the beam of a flashlight flooded the room.

"What are you doing in here, Blevin?" a harsh voice demanded. It was one of the masters who had come around to quiet the students in the dormitories. "I shall have to report this to the headmaster in the morning of course. Go to your room, Blevin."

"Yes, sir. Good night, Kid. Keep your chin up."

"Okay, Ron. Good night," the kid said sadly.

Neither of the boys slept that night. At breakfast next morning it was announced that the headmaster wanted to see Blevin and Dillard in his office immediately breakfast was over. Ronnie caught the kids eye, smiled and lifted his own chin with his finger as if to say "keep your chin up, buddy." The kid, unafraid, smiled back at his buddy.

Ronnie was waiting for him at the dining room door. They walked in to the headmaster's office and stood side by side before his desk.

"Whitfield School cannot tolerate what you boys have done," the headmaster said coldly. "Have either of you anything to say at this time?"

"It's all my fault, sir," said Ronnie.

"It's a funny thing," said the kid quietly, "but it seems that if you do something that other people don't want to do themselves or don't think you ought to do, you're either punished or thought to be sick. I'm leaving this school, sir."

"You certainly are—both of you are! You will each be accompanied by a master while you pack your belongings preparatory to being shipped. After you have finished packing, the master will see you off on your train. You have two hours to pack and catch your train, Blevin. Dillard, you have three and one-half hours. Your parents will be notified by telegram that you have been shipped. Your names will be erased from the school records so thoroughly that there will be no trace you ever attended Whitfield. That is all. You may go."

The headmaster was wrong. Ronnie was named honorary captain and unanimous choice for left halfback on the all-state eleven representing Whitfield.

Abner Dillard was called "Kid" for many years.

The two boys never saw each other again.

one
magazine

15TH YEAR
MARCH 1967
FIFTY CENTS

THE HOMOSEXUAL VIEWPOINT



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Founded October 15, 1952

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" . . . a mystic bond
of brotherhood
makes all men one."
Carlyle

magazine

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THE WALL



I found a note recently, one of my own, in an army jacket, along with a buck and three books of matches. It contained the words "the wall." I was really thrown, although I was glad to retrieve the buck which I had more or less forgotten about. I had trouble remembering what the note was supposed to stand for, what I had had in mind. Eventually, I did remember, although it took some doing. The note was a Third Avenue bar note, written to myself in a moment of drunken unhappiness and subjectivity. A memo denoting some sort of insight, self-awareness, written while I was thinking through some relationships, some people I had known.

It seems that when I first knew Louie—first met him on Third Avenue in a bar which wasn't quite chi-chi, wasn't quite as friendly as a neighborhood bar, wasn't quite in the Bowery, wasn't the sort of bar which is ever likely to get into a *New Yorker* short story—that I wasn't supposed to like his friends, wasn't supposed to be liked by them. There were walls galore which Louie wanted to build, his walls, in a rather pathetic attempt to dramatize his life. I think that he had one in particular in mind, a wall between myself and my immediate predecessor with Louie, a guy named Joe.

The amusing thing that happened was that I did like the "ex," did like Joe, really liked him considerably better than I did Louie, for all of my moving in with Louie, having a hectic three or four months before we decided to do our drinking and shopping for groceries and other things separately. A funny business, but Joe and I—while all of this was happening—were able to talk together. He was from Brooklyn, but more British than some of the birds of passage who spent little interludes in Brooklyn Heights. We talked about books and records and cats and politics and interior decorating—the mainstays of Third Avenue bar conversation—and I remember a wry dissatisfaction on Louie's part when he discovered how well Joe and I were getting along. We talked about a helluva lot of things, were able to talk about almost everything except my relationship with Louie.

It wasn't long before Louie and I were fighting up and down Third Avenue, with and without Joe, and looking, in the process, for partisans and father-confessors and people to share the sadness and excitement of a relationship clearly destined to do nothing except fall apart but good. Rather naively, I thought Joe might be helpful, in terms of his experience with Louie: someone to talk to, someone to ask for advice. And that was where I hit the wall. Joe and I continued to talk about books and cats and records and politics. We drank together, lent one another money, and compared observations about the shifting clientele of this Third Avenue bar and that one. It remained impossible for me to discuss Louie with Joe, impossible to discover how he had moved out of his relationship with Louie, impossible to discover what meaning the break might have had, might still continue to have. Joe wasn't talking, didn't want to listen. On this frontier, Joe was about as impassive as a wooden cigar-store Indian, and about as helpful. Utterly impossible, I found, for me to get whatever I thought I wanted from Joe.

So I moved out, solved my own problem, went my own way. I became rather pleased at my success at avoiding entangling alliances. Gradually, I became less concerned about my failure to get along with Louie, my inability to talk with Joe about Louie. Probably, I wouldn't be thinking about walls, about Louie, about Joe, about any of this, if I hadn't scribbled the drunken note to myself.

The real key, I now know, is Tommy, who became my successor with Louie, who made an "ex" of me in a somewhat officially recognized Third Avenue fashion.

There was a parallel, latter-day ritual, almost everything except printed announcements. Tommy met me, as I had met Joe, with Louie presiding over the introductions, with my knowing who Tommy was, with his knowing who I was, with the ghost of Joe somewhere in the offing, enjoying the fun. No pulling of punches. Louie was enjoying the dramatic possibilities of the new situation as much as he had enjoyed the older one. Honestly speaking, I wasn't jealous. I wish I could have been. Basically, instead, I was rather glad that Louie had Tommy. Tommy was necessary, if I was to feel emancipated. I was curious to see how Tommy would operate when it came to diverting the thunder and lightning, when it came to playing his part in the production. I was glad that Louie had someone else to try to make a go of things with.

So time went on, and I became fairly adroit and cagey about avoiding bars where I was likely to run into Louie and Tommy. Louie and I were likely to become bitchy, likely to argue about the way we had mismanaged house-money, failed to keep this cat from getting knocked up, Joe, who had always been a wise and sensible guy, simply moved away. Was doing his drinking uptown the last I heard, as unwilling as I to be part of a quartet.

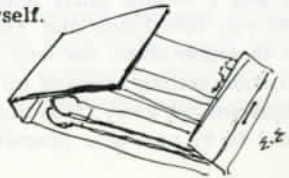
I still remember the Saturday night when I ran into Tommy when he was alone. He and I had had no chance, no inclination, to become friends, as had been the case with Joe and myself. I was a little surprised to see Tommy by himself. I don't believe that I had ever seen him drinking in a bar without being well chaperoned by Louie. I remember asking about Louie, out of expediency chiefly, because I didn't want him tearing out of the john, furious at me for even speaking to Tommy, wondering what in hell I might say to Tommy. Tommy, I remember, was evasive. He didn't really say **where** Louie was. There was no suggestion of what was happening with them.

So I asked Tommy to go down the Avenue to another bar with me, which we did. There was little difference between the bars; simply a geographic move. I asked about Louie, asked what had happened to the kittens, and paid for our beers, wondering why I felt it necessary to do so. I remember asking Tommy how he was coming with a new job. I remember standing in the crowded bar with him and thinking what a dull-tool he was, about as colorful as a sheet of typing-paper. I wondered if it took a quiet and unobtrusive person like Tommy for Louie to get along with, dominate, run. I wondered what their relationship was like. I wondered if Tommy were happy. I realized that I was thinking about my own unhappiness, my own quarrels, with Louie.

Somewhere along the way, in the process of having a private tizzy, it occurred to me that Tommy had a rather quizzical expression on his face, a question-asking look. I found myself remembering my old attempts at conversation with Joe, when I was trying to understand my relationship, my quarrels, my differences with Louie, when Joe did nothing except freeze politely and politely make it evident that he wasn't going to help. I remember the odd wall that I've already complained about, I suddenly found myself understanding the need that Joe had for the wall. It was a means of protecting whatever was left over from his relationship with Louie.

I suddenly knew that no matter how things were going with Louie and Tommy, whether they had quarrelled on this evening, whatever need Tommy might have to quiz me, that I could never be a Dorothy Dix, could never do anything except build another wall, one that would make it impossible for me ever to discuss Louie with Tommy. It suddenly became quite vital for me not just to build the wall, but protect it. I found myself understanding Joe for the first time.

The funny thing about that Saturday night, which I cut short about the time I realized this, was that I didn't even try to tell Tommy what I was thinking, didn't try to encourage him to talk, if he felt like talking. Solve your own problems, buster, I thought. Slam your own doors, I just bought another round of beers, tried to talk some more about Louie's cat and kittens, and then rather abruptly told Tommy that I was meeting someone and had to be going along. It was a damned lie, of course. I must have scribbled the note to myself about the wall later that Saturday night in the process of hanging one on, I did hang one on, which may explain why it took me a while to be able to remember what a wall meant to me in the first place. Glad now that I found the buck, the three books of matches, and the note to myself.



CARL MASTERS

Sebo Griffum Prevails



by William Lambert

Reverend Sebo Griffum returned to his pulpit in the First Disciplinary Church, Rockwood Hills, Sunday after a several months' stay in Cusco spent in studying the famous Codex Obscurantus and various papyri in the collections of the ancient Janisarian Library.

During his sermon, Reverend Griffum said: "The 20th century role of hate must not be underestimated. There is, 'A time to love and a time to hate' (Ecclesiastes), and that time is today. We must learn to hate all variances from sound doctrine, making sure that we 'hate them with a perfect hatred,' as the Psalmist so beautifully expressed it. Let us seek out and utterly expose every deviation from normality, for is not normality but a synonym for morality?"

Continuing, he quoted from the Bible, "He that perverteth his ways shall be known," and said that all modern perversions must be viewed with utter hatred. Citing the place of hate down through the ages he said, "From earliest religious periods we have the records of splendid hatreds in all their glory, of pillagings and purgings, even of the noble exterminations of those varying from what is established and right. No finer rallying call is to be found in religious literature than that of the early Quintifex Major," said Reverend Griffum, "Let there be lustye hatred, in the full exercize thereof, that the glory of true religion may be established by sword and by smittings."

"The testimony of the Codex Obscurantus in denouncing 'unnatural sin' is clear. 'The sacred purpose of the male and the female is generative,' and here it is significant that the Codex quotes from an even earlier authority, 'That the earth may be over-run' (Orinoco Papyrus II). We must never lag in our devotion to hating those who hold otherwise. It is our duty in the churches to see that dissenters are expelled from their jobs, insulated from civil liberties, spurned from their homes and families, and spat upon among men, as an exercize in 'religion in action' — to quote from a mediaeval Swiss theologian, known to us only as John the Least.

"The position of our National Authorities in this respect, and of those reporting to us from Britain, indicate the truly religious scope of this fine 20th century movement. We must purge from the temple every trace of 'unnatural love,'" he said. In fact, the question has been raised among some of the deepest scholars of the day, if there is still a place for any kind of love, although the National Disciplinary Conference cannot pass definitely on this point until the June 1955 Ecumencium, when the matter will be given place on the agenda.



In conclusion, Reverend Griffum gave several verses from a primitive hymn sung centuries ago by the simple villagers found along the tributaries of the Blue Nile:°

*Always we must hate:
So spake the gods,
Those who never mate
And all other odds.*

*Come, and let us extirpate
Those who love each other,
Cast out queer and celibate,
Never call them brother.*

*Risk not security
Disturb not your mind;
Smite with celerity
Peace in hate we'll find.*

CHANT (more slowly)

*Love, love is dead.
Hate is on the throne
Trouble not your head,
Now that Right is known . . .
Now that right is Known.*

° Freely translated from a tape recording made in 1947 by Dr. Ossip Anthropowski.

JOY TO MY YOUTH

rick davis



*Ad Deum, Qui laetificat juventutem meam
(To God, Who giveth joy to my youth)*



THE ball floated back on a direct pass from center to the left halfback, deep man in the single wing formation. Starting slowly to the right, he gave his blocking time to form ahead of him; then as he reached the line in the off-tackle slant, he saw a small opening and cut back sharply to the left to avoid the pileup of blockers. As he broke through the defensive line into the secondary, he stiff-armed the linebacker coming over to wreck the play and cut back to the outside again, fading with the halfback charging over to nail him. He faded until he picked up a key block and cut back to the left, carrying on for thirty yards before the safety man brought him down with a shoestring tackle. The whistle blew, and the coach called the offensive and defensive teams in to review the play. The ball carrier got to his feet and took off his helmet revealing close-cut black hair. He glanced toward the sidelines and saw a friend there. His attractive features lit up in a warm, friendly grin, and laughter crinkled at the corners of his eyes.

The kid, watching the scrimmage from the sidelines, turned to the old boy who was acting as guide for the small group of new students. "Who was that carrying the ball?" he asked.

"Ronnie Blevin, all-state last year, captain of our team, monitor and first classman," was the old boy's reply.

"Thanks a lot," the kid said, and he thought to himself that surely nothing could be finer than to have Ronnie Blevin smile at him as he had smiled there on the field. The kid, fifteen, had selected his school hero on this the very first day of school.

As the days passed, the kid fell into the regular school routine: classes in the morning, physical education in the afternoon and study hall in the evening. He saw little of his hero since they were in different classes and had different groups of friends due to the disparity in their ages and interests. For the kid, the high spot of each day was the time when he was dismissed from practice with the junior football squad; then he would stop by the varsity practice field and watch his hero run plays with the varsity. After a short wait, the varsity would be dismissed, and the kid would follow his idol to the locker room. Sometimes, on days which became special to him, the kid would find himself in the shower room when Ronnie came in, and he could admire his trim, well-muscled hero and hear the happy voice laughing and joking with his teammates.

The third Saturday of school brought the first football game of the season. It was a beautiful autumn afternoon, and the entire student body turned out to watch the team in the initial defense of their state championship. The kid sat in the bleachers with his young fourth classmates and friends and cheered the team throughout the short afternoon. Ronnie Blevin ran and passed the team to a 27-6 victory, and when the coach took him out of the game shortly before the final whistle, the whole student body rose to its feet as one man and gave him a thundering ovation. A few minutes later the game ended, and the kid ran to the bench and, breathless at his own temerity, asked his hero reverently: "Can I carry your helmet for you, Ronnie?" Adulation shone from his eyes.

"Sure, kid," said Ronnie, noticing the slim, fair-haired boy for the first time. "Take good care of it for me, now."

"Oh! Sure I will!" said the kid, clasping the sweaty prize tightly in his arms.

Ronnie smiled down at him and tousled the soft fair hair playfully. "I know you will, kid."

The kid felt a surge of happiness and well-being rise within him, and he accompanied his hero to the door of the locker room as if he were floating on a cloud. All the way to the locker room, hands slapped at Ronnie, and excited voices shouted congratulations to him. The kid felt that he, too, had accomplished great deeds that afternoon. At the door to the locker room, he reluctantly surrendered the treasure to the star halfback.

"Thanks a lot, Ronnie," he said.

"Thank YOU, kid," said Ronnie; then reading the hero-worship in the kid's eyes, he added, "How about me appointing you as my official helmet bearer for our home games for the rest of the season? Suit you?" He looked down at the kid, and once more his face broke into that sunny grin.

"Oh! Gee! Yes! Thanks again, Ronnie!" Ecstatically happy, the kid ran to tell his young friends of the honor conferred on him by none other than Ronnie Blevin.

The following Monday, the kid stopped as usual to watch the varsity squad after the juniors had been dismissed. When the coach let the varsity go, Ronnie caught sight of the kid on the sidelines and walked over to him smiling.

"Hi, kid," he said, "so you're a football player, too?"

"Aw, Ronnie," the kid said, embarrassed, "I'm not good like you—I just play at the game."

Ronnie threw his arm around the kid's shoulders and started to the locker room with him. "You never can tell, kid. Maybe if you grow enough and work hard enough, you'll be good—a lot better than I can ever hope to be. If not, it doesn't make a lot of difference. It's a lot of fun to be good at the game, but that's all it is—just a game. Always remember that."

"Sure, Ronnie," said the kid, pretending to understand. He wondered, though, what could be finer or more important in life than to be the best left halfback in the state and have all the popularity that goes with it and hear the crowd shouting your name every Saturday.

As they reached the door to the locker room, Ronnie stopped a moment. "Say, what's your name, kid? I can't keep running into you all over school without having a name for you," he said.

"I'd rather you call me Kid," the kid said wistfully, "my real name's Abner Dillard."

"Yeah, I like Kid better, too. Then it's Kid Dillard. Right?"

"Right."

"What dorm you on?"

"I room up on North-Three."

"Oh, Jim Wilks your monitor?"

"That's right."

"Well—I might drop in on you some night when I come up to see Jim, if you'd like me to."

"Gee, I'd like that a lot—if you only would."

"Okay, Kid, then I'll drop up to see you one of these first nights. See you around."

"Okay, Ronnie. See you."

The next couple of days, the kid didn't get a chance to talk to Ronnie. He waited at football practice and saw him when he came in, but Ronnie only smiled and waved at him and walked in with the other guys on the varsity.

Then came Saturday and the second home game. Once more Ronnie was the whole offensive show for the home team as he ran and passed them to a 26-12 win. After the game, the kid ran to the bench to carry the hero's helmet.

"Gosh, Ronnie, you were great!" the kid said.

"Thanks, Kid. Hey! I thought you would have forgotten about the helmet. Glad you didn't, though."

"I couldn't ever forget that," the kid said simply. Then he was lost in the crowd of shouting back-slappers that surrounded the star.



THE following Tuesday, shortly after the lights out bell sounded at ten o'clock, the kid heard a knock at his door.

"Come in," he said.

The door opened and Ronnie walked in. "Hi, Kid," he said. "Had to come up to see Jim Wilks a minute and thought I might as well check by to see where you roomed."

"That's swell, Ronnie," said the kid, enormously flattered that the school big shot was interested in where he, a new boy and lowly fourth classman, roomed. "Come on in and have a seat."

"Can't. Came up to get Jim for a monitor's meeting tonight, and I've got to get back down for the meeting myself. Say, you didn't say you were in a single room up here. Isn't it kind of lonesome rooming alone?"

"My folks asked the school to put me in a single room—thought I'd study better by myself, I guess. It gets pretty lonesome sometimes, but I'm getting more used to it now."

"Well, I've gotta run, Kid. I'll come back some other night when I've got a little time to visit. Good night."

"Good night, Ronnie." The kid went to sleep happy that night.

Sure enough, the demigod returned for the promised visit two nights later.

"Come in," said the kid in response to the knock on his door.

"Hi, Kid," Ronnie said as he walked in and sat down, "how are things with you?"

"Swell, Ronnie," the kid replied. How could things be other than swell when THE big shot of the school pays you a visit? "How about you?"

"'Bout the same as usual, I guess."

The eighteen year old and the fifteen year old sparred conversationally for a few minutes, the kid trying desperately to establish some bond of common interest between them as a basis for friendship. He was too young and inexperienced to know that his own hero-worship for the older boy was, in itself, what had brought them together in the first place and would be enough to keep interest alive until genuine friendship could be established or the admiration died out of itself. Ronnie's admiration of the kid was based on the kid's admiration for him. Youth is so very simple and at the same time, so terribly complex. Each boy aroused the interest of the other, and as long as the mutual bond of interest remained, the possibility of friendship was there.

After a short visit, Ronnie had to leave. "I gotta go, Kid. I'm in training, you know, and I'm supposed to be in bed by ten-thirty."

"Yeah, that's right. But you'll come back again, won't you, Ron? It gets sort of lonely up here with nobody to talk to, and I can hear the other guys talking and laughing in their rooms at night."

"Sure, I'll be back, Kid. By the way, we play our next three games away from home. I'll make a touchdown for you Saturday," Ronnie promised, feeling a touch of sympathy tinged with friendship for the kid.

"Gee—How fine!" said the kid, immensely pleased and flattered.

"Good night, Kid."

"Good night, Ron. Thanks a lot for coming by."

ON Saturday morning the student body gathered at the bus to give the team a big send off; then they waited anxiously through the brief fall afternoon for the message which would signify victory or defeat. At last

the call came through. The game had been won on a long touchdown in the closing minutes by Ronnie Blevin. It had been a close 18-13 conference triumph.

The school was given late permission for a torchlight rally to welcome the team home. New boys were recruited for various last minute tasks, and the kid found himself wiring scraps of burlap to sticks to be dipped in kerosene and used as torches.

The team finally arrived, and the student body cheered the team collectively and each man individually—the longest and loudest cheer, of course, going to Ronnie Blevin, once more the hero of the day. Finally the light from the last torch smoldered and died, and weary students filed off to their dorm rooms and bed.

As the kid switched off his light and crawled under the covers, his door opened and a head stuck in through the opening.

"I made that touchdown I promised you, Kid. Just wanted to tell you before you went to sleep. Good night. See you tomorrow."

"Good night, Ron, and—thanks a lot."

"Aw, forget it, Kid."

The kid fell asleep with a smile of happiness on his face and a warm glow of well-being inside him. For him life held nothing but joy this night.

THE following Saturday's game was a breather even though it was away from home. Still the kid sweated it out until the call came through reporting a 32-0 win for the team with Ronnie Blevin making three of the touchdowns. After the traditional torchlight welcome for the returning victors, Ronnie again stopped by the kid's room.

"All three of my T.D.'s were for you, Kid. Hell, you bring me luck," Ronnie said.

The kid wriggled happily. "Say—Ron—Gee! that's swell of you to say that. Sit down and tell me all about it, huh?" He sat up in the bed, excited.

"There's not much to tell," Ronnie said, sitting down. "They didn't have very much. First time we got the ball, we ran that off-tackle slant from our own thirty-eight yard line. The boys knocked them over like tenpins. Zip—nothing to it—62 yards for the touchdown. The rest was just as simple. I was lucky enough to make two more: one from 24 yards out, one from 7. Didn't play but about half the game."

"Aw, Ron, you're too modest. You make it sound too easy."

"It was easy today, but from here on out, it's going to be pretty tough."

"You'll make it look easy, Ron," the kid said softly.

"Flattery will get you nowhere," Ron said, looking at the slight figure on the bed. Then, abruptly he stood up and walked to the door, disturbed. "Good night, Kid," he said in a hoarse voice.

"Good night, Ron," was the soft reply. "Come back, please."

Thursday night Ronnie came back by the kid's room just after lights out and walked in without knocking. "Hi, Kid," he said.

"Hello, Ron. I've missed you." The kid sat up in the bed and said, "Have a seat."

"I've been kind of busy, and—well, maybe I've been coming up here to see you too much."

"I don't get what you're driving at."

"Oh, forget it. This week's our last game away from home; after that, we've got two home games, and the season's over."

"You going to make a touchdown for me this week end, Ron?"

"That's what I came up to tell you, Kid. I'm sure going to try. If I make one, it'll be for you."

"What's wrong, Ronnie? Did I do something to make you mad at me or something?"

"No—what put that idea in your head?"

"Well, you're acting so funny and stand-offish tonight that I thought maybe I said or did something that made you mad."

"No, Kid, there's nothing wrong with you. It's me."

"What's wrong?"

"Wrong time of month, I guess. I'll get over it.—And, Kid—I'll make that touchdown for you Saturday."

"And you'll come up and tell me all about it Saturday night?"

"I didn't say that."

"But you will?"

"Yes," Ronnie said unhappily, "I will." He got up and walked blindly from the room without answering the kid's soft good night. Neither Ronnie nor the kid slept well that night.

LATE Saturday afternoon, the anxious students could breathe easily once more. Their team had won a close one, 19-14. After the opponents had gone ahead 14-13 midway of the fourth quarter, Ronnie Blevin took the ensuing kickoff back seventy-eight yards for the winning touchdown.

After the wild torchlight celebration of the hard-won victory, Ronnie came by the kid's room. The kid was waiting for him. Ronnie stood silent in the doorway.

"Hey, Ron, I've been waiting for you. Come on in."

"I better not. But I promised I'd come by and tell you; I made that touchdown for you, Kid."

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Then why don't you come on in and tell me about it?"

Ronnie came into the room reluctantly, closing the door behind him.

"Aw, Ron, come on. Sit down, why don't you?"

"All right," Ronnie said with an air of resignation. He walked over and sat down.

"Now—tell me all about the game."

"It was a pretty tough game, Kid. I got off a lucky long pass early in the first quarter for a touchdown. They tied it up at the beginning of the second quarter; then in the third quarter, Ed Adams scored on the end around, and we went out front 13-7. When they scored near the middle of the last quarter to go out in front 14-13, I realized that there wouldn't be many more chances to get that touchdown I promised you. I caught the ball on our 22 yard line and got a couple of key blocks; then I cut to the sidelines and took off. That was the game."

"Say, Ron?"

"Yeah?"

"What's wrong between you and me?"

"Nothing, Kid. Why?"

"Well, the other night, you said you'd been coming up here to see me too much; then you didn't answer me when I said good night, and tonight you didn't want to come in and talk to me. What's wrong? Aren't you and I buddies any more?"

"Sure, Kid, we're buddies. I like you, all right. I guess that's the trouble. I like you too damned much."

"There's nothing wrong with your liking me, is there? I don't think you could like me too much—not too much for me, anyway."

"You're swell, Kid," Ronnie whispered.

It was late when Ronnie left the kid's room that night.

DURING the following week, Ronnie went out of his way to avoid the kid. When they would accidentally meet in the corridor, Ronnie would turn his head to avoid looking the kid in the eye. It was a pretty terrible week for both boys.

Saturday came at last and with it the next to the last football game of the season. It was pretty awful. Ronnie received the opening kickoff and fumbled on his own 27 yard line with Thomas Prep recovering. On the first play after the recovery, the Thomas left end got in behind Ronnie and caught a touchdown pass. They converted to go ahead 7-0. After the quick touchdown, the two teams see-sawed up and down the field with neither being able to score. It was three downs and kick—over and over. Ronnie's usual accurate passing was sadly off, and he was unable to get off on one of his long sure-footed spectacular runs. He was flat. Finally in the last quarter, Ed Adams got away on the end around for 54 yards and a touchdown, but they missed the point, and that's the way the game ended—7-6 favor of Thomas Prep.

After the game, the members of the varsity started disconsolately for the dressing room. The kid ran from the stands and caught up with the dejected figure of the fallen hero as he trudged along, dangling his helmet from listless fingers. The kid took the helmet from him.

"Don't you remember? I'm supposed to carry this for you. I'm your helmet bearer."

Ronnie looked at the kid with disbelieving eyes. "What are you doing talking to me?"

"We're buddies, aren't we?"

"After what happened?"

"Hell, Ronnie, anybody can have a bad day. Don't you remember telling me not to worry—it's just a game."

"That's not what I was talking about."

"Nothing else happened that we didn't want to happen, did it, Ron?"

A great weight lifted from Ronnie's shoulders. "Kid, you're All-American! Wait for me after supper, will you? We'll go to town and celebrate. Suit you?"

"Nothing could be finer," said the kid, happy to be back in the good graces of his hero once more. He scampered off happily to wait for Ronnie.

THE next week was a happy one for the two boys. Ronnie visited the kid several nights during the week, and he promised the kid that the team would beat their traditional rival, Babbitt Prep, for the state prep title.