

Mr. Coburn

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Mr. Coburn, who has been substituting for the manager of one of our stores the past few weeks, is enjoying his half holiday today. He informs us that he has some letters to write, and that he has come down "where there is a little peace and quiet." His brother has recently enlisted in the Navy, and Mr. MacCurrie inquires about him.

Mr. Coburn: "Pete's doin' fine. He's at the training station at Newport. He got some kind of a medal or somethin' for learnin' the drill quick. They got some kind of a system there, they make officers out of some of them that learn quickest. Pete got promoted, he said, right off the reel. Of course he learned all that drillin' right here in the fire house, when he practiced for the parades. But he didn't say anything to them about that, you can bet your life."

Mr. MacCurrie: "He likes it then, does he?"

Mr. Coburn: "Sure, he likes it. Why wouldn't he? He didn't have nothin' here but a WPA job. Now he's got somethin' with a future in it. A young fella stays in the Navy a few years and he can learn most anything he wantsta. They teach a lad a trade, you know, if he wansta learn one. And if he stays in the outfit for twenty years, he gets a nice little pension. Pretty nice to be able to retire on pension when you're only about forty or so."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Yes, you're right. There's Claude Thompson doon here. He gets a nice little sock from the government every month, and what he makes in the shop besides."

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Mr. Coburn: "Didn't he get retired for disability of some kind?"

Mr. MacCurrie: "He went deaf. It was due to some kind of accident, I forget now just what it was. There was some kind of accident, I forget now just what it was. There was some kind of an explosion, and he rescued some of the sailors. He got a medal for heroism, or something o' the kind."

Mr. Coburn: "Well, in that case, he deserves a pension."

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Mr. MacCurrie: "Oh yes, he deserves one all right."

Mr. Coburn: "They're makin' it pretty damn hard to get in the Navy these days. Pete said the tests were pretty strict. Any little thing wrong with you, especially your teeth, you don't get by. And the mental tests are tough, too, he said. He said the guy in the recruitin' station told him they get so many applications these days they can take their pick of the best ones. A lot of young lads just out of high school head for the service, he said."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Well, I'm glad to hear he likes it anyway. It would be goddom tough if he didn't and him in there for the next four years."

Mr. Coburn: "Yeah, he's gotta like it."

Mr. MacCurrie: "How's George gettin' along?" (The merchant whose illness has given Mr. Coburn temporary employment.)

Mr. Coburn: "Pretty good. They expect him home pretty soon."

Mr. MacCurrie: "And then I suppose you'll be oot of a job again?"

Mr. Coburn: "Well, I got a couple of things in mind--Jeez if a 3 lad could only think of something. I mean some little thing he could put on the market, and it might go like a house on fire."

Mr. MacCurrie: "You mean an invention."

Mr. Coburn: "Yeah. Look at the safety pin. The lad invented that must have made a fortune. I had somethin' figured out one time. But it cost too much to make. Cost about five dollars. If you could get up somethin' that wouldn't sell for more than a couple of bucks-----

Mr. Odenwald comes in, stamping wet, clinging snow off his rubbers. "By God it was slippery comin' down the hill," he says. He hangs up coat and hat and takes a chair.

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Mr. MacCurrie: "So it's slippery is it? And me gettin' ready to go for a walk."

Mr. Odenwald: "Well, it was mostly on the hill. That ice underneath the snow. But the sidewalks ain't so bad."

Mr. Coburn: "I got to be gettin' at those letters." He goes upstairs.

Mr. Odenwald: "How's the trial comin' Andrew?"

Mr. MacCurrie: "They're still cross-examin' this Levy, the lawyer. They've got him pretty well confused, accordin' to the radio. He'll make some damagin' statements, and they'll discredit his testimony. What chance has a mon got with six or seven lawyers (Mr. MacCurrie makes it sound like liars') on the top of him?"

Mr. Odenwald: "How do you think it'll come out?"

Mr. MacCurrie: "It wouldn't surprise me a goddom bit, if 'twas 4 a disagreement. One or two of the jurors will hold oot. Look at all the money those lads have got. I don't give a dom how well they watch the jury, there's always ways to get at 'em."

Mr. Odenwald: "Maybe you're right."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Over in the old country it's the majority that counts. If the majority of the jury says guilty, the mon's guilty. And that's that."

Mr. Odenwald: "Well, that's a pretty good way."

Mr. MacCurrie takes a pinch of snuff. Mr. Odenwald puffs thoughtfully at his pipe.

"You weren't around yesterday," says Mr. MacCurrie, replacing the snuffbox in his pocket.

"No." says Mr. Odenwald. "I didn't feel up to it."

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Mr. MacCurrie: "Fred Robertson was in here. He was talkin' about the shop down there. It's kind of a tough place to work these days, from what he says."

Mr. Odenwald: "That's what I hear. Some of them are callin' it 'Alcatraz' they tell me. I was talkin' to young Anderson the other day. He's got a job truin' wheels down there. He says the prices are cut so low on some of them he can't do any kind of a job. He says he can just about pick them out of one box and put them in another at the price they've got on them, to say nothin' about truein' 'em."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Fred was sayin' the same thing. He says they're puttin' oot rotten work doon there, all the way through."

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Mr. Odenwald: "It ain't the place it used to be. And the clocks ain't what they used to be either."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Well---" he gets up, looks up at the clock. "I guess I'll go for a walk. But not very far? Not very far today. I don't care much for this goddom snow."

Mr. Odenwald: "I got to go over to the drug store. And then back up the hill. And I don't think I'll come out any more tonight. Stay home and listen to the radio."