

Lonely soldiers

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LONELY SOLDIERS

... Loneliness has seeped through the happiness I once knew and now my whole body and soul ache as it dominates my life. With thousands of people around I still feel so singular and alone. No one to talk to, no one who understands...

... I am not sorry I joined the Air Force, because my home had become unbearable. I shall never forget the day when my parents learned about me. I don't know whether Mom felt pity for me or hatred, as my father did. Life after that became unbearable. I was treated like a criminal or a freak. My parents spied on me constantly and read all my mail. When I joined the AF, my parents for some unknown reason — hatred perhaps — reported to the Office of Special Investigation that I was a homosexual. Three weeks later I was called in to the OSI and was told that I was under investigation. When I was transferred I left fearing what was to happen and hating my parents for their injustice. At the new base I was called in to the OSI periodically for the next seven months. Every time I went, all I could think of was «what lies can I tell that they would believe; how can I clear myself and not be discharged?» I don't even remember how I did it or what I told them. Finally, after eight months of hell and agony, I convinced them or they decided that I was not gay but a victim of circumstances...

... The days and nights seem to drag by so slowly. I spend most of my time either in the barracks or in a theater. I hate to spend much time in the barracks; the type of characters that I have to live with are so —. Right now about ten of them are sitting around reading comic-books. I don't see how they can get any enjoyment out of these fantastic bits of trash. Oh well, the world is made up of all kinds, isn't it? The trouble is that they don't limit their distaste to themselves. Any time an opera or symphony is turned on a shriek of terror is heard from all around. I don't know; I guess they are a little afraid of culture or something... However God has been kind enough to grant me one person with whom I can at least talk. I am quite sure he is gay and does try to understand. At least it lets out the tension once in a while which has built up inside of me...

... Today orders were issued for those going to Europe. If only I could be that lucky! I know our European friends have their heart and soul in the task of bringing light to the ignorant and help to the helpless. I do hope and shall pray to the end that you and your friends succeed in penetrating that Iron Curtain here in America. The ignorance of the people is pathetic and I am afraid that it will be years and years before their minds will be able to accept anything except that which they have believed so strongly for such a long time. Hope — most of us here in the States have even given up that. It isn't our fault, but the fault of those who cause this. It is more of a vengeance, a way to get back at those who hate us. I hate this our life myself, but America is so full of it... I pray for your work because I know that you have started something that is great and brave. I shall be saving every penny I can; for as soon

as possible after my separation I shall be on a ship headed for Europe and my life . . .

. . . Why must people be so cruel and heartless? Don't they realize that a person cannot be held responsible for an act of God? How can a person be blamed for loving in the only way he knows? Love is the one thing in the world that a human being searches for and longs for all his life. Without some form of love it is impossible for a human to exist, and yet «they» cannot understand why a person is gay. Some day the world will be different. Love will rule the world no matter what form it takes. It is just as normal for me to love a friend with every bit of my being as it is for someone to love a girl. This word «normal» has been so terribly misused. Who is to say what is normal and what is not? I have no idea whether my love be «normal» or not, but one thing I know and that is that it is real and alive. If I never see my friend again, he shall always remain the first in my heart. Since he went away I have had nothing but sorrow . . . I thank God that He at least granted me the love of a clean-cut friend and did not allow me to be cast into the world totally unprepared and unaware of myself. And also that my love was not just sexual, as with so many of our friends. I know that gay love can be beautiful, by my own experience. So after all I have something to be thankful for . . .

These excerpts from letters from an 18-year-old volunteer in the United States Air Force were sent to us by Kai Mossin, our Norwegian colleague, who comments: Some readers might find the boy's thoughts sentimental, yes, even childish; but I consider the quotations of interest to all of us, especially to those of us who know little about life in America and the difficulties with which the American homosexuals have to cope. Loneliness, suppressed feelings, concealing one's real self — these are, after all, the heavy burden of most homosexuals in this life. In Europe, too. But it is touching, just the same, to read what an American thinks about and longs for — Europe, which we Europeans ourselves consider to be a difficult place enough to live in, but which for our American friends stands out as a paradise . . . The letters give the impression that the boy has a continued love for his friend and longs for his return. Yet he refuses to believe that the short, happy life they lived together has come to an end. According to official dispatches, his friend found the death of a hero at Pusan in Korea. «He gave his life for Freedom». How ironic! Political freedom, perhaps, but what about his **FREEDOM AS A HUMAN BEING, AS A MAN?**

During the American Civil War, Walt Whitman performed a great humanitarian service in cheering, assisting and comforting sick and wounded soldiers, at the same time enriching his own life, as a «Specimen Day» from his diary and a short poem indicate:

This afternoon, July 22d (1863). I have spent a long time with Oscar F. Wilber, company G, 154th New York, low with chronic diarrhoea, and a bad wound also. He asked me to read him a chapter in the New Testament. I complied, and ask'd him what I should read. He said, «Make your own choice.» I open'd at the close of one of the first books of the evangelists, and read the chapters describing the latter hours of Christ, and

the scenes at the crucifixion. The poor, wasted young man ask'd me to read the following chapter also, how Christ rose again. I read very slowly, for Oscar was feeble. It pleased him very much, yet the tears were in his eyes. He ask'd me if I enjoy'd religion. I said, «Perhaps not, my dear, in the way you mean, and yet, may-be, it is the same thing.» He said, «It is my chief reliance.» He talk'd of death, and said he did not fear it. I said, «Why, Oscar, don't you think you will get well?» He said, «I may, but it is not probable.» He spoke calmly of his condition. The wound was very bad, it discharg'd much. Then the diarrhoea had prostrated him, and I felt that he was even then the same as dying. He behaved very manly and affectionate. The kiss I gave him as I was about leaving he return'd fourfold. He gave me his mother's address. I had several such interviews with him. He died a few days after the one just described.

O tan-faced prairie-boy

O tan-faced prairie-boy,
Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till
at last among the recruits,
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give — we but
look'd on each other,
When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me.

The lonely, «different» soldier is the theme of the recent novel «Walk on the Water» by Ralph Leveridge (Farrar: also Signet). In their Pacific jungle foxhole, Cailini and Rosinski fall to discussing Lorry Adams:

«Now, looking back, I know why the squad gave Adams such a tough time. He was like a spittoon for them, and into him they spat all the anger of their misery.

«Well, one night, feeling lower than usual, I happened to be sitting in the recreation hall. Adams was right opposite me. I got to thinking about him. I figured that he must be just about the loneliest guy I knew. Then it struck me that I was making an ass of myself. My little pile of misery, when placed against what he could except, was like a minnow alongside a whale. About that time the new squad leader came in. That was Hervey. He walked over to where Adams was and started to talk to him. I remember seeing the look that came over the kid's face. I'd never seen anything like it before. It transformed him. All the loneliness had vanished. In its place was something holy. I imagined that the woman who kissed the hem of Christ's garment must have looked like that. I wanted to go and sit near them and eavesdrop. But as it was, it didn't matter, for Adams got up and walked to the piano. I knew then what they had been talking about. Hervey had bullied the kid into playing. There was a little trouble at first. The fellows resented Adams' trying to break into their gang. Tuthill made a fool of himself. I got a kick out of that. Well, when Adams did get to sit down on the piano stool, he was defying the whole room and he was very unhappy about

it. But he'd made up his mind he was going to play — and, brother, did he play!»

Now, in the excitement of telling, he gripped Rosinski's arm.

«I've been to Constitution Hall in Washington and listened to recitals. Heard all kinds of famous pianists. But I'd never heard anything like that kid played. Perhaps it was the defiance in him. Perhaps he was just speaking to Hervey, and in his tragic, lonely way, endeavoring to tell the man what was in his twisted mind. Exactly what, I don't know. But I do know that while he played I left the room.» Now slowly, tasting the mood of each word, living it all again. «Suddenly I was home. I was sitting on the porch looking between the cherry tree and the willow. I saw the rivers merging and becoming the Chesapeake. I saw myself trying to walk on the water. I was reaching — reaching for that mysterious something. It was there. Closer than it had ever been before. Right at the tips of my fingers. I leaned over. I pushed my hand a little farther. And then, and then, unbelievably, I had it.»

Rosinski sat up. «What was it?»

«I slowly opened my hand. I looked. I couldn't believe it.»

Rosinski shouted, «Mother of God, what was it?»

Cailini looked deep into Rosinski's eyes as though he would see again what he had held in his hand that day so long ago.

«The Christ. That's what. The Christ. In my open sweating palm, the day before Calvary.»

... After that, neither spoke for a while. The sneer was still in Rosinski's eyes, but, Cailini noticed, he did not move away. So he tried again.

«No, not in my hand the Flesh. Only sweat was there. Big bright drops. And somehow that sweat picked up the light of the sun and the water — getting all the time brighter and warmer — washing over me with its flooding tide — until at last I saw what I wanted to see — Him, symbol of man's eternal loneliness, Him, the only infinite victory over loneliness. All I saw was a reflection of what I wanted to be — an invitation to give what's tender inside a chance to develop, a warning of what would happen if I tried. the way of all love, death.»

The sneer left Rosinski... Now he hesitated, stammered. «Are you sure it — it wasn't just imagination?»

«*Just* imagination?» echoed Cailini. «Of course it was *just* imagination. What else do you think Christ is? Imagination is the seed of all wisdom, the road through hell, the gate into heaven, yesterday and today and tomorrow. Imagination is man's only conquest of the universe. Sure it was *just* imagination.»

A Word to our Readers

Won't you help us in our endeavors to make the English portion of this magazine please YOU? We welcome your comments, your suggestions — yes, even your gripes! But especially we need material: original stories, sketches, book reviews, articles, photos, etc. May we hear from you? (Of course, all correspondence is held in strictest confidence.)

Yours sincerely, THE CIRCLE.

„LE COUP DE FREIN“

Bar-Restaurant

chez Pierre & Bébé

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Le seul endroit à Paris où l'on est vraiment entre nous. - Intimité - Gaieté.

Les numéros du «Cercle» des mois de janvier et février 1953

et leurs «petites feuilles» respectives sont épuisés. Nous serions très reconnaissants à tous ceux qui voudraient bien mettre leurs exemplaires à notre disposition et les leur échangerions volontiers, aussi longtemps que possible, contre d'autres exemplaires; par exemple, également, contre le «Kinsey-Report» ou «l'Allocution de Noël» de Rolf.

Kameradschaftliche Vereinigungen und Zeitschriften des Auslandes: angeschlossen an das «Internationale Komitee für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung»

(I. C. S. E.) — Organ: «Newsletter» — Postbox 542 — Amsterdam.

Dänemark: «Forbundet af 1948» — Postbox 1023, Kopenhagen K.

Deutschland: «Verein für humanitäre Lebensgestaltung», Arndtstr. 3, Frankfurt a. M.
Zeitschrift «Die Gefährten»

«Weltbund für Menschenrechte» — Postfach 1399 — Bremen

Holland: «Cultuur- en Ontspannings Centrum» — Postbus 542 — Amsterdam
Maandblad «Vriendschap», Telefoon 34596

Norwegen: «Forbundet av 1948» — Postboks 1305 — Oslo

Schweden: «Riksförbundet för sexuellt likaberättigande», Box 850, Stockholm I
(Bund für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung)

Sonstige Zeitschriften, jedoch dem I. C. S. E. nicht angeschlossen:

«Der Weg» — Unnastrasse 12, Hamburg 30

«Vox» — Charles Grieger Verlag, Kleine Freiheit 25
Hamburg-Altona

«Pan» — Literarische Monatsblätter der Freundschaft

Dänemark: Dansk Forretnings-Tjeneste, Postbox 108
Zeitschrift «Vennen», Kopenhagen K.

Journal «Futur», 57, rue de Clichy, Paris (9e).

Mitgeteilt von dem I. C. S. E.