

the misty depth imparting a glowing radiance. Shadows of form and color came into being, veiled in the clinging mist but giving hope that here was no lonely void. And then the sun leaped over the loftiest mountain top, dispelling every trace of uncertainty and doubt. The mysterious chasm at my feet became a scintillating

jewel, as the glorious azure of Crater Lake caught the sun's rays and flung them joyously upward to the sky again.

No longer was I standing on the brink of the unknown. Here was joy, and freedom, and glorious existence, realities that neither life nor death can dim. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not sleep."

## The Birthday

JOAN FULLER

*(First Place, Short Story Division,  
1945 Butler Literary Contest)*

The woman's arms were tired, and her back, as she pushed the iron. But the pain of her body was somehow outside her, and she was only her thoughts. There was so much to do before Grandma's party. After Mrs. Knox's ironing was done there was hall and living room to clean, the cake to ice, and lunch to fix for Grandma and the baby. If only Ella May's time hadn't come early, she could have helped with the easy things. She'd been early with Carol, too, though, and they might have known.

It seemed awful not to be with the poor girl. But there was so much to do. And Ella May was a big strong girl. And this time they even had money enough for her to go to the hospital. Almost nobody had trouble having babies in the hospital. It wouldn't be like when Ella May herself was born. The woman smiled a little at the slip on the ironing board. Once in a while she'd thought it would have been as well if she'd died then and Ella May too. But that wasn't so. Sometimes it was very good to be alive. And sometimes even cleaning people's houses wasn't so bad.

Most people were awfully nice. They sent you jellies and chicken when you were sick. And look at Mrs. Pohl. A hundred dollars for Grandma — one for each year. Certainly was lucky, seeing that Ella May had had to go so quickly. Babies might be a lot of trouble, but it was fun to watch them grow up. And to think of all the times Grandma'd seen that. It was lucky too that Mrs. Pohl had said she could clean on Friday this week or she never would have got ready for the party.

The slip was the last thing in the basket, and as she folded it she planned what she'd do next. First the cleaning. She'd hung the curtains last night, and there was only the floor and the dusting to do. She put the ironing things away in the closet and then stood still a minute. Pushing back her hair with her arm, she sighed a little. Her forehead was wet, and she could smell the perspiration from under her arms.

With a big cap on her head and brooms and mops under her arms, she went into the living room. The sun shining in and the starched white curtains made it look pretty nice and cheerful even if the floor wasn't cleaned. And with Grandma in her



black silk with the lace collar sitting in the window, nobody'd notice the shabby chairs. It wouldn't be much of a party really. But people would be dropping in and she had a recipe from Mrs. Foster, her Thursday woman, for a kind of tea punch. With the cake, and Grandma sitting there being gracious and trying not to look excited, it would be fine.

She began to whistle as she brushed the flowered carpet. The legend of Grandma had always been such a wonderful thing. And to think of living a hundred years. And clear up to last year she'd been able to do fine sewing for people. Then the arthritis got into her hands, too. But she could still tell stories that made the whole world seem to glow. When they were children and didn't have any decent clothes to wear and the other kids laughed at them, you could sort of not care because you knew you were better than anyone else and your grandmother had been a lady in England and run away with an American sailor and got disinherited. She'd had an awful time when he died, but she was always gay and gentle, and her eyes would shine as she told about being a girl, and she never let them forget their English. She'd tell about riding in the wind and dances in great white rooms, and you forgot how tired you were and that there was still ironing to be done. And the idea of her having the courage and doing something people in books would do. That was good, too. And to live a hundred years mostly being well. That was most wonderful.

She'd finished the carpet, and it looked pretty good in spite of its being threadbare. She looked at the glass things on the mantel and decided to wash them. But first she'd better find out about Ella May. Of course it would be a girl. Everybody in their family had girls, and Ella May's husband

had four sisters. Carol had plenty of little dresses that the new one could wear.

She went next door to the Shell station to phone the hospital. The air was wonderful and fresh because of the rain last night, and the sun sparkled on everything. Carol was playing with the little boy down the street and called to her, and she yelled "Hi!" She wasn't at all worried about Ella May. Nothing could happen today. When the nurse said, "Just a moment, Mrs. Thompson. I think I have good news for you," she wasn't even surprised.

However, when they said, "It's an eight-pound boy, Mrs. Thompson, and they're both in fine shape," she nearly dropped the receiver.

"A boy?" she repeated.

"And a big fellow, too."

"My goodness," was all she could say.

But when she went outside again, she thought she might have known. This was a day when wonderful things happened. And what a surprise for Grandma. She'd seen four generations and this was the first boy. Oh, it was a good day. She almost ran back to the house and up the stairs.

"Grandma!" she called as she went.

But she stopped in the quiet room. The old woman was lying back in her chair looking out of the window at the sunlight making shimmered spots on the drying leaves. She was so still that suddenly her granddaughter was frightened. She remembered stories about babies being born and old people dying at the same moment. You were always supposed to be consoled by the new life. But then the old woman said, "It's pretty. When you're old, you can notice things again."

An enormous feeling of relief made her feel a bit weak. Then she said, "Ella May . . . ."

"Is she all right?"



"Yes, Grandma, it's a boy. Isn't that a birthday present?"

"And the mother?"

"Oh, fine."

"I'm glad." The old woman's voice was flat.

"But isn't it wonderful?" her granddaughter insisted. She was suddenly afraid again. And her mood of happiness was gone.

"It will mean more clothes to buy. Or be given."

"Oh, don't think of that now. You wanted us all to have boys. And now you have one. And for your birthday." She wanted desperately to feel again as she had a while ago. But somehow she knew she couldn't. If you counted on something and wanted it too much, you were bound to be disappointed.

Suddenly the old woman turned her head toward her granddaughter, staring at her. Sometimes her eyes were vague and their color the indefinite blue-edged brown of the very old. But as she stared they were very dark and glittering. Then her mouth twisted. "I wish you wouldn't give me a party," she said harshly. "My life has been evil."

"Grandma!"

"It has. I had money and a good family and I ran away for love. Oh, it was romantic, wasn't it? And you're romantic. Look at yourself. Broken and ugly and old from work, and your mother and me before you. And Ella and those children, too. Never a moment to notice the clouds of a sunset or the light on the leaves. You're all stupid and insensitive and each of your children a little more so. And I've done it. It's my doing." Abruptly she put her skinny, twisted little hands over her face and began to weep, noisily like a child.

The other woman was stunned and filled with a kind of horror. She wanted to say something wise. She wanted to make some gesture. But she was suddenly very tired again. She looked at her own face in the mirror and it was yellow and lined and her hair was dull and nearly gray.

The old woman looked up from her hands and said almost savagely, "Get out of here."

Because she still couldn't think of any thing to say she turned and went back to her cleaning.

## Not Guilty

JOSEPH F. WORKMAN

*(Second Place, Short Story Division,  
1945 Butler Literary Contest)*

The courtroom was lighted with a bright, blinding flash. The twelve selected ministers of the jury, representing all religious denominations, stared solemnly at the defendant who sat in the seat of judgment. With firm straight lips but in a

manner not unkind, the foreman arose, and said the jury was ready to hear the evidence. The defendant, a sailor with an oil-soaked uniform that showed spots of blood on his shoulders and chest, stood and faced the jury. His voice gurgled a little—then broke. Perspiration stood out on his face. He started again, this time in a