

# Sea Song

JAN SKINNER

The boy should have been hurrying home from school. The sky was dark with that peculiar greyness that foretells a storm, but the boy, tall and lank, was ambling along the sidewalk, looking up at the moody skies eagerly, expectantly, as if he was about to see a friend.

He stumbled, looked down at the cracked sidewalk for a moment, and his face lost the look of expectancy. He remembered Miss Thompson. Her face stood out in his memory, red and angry, saying again that she should dismiss him from her geometry class.

For a moment he conquered his teacher's image by whistling the mating song of a cardinal, then he broke off, at a loss for the missing notes and Miss Thompson returned to repeat snatches of the lecture she had given him that morning. "A person," she said again in his mind, "must discipline himself—geometry is an excellent mental disciplinarian. That is why I teach it — we are living in a world of doers, not dreamers — you must apply yourself — hereafter when I speak to you you will give me your attention, your full attention, or I shall dismiss you from this class. Do you understand?"

He understood. He understood the miles between the sooty streets of the factory town and the wind washed beaches of the coast. He understood the difference in the pay his father was making as an unskilled mechanic and the uneven amount he had brought home as a longshoreman. And he understood the difference the change made for him.

He was a stranger among the inland men, their loud women and shouting children. There was no common ground on

which he could meet these men who spent their days beneath an iron sky fashioning their gods of steel or the boys, his own age, who never lifted their eyes above the grey path on which their feet had been set.

In an effort to lift the mood, he shook his head, looked up at the sky again, and walked a little faster. Now he passed the smoke stained clapboard houses that lined the sidewalk without looking at them, without pausing to pity a marigold here, or a rosebush there, that was trying to thrust its roots into the sterile earth. Nor was he consciously thinking, yet he could feel in his heels the unyielding pavement, on which he walked, that should have been shell studded sand.

As he was passing the corner of Horne and Thirteenth Streets, he heard something. It had the sound of the wind sighing through sea grass. There was all the magic and mystery of a dark night and a high tide woven into the tune which had crept down Horne Street to meet him.

Without thinking, he followed it. Walking on sand and sea grass, he followed it to the side of a grey clapboard house. There he leaned and listened to the violin that spoke to him.

It whispered of a nettle gliding through dark waters in the path of the moon. More urgent now, it played of the shadowy shape of a hungry ray swimming behind and beneath the mass of jelly floating near the surface. It brought they ray up, nearer, too near the nettle, and then broke off because there wasn't more to tell.

Now it unfolded a beach, darkened

by shadows and lighted by a rising moon. A cardinal sang from the branches of a sand pine, softly — and yes, there was the rest of the crested bird's song he had forgotten. A white sail drifted out on the bay where the whitecaps were rising. The strong smell of the little death that always floats beside the sea was mixed with the heavy odor of mimosa and blown to him on the wind. Night deepened and the moon rose high while the tide crept up the beach.

Suddenly the wind began to beat its wings over the bay leaving the seething foam of its own fury, dashed to shore to lash the grasses. A cloud crept across the moon and far out the sail dipped and fell in the wake of the waves. A streak of light tore at the night. The sky opened and rain fell, while out on the bay a sound like the rending of a soul came back to shore.

Abruptly as it began, the storm stop-

ped. With a whisper the moon cast off its cloud and bathed the beach in light. The wind fell to murmuring with the waves again, and in answer they flung a piece of broken mast upon the beach and gently laid a white rag of a sail beside it. Far up and out of reach, a star fell, leaving its trail, for a moment, glowing in the sky.

The music faded. The beach, the sky, the falling star blended into the growing dusk and disappeared. The boy looked at the lighted window. He could step to it, stand on tiptoe, and see who had created a sea storm on the strings of a violin. Instead he smiled to himself, shoved his hands deeper into his pockets, and turned toward the coming storm.

Behind him, inside the grey clapboard house, Miss Thompson laid her violin gently in its case and turned, with a lost look in her eyes, to grade the day's geometry papers.

## The Woman And The Working Girl

JEAN FARSON

Brynn hurried along the shadowy sidewalk. She could hardly see her way through the slippery, foggy air that enveloped East Barnes Street. A fine rain still came down in a slow monotone, and nothing in the city of Wellington seemed to be dry at all. Brynn cast a glance at her watch, and quickened her steps, her green transparent raincoat crackling, as she hurried to catch the eleven o'clock bus. Mr. Dwyer shouldn't have kept her working so late on a night like this — the six blocks from the main office of Dwyer and Company, General Contractors, to the bus stop that went out to her home

were long and poorly lit, and it was cold. Mr. Dwyer thought a good bit about the Carmenson contract, though, and he and Hank had still been working on it when she left.

Two blocks ahead, through the rain, Brynn could barely see the street light at Bovard Avenue, by the bus stop. She was walking through a crowded residential district, where the houses were big and old and close to the sidewalk. The population seemed to be mostly in bed. There were few cars parked along the sidewalk. This didn't seem like Barnes Street at all. "I wish I'd taken Dwyer