

He has found me and I am not afraid.

My name?

It cried my name?—Elise calls from below! She is cowering on the terrace of rats, clinging to an overhanging branch.

She has started a little landslide on the path; rocks are clattering down to the beach; terns are flying out to sea in fear; the cliff is deserted; the house is deserted; nothing's upstairs. The merest quiver of emphasis! Elise I am coming it's over . . .



## The Cat And The Cricket

BARBARA PARK

HE ordered another bourbon and water, and watched the cat play with the cricket. How odd to see a cat playing with a cricket in the corner of a cocktail lounge! But then, it wasn't a very respectable cocktail lounge. John wouldn't approve of it, nor would he approve of her being there alone at four o'clock in the afternoon. John didn't approve of a good many things she did. But, good heavens, why think about John? That was past—c'est fini!

The drink came, and after she had paid for it, she turned again to watch the cat and the cricket. He pawed it carefully again and again until he paused, crouched low, his slit eyes watching it writhe and twist and scurry about in frantic circles, his tail swinging behind him like an irregular pendulum. He pounced upon it, tossing it playfully into the air and down again. She lit a cigarette, blew the smoke out slowly, and gazed into nothingness for a moment. She laughed shortly at her thoughts. They're like me, the cat and

the cricket, very much like me. She laughed again. How strange to compare oneself to a cat—and stranger still to compare the cricket with the hearts and souls of men! But it was true, wasn't it? She was a cat, a sleek and beautiful cat, playfully toying with love, tantalizing men until they squirmed and writhed and became docile. And men *were* like crickets really—stupid fools, who chirp and make a loud noise and pretend they're something they aren't. How small and insignificant and helpless they really are!

The cat batted the cricket again, but it wriggled once, and then lay very still. The cat sniffed at it, touched it experimentally, and, perceiving no movement, walked over to the corner and curled up contentedly. The cricket wasn't fun anymore. The life had gone out of it. The cat washed itself for a short moment, then lay back and surveyed the room in a self-satisfied manner.

She sank down into the dull leather cushions and smiled. It's a rather delicious feeling, isn't it, Cat? Feel pleased with yourself, don't you? Oh, she knew the

feeling well—a self-satisfied feeling of conquest, and of contempt. Stupid cricket—stupid men! She gazed into the dirty mirror on the opposite wall and studied her reflection. Yes, darling, you are beautiful, in a black and white sort of way—a successful and charming business woman of thirty-two. She could have any man she wanted, couldn't she? Life had been fun—the thrill of seeing an interesting face for the first time, the mystery of how to manage an introduction, the carefully laid plans to mold an acquaintance into friendship; then, and she laughed, the kill. It was delightful to watch a man fall for her, to watch him squirm, to listen to his stupid chatter, to hear his foolish threats when she walked away and left him. It had happened many times. First there was Rouget, the French painter—his love-making had been inspiring for awhile, then became, oh, so tiresome. Then there'd been Mark, who was terribly dull, then Peter, and Jameson, and that ridiculous little man from San Francisco. And basically, they were all alike—except John. He was the only one who saw through her, and it worried her a little. But she cast off the incident with a shrug of her shoulders. No man was worth it really.

The cat had arisen from the corner and was pacing up and down the room. He's restless, she thought. He's looking for another cricket. A wave of uneasiness went through her, for she understood that

feeling, too—the need for something new, something exciting. She turned again to the mirror for reassurance. But somehow there was no comfort in the well-moulded face which stared anxiously back at her. Life was funny. Could one go through life constantly searching for something—what was that something? A home, a family? She was angry with herself for being a sentimental idiot. A woman with the world of love and excitement at her feet didn't need a home. But was it love, real love? She took a quick drink and turned to the cat again.

He's found another cricket—no, it wasn't a cricket. It was bigger and better. He began the same routine, batting it, tantalizing it. Suddenly, the insect darted for a crack in the moulding and disappeared. The cat waited, patiently, eagerly, its tail twitching in nervous rhythm. She waited, too, angry and annoyed at the feeling of anxiety within her. Minutes passed. The insect did not appear. The cat walked slowly away from the crack in the wall, turning once or twice to look back. He meowed plaintively, and sank down into his corner. The insect was gone.

She finished the drink, hoping that it would quell the feeling of terror which had gripped her, held her, and made her weak. She arose quickly. Perhaps—perhaps if she called John, he would take her to see that small cottage on the lake.

### ANNOUNCEMENT!

Butler University Literary Contest closes Monday, April 15. Prizes of \$25.00 are offered for the best short story, essay or one-act play and group of poems. All manuscripts must be typed in double spacing and in triplicate, being entered under a pen name. The manuscripts must be on Mrs. Wesenberg's desk by 6 p. m. on the deadline day.