

was out here . . . in the cold . . . waiting . . .

Finally the snow stopped. The clouds moved on across the cold crisp sky, leaving a pale moon; and a mile across the fields Jed Sparks stirred in his bed as his dogs began to bay it.

Vignette

William Backemeyer

“THE KNIGHT is the only move,” said the Kibitzer. “It’s the only move.”

The Player grunted, staring at the chess board. His opponent unwrapped a fresh cigar and bit off the end.

“It’s the only *move*, I tell you.”

“You said that already,” mumbled the Player. “We heard you already.”

“Well, it’s the only move.”

The three men sat in silence. Then the Player reached for the bishop. “The knight is the only move, but I move the bishop, so there!”

“Ach,” exclaimed the Kibitzer with a wave of his hand. “What a *Potzer* you are. I don’t know why I watch.”

“God knows *we* don’t need you.”

“All right, so I’ll leave.”

“So leave already! There’s Hoffmann over there. Go play with him.”

“I’d rather watch.”

“You’d rather kibitz!”

The Opponent looked up smiling at the two older men. “He was right, you know. The knight move was the best.”

“And do I need *your* help now, too? Isn’t one kibitzer enough? Worry about your own moves, my friend.”

The Opponent kept his smile as he returned to studying the board. The Player picked up a captured pawn and tapped it rapidly upon the table. Soon over the tapping could be heard the Kibitzer:

“Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk. . . .”

“What’s the matter now?”

“That move.”

“What move?”

“Your last move. It was *terrible!* You had to move the knight.”

“I’m *waiting* to see what’s so bad about the bishop.”

The Opponent made his move.

“You see,” laughed the Kibitzer, “there’s your answer. *Now* tell me the knight wasn’t the best.”

“So . . . what has he got? Nothing. After the knight he’d have taken the diagonal.”

“Diagonal, schmiagonal! Can’t you see when you’re lost?”

“So why do you keep kibitzing, if the game is over?”

“He might muff it.”

The Player made his move; and the Opponent, shifting his cigar, made a quick reply.

The Kibitzer shrugged. "You see, the game plays *itself* now. He can't go wrong."

"I suppose I might as well resign!"

"Might as well."

"Yah, well, if you don't mind, I'll play on. I happen to like the game still."

"Suit yourself. I don't care."

The Opponent watched them, amused. The Player moved again.

"Oh, not *that* move, you idiot. This time you *had* to move the bishop."

The Player grunted, but said nothing.

The Kibitzer shook his head back and forth. "It was the only move, and you missed it. *Why* do I watch such playing?" And he leaned closer for a better look.

A Scrap of Lavender

Judy Bergen

YOU PROBABLY read the story; it was in all the papers. When a man as prominent as Wheeler Dunlop gets killed, it's bound to attract attention. Of course people get hit by cars often enough, and if anyone suspected its having been more than an accident, certainly nothing was said. If I had said anything, who would have believed me?

Wheeler Dunlop was an artist. So am I, but he was a good one, a genius. We met in college and managed to keep contact through the years, years that carried him to heights of fame while they brought me a clientele which kept me eating but nothing more. For several summers we had been going up into the New England region to paint and get away from civilization a little. We always picked a small rural community where Wheeler wasn't known. Somehow we never worried about anyone recognizing me.

Wheeler's last summer was spent in Vermont, in one of the rocky mountainous spots that can be changed, via the paint-brush, from grim reality to picturesqueness. It was here that he was killed. Till now I have never told my story, partly because I didn't want to get involved and partly because I don't think anyone would have believed me. There was a third reason, but I myself wasn't sure just exactly what it was.

We had been working hard that day, tramping all over the hillsides, picking first one spot then another for our sketches, and our luck had been bad. Wheeler was a little out of sorts, a prerogative of genius, I suppose, so I suggested driving in to the county seat, a town about fifteen miles away, for dinner. He instantly agreed, and as soon as we had gotten cleaned up, we were off.

It was a misty evening with a touch of fog in the air, and