

sound of an AK-47 automatic following him. Pounded twice by shots through his back, coughing blood, he managed to fire in support of his team members. His buddies dragged him to the chopper they had finally raised by radio. As the medics strapped him down, consciousness retreated.

### THE GAME IS OVER\*

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The little boy heard his father come in from work and hurried to finish the page of fractions. Homework can be a bore for an eleven-year-old boy, but he didn't really mind; it was part of the game. That task completed, he took off in search of his father. Cautiously creeping through the hallway, he became the hunter: his father was the hunted. "There he is!" With an exuberant cry the little boy attacked and landed amid a tangled mass of newspaper. Laughing, he looked up to his father and asked if he could go to a Halloween party the next day. Father started to grumble, which meant no to the little boy, but then he reversed his decision and nodded in assent.

"Make your own costume," he added, but the boy had already bounded away gathering crayons, scissors, and assorted papers and sacks. It soon became a father and son project, with Father grumbling

as he always did when asked to help his son, and with son enthusiastically directing the efforts to make a monster suit. Mother often worried about the two of them; they were constantly at each other's throats. But she need not have worried, for secretly they smiled at each other; they knew it was all part of the game of love and of life.

Streaming through the open curtains, sunlight danced across the little boy's face. He awoke with a start, not wanting to miss the school bus on Halloween. Father was just leaving for work, and the boy waved as he drove away. Armed with books, lunch box, and costume, he left for school, singing to himself.

"Good morning, Earl," the little boy called as he boarded the bus. Smiling, the driver agreed that it was indeed a beautiful morning. The little boy sat beside his best friend, Ricky, his voice rising in confusion with a dozen others as each tried to show off his costume. At each stop the noise grew louder; the new passengers added their voices to the near hysteria that already prevailed on that happy holiday.

The sight of the two demolished cars at the intersection quickly sobered the mood. Horror gripped all; the little boy was panic-stricken. Painfully, grim reality blanketed him. Every part of him was insulated from the outer world except his eyes. "That's Father's car," he murmured. The green station wagon was upside-down in the road, the windshield smashed, the rest of the windows gone. The driver's side was nothing but a scar, and the door had been punched past the steering wheel. The ambulance apparently had already come and gone. Slowly, the bus rounded the corner and continued to school.

The little boy was puzzled. "Why is Brother crying? Why is everyone staring? Don't they know the rules? This is a game, but they're not playing right." Panic was still rising in the little boy as he mounted the stairs to his classroom. His mind was a fog, and he couldn't understand what was happening. A half-hour passed. To the little boy it could have been a minute or a year.

"Your uncle is in the hall to see you." His teacher softly led him to the door. The little boy's uncle explained the accident as best he could and left silently.

"It's not fair," complained the boy. "It's not part of the game." But slowly he began to understand. And the young man cried.