

LOCKE-HAVEN AT LARGE

Me and Jamie just come down from the overpass on the way to Blissvale, this neighboring burg where he lives, when the marshal got shot. Dead. I seen it all. I was riding on the handlebars and had me a front row seat.

First I see this little yellow house on the corner where a guy is on the front porch beating on the door with his fist. He's yelling, I waited long enough, and he's raising his foot to bust down the door. I get me just a glimpse of two people hightailing it out the back. They're going past the garbage cans, a guy wearing a T shirt and levis slung so low they like to fall off, and a woman trailing long pink veils so's you can see the crack of her can, and they're gone.

Meantime me and Jamie come closer and I see this black car pull up on the opposite side of the street where there's a vacant lot, and two men get out. I know who they are because Jamie showed them to me one time when we were going over to his house to have a war. They were sitting out in front of the Blissvale jail, which is nothing but a big square box with a few bars on a window and a leanto office alongside of it that says Marshal.

So here he comes, walking tall across the street, with his thumbs hooked in his belt. His deputy next to him is starting to take his gun out of his holster. The guy on the porch is just splintering the door.

The marshal calls out, Harvey, Harvey, what's all this here fuss?

The guy on the porch turns, his hands down at his sides, and steps over to the edge and up comes this big pistol straight out and he fires twice. The marshal goes down like a plank falling straight backward and bounces and sends up some dust in the middle of the street and lays there stiff, except for his boot that jumps a couple of times and then stops. The second shot hits the deputy in the arm, and I see his pistol go flying through the air and he falls to his knees.

The guy with the gun steps off the porch onto a yellow patch of grass and looks over at the marshal. I see now he's a pale, sandy

haired guy wearing a washed out khaki shirt and pants, and his eyes are kind of vacant and strange. Except for those eyes, he's just a plain ordinary looking guy. You wouldn't take him to be nobody that just killed somebody, and maybe more next. Me and Jamie are by now stopped right in front of him alongside the marshal and we hear the deputy groaning. The guy starts to raise his gun again, but it don't come up very high, so to tell the truth I'm not sure whether he's going to shoot me and Jamie or not. It all happened so fast, less than a minute, so we didn't have much time to get scared. He squints at me and his mouth twitches, but he don't say anything. He just turns and walks up the porch and on in the house through the splintered door.

I'm off the handlebars and Jamie drops his bike right there in the street and we bend over the marshal. There's a hole in his shirt pocket, a pink circle around it about the size of a silver dollar. He hasn't bled hardly at all, except what is underneath his back, staring straight up at us, and his mouth fixed just like he's still saying the last word he ever was to say, and that was fuss. The handcuffs at his side are flashing in the sun, and his gun is still strapped peaceable like in its holster.

The deputy is still on his knees, groaning, my God, my God, my arm, and trying to hold the elbow with his good hand. His arm is a mess and bleeding bad. He's got his teeth together and the sweat's running off his face. He says, Your shirt, boy, your shirt. I'm shaking some but I get my shirt off quick. I twirl it around like a snake and I wrap it around his arm above the elbow and I squeeze and he's grunting, That's it, that's it.

People are starting to come out from their houses, and two cars going by the T intersection slow down and stop. Somebody says he tried to call the marshal but couldn't raise him, and Jamie says, That's him there. Another man says he called the Marchildon police and they'll be along any minute. A woman says, Where's he gone? and Jamie says, In the house, and the folks get jittery like they're going to get shot up but it appears to me he's already lit out.

We hear the sirens wailing, and then the police are swarming all around. They're from the county sheriff's and the Marchildon police department. Two ambulances screech up on the Marchildon side where the street's paved. The police are jawing at each other, paying

no attention to me and Jamie who were maybe the only ones to see the shooting. A crowd is closed in around the marshal. Then the ambulance drivers start to jawing too when somebody asks them why they don't help the deputy.

My contract says the city limits of Marchildon, mister. So's his. The Blissvale Board don't like nobody poking in their business.

Where's Bowen?

Out on call, I expect.

So you mean you ain't going to take Stats here. Hellfire, he's bleeding all over the place.

I told you, we can't touch him but halfway this side of the street.

The deputy is muttering cuss words not fit for the ladies to hear.

One of the ambulance drivers bends down talking to the deputy, elbowing me aside and waving everybody away so's the deputy can get up and walk over to the middle of the street, which he does, kind of staggering. He gets in the ambulance, and off they go. I'm not worried about my shirt, except what my ma will say when I tell her I haven't got it anymore.

The sheriff himself has pulled up, and him and two policemen get to arguing over who's in charge. The other police start to asking questions about who did the shooting and where the shots come from.

A gray haired guy wearing an apron says, Harvey Locke-Haven shot him. He spells out the name good on account of he runs Pop's Grocery Store around the corner that gives credit. He says, His house is right there, the Mrs. house. Don't worry, he ain't there no more. I seen him going past my place, toting his gun too, like he don't care who sees it.

Anybody in the house?

Not no more. He come to kill Virgie, I reckon. She took off.

While the police and the sheriff are getting a description of him, I try to say something a couple of times but nobody pays any attention to me. Jamie neither. Pretty soon the police tell everybody to go on home.

Aren't you going to pick up the marshal? I pipes up.

You mind your mouth, boy, says a policeman, the one that's holding the deputy's gun.

He's got more sense than you, a woman says.

We can't touch him, ma'am. We ain't allowed to.

Well I never.

We called your mayor. He's coming and settle it.

Well, Mrs. Preece's not going to take to his being left there in the dirt.

Two little ones, no more than babies, another woman says.

You boys get, another policeman says. His fingers are pinching my arm. Your pa ought to take a strap to you, poking around dead bodies.

But, mister.

Let's go, Jamie, I says.

I don't feel much like going to his house anymore. Besides I got to get the blood off me. So I tells Jamie I'll see him later and head on home. At the top of the overpass I stop and catch my breath. I wonder if those two people are still running, like I was. I look back over where Blissvale is and bet myself they're long gone out of that rinky burg. I don't see anybody running in Marchildon, far as I can see past the railroad yards over trees and roofs. There's lots of places to run, though, clean up to the foothills. I can see the college up on the bench to one side. Slopes on the other side are mostly bare, except for some new houses and a big ugly water tank that looks like a toadstool. Farther down I can see the top of the VA hospital where my ma works. Maybe Locke-Haven is already hiding out or maybe he's strolling along somewheres downtown easy as you please. I get to wondering what he's thinking after going and killing the marshal who knew him because he called him by his name, Harvey, Harvey, what's all this here fuss?

I run a block and walk a block all the rest of the way. Our Chevy's out in the front. When I left, Ma was canning peaches, so I guess she's still at it. Nitwit's helping her.

I don't know how Ma's going to take to the news because shooting and stuff like that drive her batty. She don't allow me to have any play guns, let alone a real one. She don't even want me to go to movies where there's any shooting. War pictures she hates most of all. I see them anyways, I just don't tell her. She feels the way she does on account of my dad and her dad. We're jinxed is the reason. They were both killed being in wars. Me and Otto figure

there's no stopping the way she feels, so we just let her go ahead and be crazy about this one thing.

The smell from the kitchen spreads clear up front to the porch. Pots and kettles are bubbling and snorting, and steam is rolling around like smoke. Ma started out super efficient, but looks to me like things got out of control. There's shiny peaches stacked up in bowls, and peels and pits slopping over newspapers, and mason jars and lids and red rings and pans and funnels and strainers and big spoons and junk like that scattered all over the counters and the sink and even on top of the fridge, and sugar spilling out of a sack, and lugs tossed around by the door where I'm standing. Leave it to Nitwit and she'll turn any place into a disaster area in no time.

Where's your shirt? Ma says, just glancing at me. She's got sweat on her forehead, which is very rare for her.

I lost it, I says.

Lost it?

Lucky for me she's got her hands too full to raise the roof. I says to her, On account of the man that got shot.

Give Nora that potholder there, Ma says.

I play me a tune with a kitchen knife on the mason jars that were turned upside down on towels all around my end of the counter. I start to tell them again about the marshal, but Nitwit sticks her big nose in.

Watch what you're doing, she says. You want to give us botchism.

What? I says.

Botchism—it's a disease that creeps into the bottles from creeps like you.

Nora, my mother says.

Well, I don't want his dirty filthy little hands all over what's going into my mouth, Nitwit says.

Which is big enough to hold a piano, I says. While she's thinking of something to say back, I tell Ma I remember reading about this botchism. There was this whole family sitting around eating one day from a jar just like this, and they were all croaked, stone dead. At the funeral parlor they had to bust open their jaws to get out the spoons. I get me another knife, the flat chrome kind that bounces good on a pot, and I plays me some more beat working over to the canisters, a regular Gene Krupa.

Chip, please, Ma says.

You should have seen that pistol, I says. Kapoom, kapoom.

Take that lid off, Nora, Ma says, and then she says to me, Why don't you go out and play some more?

Oh Mama, how could you have had him? Nitwit says, her upper lip curled up so's she looks like a wart hog.

Not me, you, I says.

You ought to be in the zoo, she says.

Children, please, Ma says. She reaches over for my drumsticks and says, You want to put me in the asylum?

I was about to say sis there was the one that belonged in the booby hatch, it was right at the tip of my tongue, then I remember the time Ma hit me. We were having a big fight and I yelled at her she belonged in the booby hatch with the other loonies she was taking care of and, whap, she gave it to me right across the face. It didn't hurt me none, except to sting a little, but it hurt her something terrible because she started to bawl. She told me she was sorry she smacked me but she didn't want me to talk about the soldiers that way. She was working in the Psycho ward at the time.

I says, I been trying to tell you for a half hour. Don't you want to hear about the marshal getting killed? I seen it with my own eyes.

Saw, Nitwit says.

Aw, go suck your tit, I says.

Truman Mackie, Ma yells.

I did, I seen him shot right through the heart, I says.

My sister gives me this look like I'm an insect and she's the DDT. So I plays my ace in the hole.

How'd you like to bet \$2.45? I says.

I go to my room and get my jar off my bookcase and come back and kick a lug out of the way and I dump my money upside down on the floor and I says, Well, come on, big mouth, put your money where your big fat mouth is.

I didn't play my cards right. Too eager. I could see right away ole sis was going to chicken out.

Ma looks at me for the first time, I mean really looks at me, and that's when I guess she sees the blood which is mostly smeared around my side. She puts down the pot she's holding and turns off the stove.

She takes me in the bathroom and flips down the lid of the can. Sis follows like a big dumb sheepdog. Ma's on her knees washing me off and I'm on the throne, for once getting the kind of attention I deserve. When Ma's mouth isn't hung open, she's saying, Terrible, Terrible, as I'm telling her what happened. Ole sis has got her yap closed, which is a rare event around my house. When I tell Ma about the tourniquet, she stands there holding this bloody wash rag and her eyes get all shiny and she gives me a hard squeeze and tells me she's very proud and then she apologizes for paying more mind to the peaches than to me. But when I get to talking about the guy that did the shooting, her face gets all squinched up and she says, Oh no, soon as I give his name. I ask her what's the matter, and sis says, Do you know him, Mama?

She's at the sink watching the pink come out of the rag and she says, Yes, very well. He's been a patient. The poor man. She turns and asks, Does Otto know?

I tell her I don't think so.

Go over and tell him, Chip, will you please? Ask him to come over, if he wants to, Mary, too.

How come, Ma?

Otto knows him. We were all in school together. He knew your dad, too.

So I go over to find Otto, who's our next-door neighbor. He's about the best friend I got, except for Jamie. It was him that told me exactly how my dad got killed. He didn't give me a bunch of baloney about his being a hero. They were both in the same artillery unit, which was practicing up for going to North Africa, but Otto was away that day hauling off garbage cans on a work detail. It might just as well have been my dad in the truck and Otto at the gun, but it didn't happen that way. A soldier did something stupid to a shell and it blew up. My dad and six other men got blown up, including the one that hit the shell with a wrench. One soldier, who was on the other side of the sandbags, lived to tell about it, but his hearing was bunged up for ever more.

Whenever I go to Otto's, I check first in his garage where he's got this workshop in the back. His whole house and half of ours is filled with furniture he's made. He's in there, all right, so I tell him about the marshal and the deputy and this Locke-Haven and he puts

down the shelf he's fitting into a bookcase and sits down and watches me real close. I got to say this about Otto, he listens, which is very unusual because he's a teacher over in Marchildon high school. All the teachers I know do most of the talking and all you do is sit and listen.

He wipes his hands on a towel and smoothes down his hair, which is getting thin on top, and goes in to get Mary. I'm glad to hear their daughters are gone over at their grandma's. They got these two dippy girls named Iona and Olive, and they look just like they sound. They pal around with my sister, which is okay by me as long as they stay out of my hair.

We talk a lot about interesting things, like history, which is the subject he teaches. There's no man alive knows more about wars than he does. We been talking the past week about the new one that just started in Korea. I been to his school where he's showed me maps and layouts of battles in the Civil War and the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 and the Spanish American War and the Mexican War and World War One and World War Two. I'm most interested in One and Two because they're the ones my grandad and my dad died in. Dying's another thing me and Otto talk about. I'm very interested in dying, not personally, naturally. Those are about my favorite subjects, history and dying. Otto says seems that's all there is, wars and dying in them. He says that's no way for a kid to grow up, from one war to the next. The bad part is somebody's got to do the fighting when the time comes, he says, and it's always kids. He says I'm lucky I don't have to worry about getting in this new one because I'm too young. Being born when I was, which is August 31, 1939, was why I didn't know my dad because he got killed when I was three. My sister says she remembers him, but I know she's fibbing. She was only six, and hasn't got that good of a memory.

Mary comes out, drying her hands on a dish towel, and then me and Otto wait for her to run back in and get her dumb cigarettes. They come over in the house and Ma gives them some coffee and me and sis some milk and they start to jawing about this marshal getting shot. They don't know him or the deputy, but they know a lot about this Locke-Haven. Ma drags out her old high school annual and there he is all right, looking at the birdie. He's got

dimples and a big grin and wrote under his name is (Peaches and Cream). It's the same book that's got my dad. It says under his name (U.S. Senator). Ma's name was Elizabeth Huff back then, and it says under hers (Carole Lombard). Otto's is the very last picture (Salt of the Earth). Mary's picture isn't there because she's from another town, same as this Virgie they keep talking about.

Otto's curious about what happened since the shooting, so he calls up this friend he's got on the police force that tells him they haven't caught Locke-Haven, but they've blocked off the roads leading out of Marchildon-Blissvale, and they're combing the streets and searching the bus station and the train station. They picked up his wife and they're keeping her under guard. Otto smiles at what he says about her clothes. They never did find her boyfriend, and Otto says he probably ran off. She said his name was George Byron, which makes Otto smile again. Otto says he figures Harvey come to kill his wife because of this other guy. But Ma says there's other reasons. So I ask her what they are.

Ma beats around the bush telling me the war got him all mixed up and he's not always right in the head. When I ask why, Otto says, Too much combat, mean wounds, getting lost for a long time on the wrong side.

Mary blows out a big puff of smoke, hacking away, and says, Being married to Virgie was just as bad as the war. Liz, you remember how she kept calling you when he was missing, wondering why she hadn't got her money?

Ma sips her coffee and says, Uh huh.

What money? I says.

The GI insurance, Otto says.

I know about the GI insurance because that's what Ma used to buy our house.

The poor man, my mother says.

What do you keep saying that for? I says.

He didn't come back the same man, Otto says.

At least he came back, my sister says.

That's about the first smart thing I ever heard her say. Sometimes, hellfire, I actually like her. If only she wasn't such a birdbrain most of the time.

Ma tells about how he was a patient off and on at the hospital. He'd have bad spells and then he'd be all right and they'd let him go. I'm surprised at Ma because she almost never talks about the patients. Once in a great while she'll maybe say something about a vegetable with nothing but tubes stuck in him or a paraplegic and like that. One thing gets her real mad and that's when some disabled vet gets himself all spiffed up for a visit and his wife or his girlfriend don't show up. She don't like this Virgie because that's what happened to Harvey. Now I'm really surprised at Ma because she's always drumming into me and sis that if you don't have something good to say about somebody then don't say anything.

Why would he stay married to her? my sister wants to know.

He loved her, Ma says.

My sister says, Well, she didn't love him so there was no reason for her to.

The mailman brought her the reason every month, Mary says, lighting up another of her dumb cigarettes.

For a while what they talk about isn't very interesting. Then Otto brings up something that perks me up. It's about this Locke-Haven going to the college. It's not only interesting, it's sad. He had the GI Bill of Rights and even if he was not right in the head and full of shrapnel scars and pins and bolts they let him go. Otto already went to the college before the Army and then afterward he was there learning how to be a teacher. One day, Otto says, a physics teacher was demonstrating gravity and soon as these objects started to fall Harvey grabbed himself around the ears and dove under a desk. Another time a girl laughed at him and next day he come to school in his full dress uniform with all his ribbons and medals on. The worst part come about a year later when he set off a dynamite blast up in the hills back of the college. I remember people talking about it when I was a little kid, wondering if it was an atom bomb test. I sure didn't know this was the same guy. Anyways, nobody got hurt. All he did was knock out a jillion windows, but they kicked him out of the college. He went back to the hospital for a while and then when he got out he seemed all right, but they wouldn't let him back in school. He'd get on a suit and a tie and take a briefcase and go sit in the library or the student union. He would read there by the hour, Otto says. He'd say he was

a graduate student, but you could tell by his grammar that he wasn't. Boy, him sitting there like that really hits me.

I look off in the direction of the college. Off to one side of Otto's chimney I can see part of this new dormitory that's being built up there.

That's prob'ly where he is, I says.

Otto comes over and looks down at me.

Oh what does he know the little—

Be still, Nora, for once, Ma says.

Right there was about my championship day, seeing the lid squashed down on her pumpkin head. She starts to sulk but nobody's paying any attention to her.

What makes you say that? Otto says.

I says, Stands to reason. Him carrying a briefcase and wanting to be at the college that bad. Well, he's running and got no place to go. That's where I'd go. Find me an empty building. It isn't any more than a mile, a mile and a half, from where he done the shooting. He could have made it easy.

Otto paces up and down and then he says to Ma, You know, the boy may be right.

He calls up his friend again at the police station and asks about seeing the chief. He hangs up and says, He's out but he'll be back in a while. Come on, Chip, you and I are going for a ride downtown, if it's okay with your mother.

She says she has to get back to her peaches before she goes to work. Mary asks if she can help. They decide they'll listen to the radio while they're working and see what it says on the news. Ma's looking so sad. When I try to cheer her up, she says she can't help it—she's feeling very bad about the marshal's family. She gives me a hug and tells me she's glad I'm safe.

I get myself a shirt on and comb my hair and me and Otto take off for the police station.

By the time the chief gets back it's already dark. Me and Otto don't mind waiting because the foyer has got interesting glass cases filled with guns and blackjacks and brass knuckles and knives. The chief takes us in his office. He looks tired and keeps rubbing his blue whiskers. I didn't see him at the shooting. Otto asks about Locke-Haven, and the chief says they haven't seen hide nor hair of

him. Otto tells him how he knew Harvey, then looking over at me he tells him what I said about the college. The chief stops rubbing his beard and says, Humm. He takes a slow spin in his chair and peeks out between his venetian blinds.

Like he's thinking out loud he mutters to himself, could be, could be, and it's a long shot, and too risky at night. He swings around and says, If he's up there, he's got the jump on us. We'd be sitting ducks with lights. I don't like the odds. He's too good a shot.

He thinks some more, swinging in his chair from side to side, then he comes around and sits on his desk, swinging his leg, and says, I'll try and find a couple men to keep an eye on the campus tonight. If Harvey's in that dorm and hasn't made a move by tomorrow, we'll search it first thing in the morning. Good thing it'll be Sunday, won't be any workmen around. Like I say, it's a long shot, but we got nothing to lose trying it.

Could I go with you, chief? Otto says.

We don't want anybody getting hurt, Mr. Zundell.

I might be able to stop somebody from getting hurt, Otto says.

The chief can't stop Otto from going along if he wants to, and tells him what time the police will be leaving in the morning.

Can I come too? I says.

The chief looks at Otto and says, I can't be responsible for a ten—'leven year old boy. His mother'd have a fit.

Otto says, He'd stay out of the way.

The chief don't like the idea, but he don't say yes and he don't say no. When we're going out, he ruffles my head and asks me if I want to be a policeman when I grow up.

I says, Not after what I seen today.

Me and Otto are glad that Ma's going to be on the night shift so's she wouldn't know I'd be gone in the morning. Otto don't like not telling her, but he comes around to a very sensible conclusion, which I figured out myself back when I was a little kid, and that is, what she don't know won't hurt her.

On account of sis is sleeping over with Olive and Iona in their back yard, Ma says it's okay if I sleep at the Zundells too. That way she wouldn't have to worry. I calls up Jamie on the sly and ask him if he wants to come in the morning, but he's going fishing with his dad. I don't sleep none too good that night. I keep thinking about

this Locke-Haven hiding out in that building. Probably shaking in his boots. And then I get to thinking about him not being there. I mean, he might be in the next county by now, and I was the one swore up and down I knew where he was. I'm glad to feel Otto's hand on my shoulder waking me and the light come. He's drinking some coffee and gives me some milk and a doughnut. We tiptoe around so's not to wake up Mary.

Out on the front porch Otto flips open the Sunday paper and looks at the headlines. There in big words it says LOCKE-HAVEN AT LARGE, along with other headlines about the marshal killed and the deputy shot. There's pictures of all three of them, Harvey in his Army uniform. He don't look any more like the washed out looking guy I seen than he did when he was (Peaches and Cream). I glance at the rest of the page. It's got a bunch of stuff about Korea, U.S. troops starting to fight, something about Suwon and Taejon, plans for draft. Otto puts down the paper and we get in his car and take off.

I ask, How come he's got that thing between his name, Locke-Haven?

A hyphen. That's a strange story, Chip. You're going to wonder about grownups, as if you didn't already. His mother's name before she was married was Locke, his father was Haven. The mother insisted he have her name too. Well, when he was about your age his folks split up and fought over who was going to get him. His mother was going to get rid of the Haven, his dad was going to get rid of the Locke.

So who got him?

Neither one. His mother married somebody else and her new husband didn't want him, and his dad got married too, and he didn't want him either. Harvey was raised by his aunt, and kept both names.

If it'd been me I'd have changed my name to Joe Doe or something, I says.

Three patrol cars are purring in front of the station. The chief comes out and waves at Otto, and we follow them up to the college. I'm not used to getting up this early, but I like it on account of the morning is so quiet and pretty and cool. The chief picks up his two men that have been keeping watch, and then heads for the

dormitory as the most likely place where Locke-Haven might be. It's a big long building, three stories, all the walls up and everything, but the roof's not finished yet and just the frames are in for the doors and windows. Up ahead there's stacks of lumber and girders and a couple big yellow machines and a pile of sand. Before we get to them, the chief pulls up in trees that are off to the side. Otto tells me to stay put where I can see, but I'm not to come any closer, and him and the police start for the building.

It don't take but a couple of minutes to find out Locke-Haven's there all right. I hear a shot. I find out later a policeman named Hackett got a finger shot off. He must have been wearing a rabbit's foot because he could have been dead. He was walking up toward the building on the back side with his gun in front of his chest and this one shot hits him in the finger and drives the gun right into his chest, which was bruised real bad, but the bullet ricocheted off.

The police start shooting and then stop on account of they don't know where Locke-Haven is inside. Soon as the shooting stops, people start coming from all over the neighborhood and the college. Some are still in their bathrobes. I'm there, too, of course, because I'm not about to sit and twiddle my thumbs where I was left off. The police are having a terrible time keeping everybody back. Seems like nobody in the crowd thinks about getting shot. Down below I see more police cars coming.

The police got the building surrounded and then I guess on account of Locke-Haven can't keep watch on every side, they manage to get into the front door and the back doors. An ambulance comes tearing up, and good thing too because another policeman gets shot in the shoulder and they're right there to lug him off.

Otto makes it into the front of the building with the police. Nobody's minding whether he's a policeman or not. The way I figure it they're mighty lucky he was with them. I get the details from him right after. Him and the police search the first floor, and the second floor, and they're creeping along on the third floor where they most suspect he's hiding. Otto's off to the side of the police, and he sees this little cranny and he sticks his head in, and there's a pistol sticking right in his forehead. He says he's been scared before but never like that. Then it comes to him that Harvey

recognized him, otherwise he'd have been shot dead right there. So while he starts talking to Harvey he waves the police away with his hand behind him.

He says, Let me come in there, Harvey. I don't have a gun.

So Harvey lets him come in, and Otto calls to the police not to come anywheres near, and they promise they won't. Otto keeps on talking to him. This Harvey's all scrunched up, shaking and hungry, but so riled up he's ready to shoot anybody, even Otto maybe.

But Otto says to him, What good's it going to do? You killed one and shot three more. Why do you want to hurt anybody else? You're surrounded and can't get out.

Otto's got some Lifesavers that he was going to give to me but he gives them to Harvey instead and he's crunching at them like they're peanuts. Otto gets to talking to him about where they used to go swimming in the river and about high school days and about the war and about getting taken care of in a hospital, maybe even one away from Marchildon would be better so's he wouldn't have to think about Virgie.

Otto says, Boy, that was a mistake. I thought he was going to do me in right then, he got so mad.

Otto keeps trying to calm him down, and then the funny part is, they start to talking about me. This Locke-Haven asks Otto how come they knew where he was. He's sore on account of he was going to leave that night before the workmen come in the morning. So Otto tells him it was my idea.

You know what he said? Otto says. He says, That was Tom Mackie's boy on them handlebars. I'll be damned.

He's mad at first and then he laughs real hard and then he starts to cry. So Otto knows it's all over with, him just busting all to pieces crying. He gives up his gun and his bullets and comes out of the cranny with Otto. The police put handcuffs on him and bring him outside.

That's when I see him.

The crowd is getting bigger by then and starting to close in on him.

One guy says, Let us have him, Jake. Save you a lot of time and trouble.

Get out of the way, the chief says.

Who's going to feed Alice Preece's youngsters? one woman says, her mouth pulled back and big snaggly teeth sticking out.

Another guy says, Jud Preece was the best friend a man ever had.

Murderer, this ugly woman yells.

They're coming right at me, and the lane's getting closer all the time. Some grubby looking bum with glassy eyes and a rough beard lets go with a gob of spit and gets Harvey right in the face. He don't flinch.

That does it for me and I yells, Shut up, can't you see he's all tied up.

The people kind of stop pressing in. Harvey's eyes come up. He don't say anything to me. He just looks at me and his mouth twitches, but it isn't a mean twitch. A policeman's got sense to bring a patrol car up and it's driving right into the crowd, and before you know it Harvey's inside and being driven off.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. It's Otto and he looks all drained out.

Come on, Chip, let's go home, he says.

Ma isn't home from work yet and everybody's still asleep over at Otto's, so I invite him for breakfast. He takes me up on it, but first he goes over to get his Sunday paper. I fix us some eggs and toast and we have some Wheaties too, and we sit there and talk about Harvey being in the dormitory. Then we go out on the front porch to read the papers. He's got his in his chair and I got mine in mine. We sit there looking at the front page.

LOCKE-HAVEN AT LARGE sure isn't LOCKE-HAVEN AT LARGE anymore, I says.

Used to be yesterday's paper was old, but getting so even today's paper's old, he says.

We sit there reading all about the shooting. When I finish I look at the movies that are playing, but I don't see anything on that's any good, so I turn to the sports page. I'm reading about the Whiz Kids staying in first place, beating the Dodgers 6 to 4, Bob Miller winning his seventh straight and Jim Konstanty saving him, and about the Yankees dropping to third, and about Walt Dropo hitting a grand slammer for the Red Sox.

I hear Otto give a kind of groan behind his paper but he don't say anything. He's still in the front section, and I'm looking at the other headlines there on his front page that say U.S. TROOPS MOVING UP TO BATTLEFRONT, and little stuff, Red Korean columns outflank Suwon, and Americans head north from Taejon by truck toward combat zone, and 12 U.S. planes lost, and down at the bottom DRAFT PLANS READIED.

Otto folds his paper and leans forward to point at a little box. He says, Read that, Chip, the first lines.

It says, Your day today, July 2, 1950. Today is the 183rd day of the year.

Know what that means? he says.

I says I don't.

Yesterday was 182 gone, and tomorrow is 182 to go. So what does today mean?

We're right in the middle, I says.

Chip, you are a scholar and a gentleman. We are in the middle, exactly in the middle day of the middle of the months in the middle of the year in the middle of the whole century. What do you make of that?

I don't know, except we're sure in the middle, I says.

He says, That we are. But you can't stay in the middle. I just wanted you to know where you are, like you've been on one side and now you swing on to the other, and you've got the whole rest of the century to find out what's going to happen.

I says, Well, if yesterday and today is a sign of what it's going to be like, I don't think it's going to be worth much.

We are still sitting there on the porch reading the papers when my mother come home. □

Charles Clere is a retired Professor of English and department chairman at the University of the Pacific, where he taught for thirty years. His previous books include *Approaches to Gravity's Rainbow* and three editions of the popular anthology *Seven Contemporary Short Novels*. "LOCKE-HAVEN AT LARGE" is from the forthcoming collection *The Y and Other Stories* (Provine Press).