

HARRY. (*Rises.*) My folks left me a few stinking thousand, that's true, but don't you forget I never lived with them, I was brought up by my grandparents, and it was hell, believe me, it was hell.

MILT. (*Drops overcoat to ground.*) Ha! You should have lived with my folks for a couple of weeks, then you would have known what hell is really like. Those two were like a pair of cats at each other's throat. And the poverty, the lousy humiliating poverty. I didn't start school until I was eight years old because I didn't have a pair of shoes to wear. Oh, yeah. Lucky for me the kid downstairs was hit by an ice-cream truck and I got his shoes. Even then they were so tight on me I couldn't walk. I was put in a special class for disabled children.

HARRY. You think that was bad? My grandparents used to lock me out of the house. They couldn't stand the sight of me because I reminded them of my father. I remember one day I came home from school during a blinding snowstorm and the door was locked. I knocked and yelled and beat my poor little frozen fists on the

door . . . They laughed at me. They laughed! Picture that for yourself. A tall skinny kid standing out there in the snowstorm, wearing nothing but a thin torn jacket and a paperbag for a hat, knocking and yelling, "Let me in. Please, let me in!"

MILT. Paradise. (*Slight pause.*) It was paradise compared to my childhood. Picture this. It's late at night. The wind's blowing outside. A small undernourished boy sits by the cold kerosene stove, feeding his toy wooden horse a bit of bread that he stole during dinner. The parents are quarreling. "If you don't like it here, get the hell out," the father shouts. "You're telling me to get out," the mother shouts back, and with savage hysterical fury she picks up the boy's toy wooden horse and throws it at the father. He ducks and it smashes against the wall. The boy drops down beside his broken toy horse, the only thing he ever loved, and he cries quietly.

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HARRY. (*Moves R., then whirls back to Milt, pugnaciously.*) Did you ever get beaten?

MILT. (*Emphatically.*) I did.

HARRY. With what?

MILT. A strap, a stick, a radiator cover.

HARRY. A chain?

MILT. How thick?

HARRY. As thick as my wrist.

MILT. (*Foiled, moves away, turns.*) What did you get for breakfast?

HARRY. At home?

MILT. At home.

HARRY. A glass filled with two-thirds water and one-third milk.

MILT. Coffee-grinds, that's what I got.

HARRY. With sugar?

MILT. Not on your life. I ate it straight, like oatmeal.

HARRY. (*Foiled, moves away, suddenly turns.*) Did your mother ever kiss you?

MILT. Once. When I stuck my head between her lips and a picture of Clark Gable.

HARRY. Well, that's better than I did.

MILT. (*Foiled, moves about.*) What presents did you get for Christmas?

HARRY. Presents? When I was five my grandparents bought a box of donuts and every Christmas until I was seventeen I got a donut.

MILT. You were a lucky kid and you didn't know it.