Neither Do They Reap

The Sheep

Helen was painting "Meadow at Arles" when Dan got home from play. "That old thing again!" he said, taking off his hat and coat and handing them to the robutler. "Why don't you paint something different for a change?"

Helen deactivated the electronic paint-set and turned and faced him. "Because it's pretty, that's why," she said. "I like to paint pretty things." She brushed back a strand of chestnut hair that had fallen over her forehead, using the back of her wrist the way she had seen a girl artist do once on 3V. The effect, however, was marred by the sulky expression that had settled on her face.

Dan came over and kissed her. "All right, so it's pretty. You don't have to get mad."

His cheeks were rosy from the March wind, and his boyish smile was warm; the artificial dimple on his chin gave his face a clean-cut masculine look. It was one thing to get mad at Dan and quite another to stay mad at him; moreover, Dr. Cherub, the 3V marriage counselor, said that wives should show more consideration for their husbands when they came home from a hard day at the office. Helen matched his smile with one of her own and kissed him back. "I'm not mad," she said. "Why don't you play a piece on the organ while I fix supper?"

"All right," Dan said. He went over to the organ and sat down in the operator's seat. "What are we having?"

"Chicken yummy." Helen removed her artist's smock, wadded it up and threw it into the paper-eater, and tied a gay little apron around her waist. Then she went out into the kitchen and gave Big Bridget her order.

"Very well, ma'am," Big Bridget said, her banks of multicolored lights flashing on and off and her neon blood coursing vividly through her glass-tube veins. "Two chicken yummies coming up."

At the console, Dan punched out NOLA on the selector-panel, and when the opening keys lit up, placed his fingers in the numbered positions. Presently there was a little click, and he began to play.

He paid little attention to the music, concentrating on his fingers instead. It fascinated him the way they flew over the keyboard in response to the electronic stimuli. He had heard that a long time ago people used to play non-automatic organs, moving their fingers from one combination of notes to another by following sequences of little black specks on a sheet of paper. But he didn't believe it for one minute. Anybody with any sense could see that such an operation was impossible. It stood to reason that if you were looking at the specks, you couldn't look at your fingers, and if you couldn't see your fingers, how in the world could you move them to the right keys?

His fascination was short-lived: the organ, like all the other pieces of entertainment equipment he and Helen owned, was beginning to bore him. Halfway through Nola he turned it off and went out to the kitchen to see how supper was coming. Just as he stepped through the doorway, two bowls brimful of steaming yummy emerged from Big Bridget's culinary tract and came to rest on her horizontal apron.

He and Helen carried them into the living room and ate in front of the wall-size 3V screen. The Catastrophe—cast had just come on, and a big strato-liner was plunging earthward, trailing a stream of black smoke. They watched intently, spooning the chicken-flavored porridge into their mouths without taking their eyes from the screen. Catastrophe—casts could be fun.

Presently the liner began glowing a dull red. Little figures of passengers could be seen leaping from its escape hatches and trailing in its fiery wake like singed flies. The earth rose up as though eager for the imminent impact. A mountain range came into view, a forest, a green valley; a distant megalopolis. For an ecstatic moment it appeared as though the liner would plunge into the megalopolis, but such did not turn out to be the case; it crashed into the valley instead. A monstrous flower bloomed, its black petals shot with vivid streaks of red. The detonation filled the apartment; the smell of smoke and roasted flesh blended with the aroma of chicken yummy. The announcer's voice followed, garnishing the incident with

the number of deaths, promising more spectacular incidents to come.

Dan spooned the last of his chicken yummy into his mouth, swallowed it. "How come they never fall into a megalopolis?" he said peevishly.

Helen yawned. "I don't know," she said. Then, remembering Dr. Cherub's exhortations to the effect that wives should take more interest in their husbands: "How were things at the office today, dear?"

Dan's reaction cast doubt on Dr. Cherub's omniscience. "Awful," he said. "Just plain awful!" He got to his feet and began walking back and forth. "The same old thing, day after day," he went on. "We haven't had any new entertainment equipment come in for weeks now. All we've got to amuse ourselves during break time is that old Dodger—Yankee game that came in over a month ago!"

"But I thought you liked to play baseball."

"I do, but not on that old field." He stopped pacing and stood before her. His lower lip protruded slightly, ruining the effect of the dimple on his chin. "Mickey Mantle has a short circuit and can't even hit a home run any more, and this afternoon when I had the Yankees, he missed a pop-up fly with the bases loaded!" He shook his head despondently. "Sometimes I don't think the company loves us any more, keeping such outdated equipment around!"

"Hush, you shouldn't say such things! Of course they love you."

"Well they certainly don't act it. When a man plays as hard as I do two days a week, week in, week out, he's entitled to a little consideration. The least they could do is get Mickey Mantle fixed." Dan began pacing back and forth again, and a little robotic terrier came out of a little door in the wall and started jumping around his legs. "I get so bored sometimes!"

"You get bored!" Helen said. "What about me?" Dr. Cherub appeared in the recesses of her mind and shook an admonishing finger at her, but she'd had just about enough of Dr. Cherub, and she turned her back on him. "How do you think I feel sitting around this apartment all day with nothing to do but paint and play the organ!"

"But you can at least go to the Playpen."

"You know yourself that no new games have come into the Playpen for months. What would be the sense of my going there? Why, last weekend you wouldn't go there yourself."

He couldn't deny it. "You're right," he said. "When it comes to getting us new games, the government is just as bad as the company." The little terrier stood up on its hind legs and placed its forepaws on his knees. It barked with artificial ecstasy. Dan kicked it into the corner. "That's the whole trouble with this country," he said. "No new games!"

"Let's write a letter to the president," Helen said, standing up. "He'll do something about it."

Dan looked dubious. "I don't know. We've already written him twice, and he didn't do anything." He sighed. "Sometimes I don't think he loves us any more either!"

"Oh, but he must love us. Didn't he say so on his last 3V chat? Why, he even said that maybe next year we could have babies!"

"Oh, he always says that," Dan said, "but it never comes true." The little terrier was crawling out of the corner on its belly, and he drew back his foot for another kick.

Helen stopped him. "It's my turn," she said, catching the dog a good one on the side of the head. It rolled over and over, yelping realistically. She felt better. "Sure, that's what we'll do," she said. "We'll write a letter to the president."

"Well . . . all right," Dan agreed.

They approached the writing machine diffidently. For some reason it always gave them a feeling of inferiority. Helen turned it on. "We—we'd like to write a letter," she said.

The writing machine hummed. "To whom?" it asked.

"To—to the president."

"One moment, please." There was a brief pause while the writing machine adjusted its wave-lengths to the proper pattern, then: "Proceed, please."

"Dear—dear Mr. President," Helen said. "We—we haven't got anything to do. Could—could you please think up some new games for us to play? Signed: Dan and Helen Smith."

She turned triumphantly to Dan. "There, that ought to do it!" she said.

The Herdsmen

Haines released the phone and watched it crawl back into its little oubliette and close the door behind it. He raised his eyes from the table and traversed the faces of his three assistants: hog-jowled Morganstein's, cold-eyed Repp's, downcheeked Trask's. "The old man," he said. "Another spate of letters. 'Please think up some new games for us to play!' I wonder what they'd say if they knew we can't think up any more."

"Did it ever occur to you," said Trask, "that if we gave them the chance, they just might be able to think up some of their own?"

"Yes, it did occur to me," Haines said, "and I filed the thought under Notions, Idiotic." He spread his eloquent hands on the tabletop. "For they sow not, Trask. Neither do they reap ... Morganstein?"

"If the birth quota could be re-established for just one more round—" he began.

Haines shook his head. "One more round would finish us off for good. Even if we could feed them, there would be too few deaths by the time they reached mating age for us to house them. Repp?"

Repp said, "Since we've run the gamut of games and seemingly can't come up with any new ones, why not try diverting them by souping up the catastrophe-casts?"

Haines shook his head again. "We can't soup them up any more. They're already comprised of fifty percent violence and fifty percent bloodshed."

Repp's thin smile was a crevice on his glacial face. "There's a way," he said. He paused, looking at Haines.

Haines nodded. "Let's have it."

"Previously," Repp began, "we've followed tradition to a T in regaling our charges via communications media. That is, we've given them the age-old thrill of seeing someone else get it in the neck, the while carefully avoiding any reference to the possibility that their own necks might be in danger. Since both our events and our locales are fictitious, and since we've dispensed with place-names—no one ever really paid much attention even in the old days to localities: it was the event itself that counted—our adherence to tradition has involved no strain either upon our consciences or our intellectual resources. When we wish to inundate a section of a coast with a tidal wave, for example, we need merely to make sure that the particular dwellings on our model are of a type no one lives in any more in order to allay whatever fears those of our audience who dwell in coastal areas may have concerning their own skins. Or, when we wish to employ a cyclone, we need merely confine it to a small town in order to eliminate any thought of personal danger from our viewers' minds, because even though none of them is aware that small towns no longer exist, he still knows that he lives in a megalopolis, and consequently he can sit back, relax and enjoy himself."

Repp paused, his cold eyes flicking from face to face. Presently: "I propose," he said, "that we instruct the miniature-effects department that the next time they create a tidal wave, they launch it upon a miniature coastal megalopolis; that the next time they create a cyclone, they send it through a miniature inland megalopolis; and that the next time they create a strato-liner disaster, they bring the liner down, not in a valley or a forest, but in a megalopolis street—preferably a crowded one."

Trask was on his feet. "Why, that's horrible! The people will think—"

Haines motioned him down. "Let Repp finish what he has to say."

Again a crevice of a smile appeared on Repp's cold countenance. "Trask has said it for me," he said. " 'The people will think—' They will think they are in danger—and that is precisely what we want them to think. They will think that it is their section of the megalopolis that the strato-liner is about to crash into, the cyclone invade, the tidal wave inundate. They're too jaded to obtain satisfaction from events that do not involve them personally. In order for them to be affected, they must experience fear and horror directly instead of vicariously. And once they have experienced them a few times, they'll be more than glad to go back to their games, outdated or not."

Morganstein nodded, his chin sinking into his fat jowls. "It might be worth a try," he said.

Trask's boyish face was pale. He looked wildly around the table. "It smacks of the punishment the

Tsar enacted upon a group of socialists in nineteenth-century Russia," he said in a shrill voice. "Are you familiar with the incident, gentlemen? If not, I'll enlighten you. The Tsar sentenced the socialists to death, had the death sentence read to them, had the cross given them to kiss and had the dagger broken over their heads. The first three were then lined up before the firing squad, but before the execution could take place, retreat was sounded and the prisoners were informed that the Tsar had granted them amnesty. One of them went insane."

"But the others did not," Repp said drily. "And if I recall correctly, Dostoevski was one of the others. Perhaps we can thank the incident for *The Brothers Karamazov*." He looked at Haines. "What's your reaction?"

Haines rubbed a gray-specked temple, a gesture both Repp and Morganstein had come to associate with indecision on the part of their chief. He was silent for some time. Then: "It's true: emotional crises do create changes in men, and perhaps the Tsar was the involuntary patron saint of *The Brothers*. But we have no Dostoevski's today. I'm thinking of the prisoner who went insane."

Repp said, "The same sensitivity that was present in Dostoevski and made it possible for the experience to deepen and broaden him was also present in his intellectually weaker fellow-prisoner, and it was this quality, forced to stand alone, that drove the latter insane. I submit that not only do we not have any Dostoevski's today, we do not have any insane-prone 'fellow-prisoners' either."

"And I submit," Trask said, "that while we may have no Dostoevski's or insane-prone 'fellow-prisoners,' we do have the Tsar who sentenced them, and I submit further that he is sitting right here with us now!"

Haines looked at him a little wearily. "Repp is sitting here for the same reason you are sitting here, Trask—to do a job. If it happens to be a job that rarely lends itself to ideal solutions, the job, not he, is to blame. I am inclined to agree with Morganstein: I, too, consider the suggestion worth a try."

Trask was on his feet again. "I won't countenance it! I'll go to the old man. I'll—"

"Sit down, Trask," Haines said. He said it quietly, but his unassailable authority honed his words and made his gray eyes bleak. Trask sat down.

"Now," Haines went on, "I'll fill in the background which the schools you attended apparently but inadequately sketched for you. First of all, neither we, nor the generations of idea-men who preceded us, created the society we administer to. It created itself.

"It created itself by repeatedly electing men into office who it knew would give it what it wanted, and by religiously shunning all ideas that were contrary to its preconceived notion of what it wanted to be. Its three basic goals were security, conformity and materialistic comfort, and eventually it achieved all three.

"There is a price for everything. The price Agamemnon paid for Troy was Clytemnestra's treachery; the price Napoleon paid for Moscow was Waterloo; the price Japan paid for Pearl Harbor was Hiroshima; the price our society paid—and is paying—for its three ideals is sterility. I do not mean the voluntary physical sterility which its own over-propagation of itself has forced it to accept: I mean the mental and spiritual sterility which renders its members incapable of creating anything for themselves, which forces them to rely on the increasingly few of their number in whom the creative spark re-appears in each generation. Granted, this has always been true; but never was it true on such a grand scale. The mass of men have always stood around waiting for the creators to dream up new diversions, but originally a reasonable proportion existed between creator and receiver. But now, thanks to the five-day weekend and the concomitant atrophying of creativity, it exists no longer. You and I and Morganstein and Repp are responsible for the morale of almost a billion people; we are the only creators this generation has thus far been able to provide. We must do their sowing for them, but the barrenness of their minds is such that no matter what we sow, the crops will be stunted.

"Don't misunderstand me, Trask. Theoretically, leisure is a priceless commodity. But when you lack the necessary background to employ it advantageously, when, even worse, you lack the desire to employ it advantageously, it becomes a monster. Our job is to combat that monster to the best of our abilities. It is a bogy man at the nursery door, and we must keep the door secured with whatever means are at our disposal, and we can't afford to be critical of those means simply because they fail to live up to an outdated inapplicable idealism. I repeat: I consider Repp's suggestion worth a try. We'll take an official

vote. Morganstein?"

"For."

"Repp?"

"For."

"Trask?"

"Against."

"For," Haines said. He spoke into the intercom: "Get me the miniature-effects department," he said.

The Gray Pastures

Don Newcombe wound up slowly. Duke Snider backed a little closer to the center field fence. It was the bottom half of the ninth and the score read *New York 1, Brooklyn 2*. The count was 3 and 2, with two men down and the bases empty. Mickey Mantle was at bat.

Don Newcombe took his time. The miniature diamond gleamed in the light of the miniature sun. The pitch, when it finally came, was a curve that broke low over the outside corner of the plate. Mickey Mantle swung furiously but he missed by a mile.

"Darn!" Dan said. "He never should have swung at that one. I can't understand why they don't get him fixed!"

"You just picked the wrong team, that's all," Harry, who worked in the office next to him, said. "You were outclassed. Anyway, it's just as well he did strike out: we wouldn't have had time to go into extra innings."

Dan's lower lip began to protrude. "He's got a short-circuit, I tell you. The Yankees can beat the Dodgers any day!"

At this point the chimes signaling the end of the afternoon break sounded, and the two men left the big recreation hall and returned to their tiny offices. The other employees followed suit. In his office, Dan sat down at his narrow desk and stared at the slot in the wall from which, one half hour hence, his card, coded with the production figures of the subterranean automation sector to which he was assigned, would emerge. While he waited, he doodled on his desk blotter. The blotter, he noticed, was almost completely covered with previous doodles, and he made a mental memo to requisition a new one.

At length the Go-Home chimes sounded, and after saying hello and good-bye to the employee who occupied the office during the second shift, he headed for the time clock. It was Tuesday, and when he dropped his card into the "out" slot, his paycheck emerged from the slot just beneath.

He joined the line of depositors in the bank next door. Finally his turn came, and he fed his check cheerfully to the mechanical teller. The teller took care of everything: mortgages, taxes, utilities, medical expenses, groceries, insurance, clothing and games. Fifteen cents change tinkled in the return cup, and Dan picked it up, pocketed it and walked out.

There must be a surplus in his games account by now, he thought bitterly. At least no new ones had been delivered to the apartment recently. He wondered if any had come into the Playpen. Probably not. And here he was with a whole weekend to kill!

Frustration fell into step with him on the speed-walk and accompanied him all the way to the apartment. It was still with him when he went into the living room and kissed Helen. She was watching a documentary on 3V, and as it was a little too early for supper, he joined her. The documentary dealt with one of the birth riots of the early twenty-first century. The Varbleu Case. Mrs. Varbleu had given birth to quintuplets and she and her husband had been arrested: the documentary concerned itself primarily with the events that ensued their imprisonment in the local jail. Dan had seen it before, but he liked lynchings, so he didn't mind watching it again. Some of his frustration departed as the big crowd gathered in front of the jail, and by the time the jail door had been burned through with an acetylene torch, he was almost his normal self again. The acetylene torch lent the double lynching a unique flavor. Ordinarily the mob just strung the culprit or culprits up after a superficial beating, but you could do a lot of things with an acetylene torch that you couldn't do with your fists and your fingernails. Along toward the end, Mr. and Mrs. Varbleu were begging to be hanged—especially Mrs. Varbleu. Dan didn't blame her much,

considering the job they'd done on her, but she should have thought of that before.

"What would you like for supper, dear?" Helen asked after Mrs. Varbleu's screams had died away.

He sighed. "Any new dishes?"

She shook her head. "They never come out with anything new any more—you know that. How about some Lamb's Delight?"

"I suppose," he said.

While she was giving the order to Big Bridget, he played "Flight of the Bumble Bee" on the electronic fiddle. Usually the rendition left him with a feeling of accomplishment, but tonight he felt nothing but dissatisfaction. Lately there had been an emptiness in him, and no matter what he did to fill it, it kept growing bigger and bigger.

As usual they ate in front of the 3V screen in order to catch the Catastrophe-cast. It opened with a strato-liner bursting into flames and plunging earthward. "What, another one?" Dan said disgustedly.

"The same old jazz all the time," Helen said. "They're even running out of new ways to kill people!"

The disaster followed the same lines as the similar disaster of a week ago had followed—till near the end. There was the same red glow when the liner reached the atmosphere, the same fly-like wake of singed passengers. The same—

No, not quite the same. The megalopolis wasn't in the distance this time. It was in the foreground. It was so close, in fact, that you could see the apartment levels, the speed-walks, the streets; the people scurrying for cover— Dan leaned forward, a spoonful of lamb-flavored porridge halfway to his mouth. "Say—" he began.

"Why—why it looks as though it's going to crash into a populated area for a change!"

"Darned if it doesn't!" Dan said.

And sure enough, it did. Apartment levels splintered. Flames shot up everywhere. People screamed. Ambulances wailed. Black smoke, veined with red, roiled darkly heavenward. An acrid stench crept into the room, lending the illusion that the crash had occurred less than a block away, but neither Dan nor Helen got up to look out the window. As a matter of fact, they did not once take their eyes from the screen till the scene faded out, and then they did so only briefly because a cyclone scene took its place. Another megalopolis was involved—or perhaps the same one; there was no way of telling, as one megalopolis looked pretty much like another. After the cyclone, a tidal wave took over; then an earthquake; finally a hurricane.

Dan threw his cardboard bowl and spoon into the disposal chute and stood up. He yawned. "What are we going to do tonight?" he asked. And then, remembering that the weekend was coming up: "And tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow?" The thought weighed him down, and when the little robotic terrier, sensing his mood, came out of the wall and ran toward him, he kicked it heartily. "I suppose no new games came in at the Playpen."

Helen shook her head. "Not a single one."

"Darn! And after we wrote to the president, too!"

"Maybe it takes time to manufacture them—"

"In this day and age? They could make them in a week, easy."

"You—you don't suppose, do you?—" Helen began.

"Suppose what?"

"You don't suppose they can't think up any new ones, do you?"

Dan's face went blank. When the little dog crept out of the corner and fawned at his feet, he didn't even remember to kick it. He sat down instead. "But that can't be! I'd sooner believe that the president didn't get our letter."

"All right," Helen said, "let's write him another. And send it Special Delivery."

"All right, let's."

They approached the writing machine together, the little terrier barking at their heels. Dan paused long enough to turn around and kick it back into the corner, then he joined Helen at the machine.

She turned it on. "We—we'd like to write a letter—" she began ...

The Wilderness

Haines raised his eyes from the little trap door which the phone had just closed behind itself. He met Repp's questioning gaze. "The old man," he said bitterly. "Another spate of letters."

Repp's disappointment was almost tangible. "Still discontented, eh?"

"They want new games and that's it." Haines sighed. "We'll just have to come up with some, or we're done."

Trask was triumphant. "They're more sensitive than you gave them credit for being. I knew it wouldn't work."

Haines regarded him sourly. "I wish they were sensitive," he said. "But the sad fact is that they've been coddled so long that they simply can't conceive of anything unpleasant happening to themselves—and by extension, to their own megalopolises."

Morganstein said, "Maybe it's too soon to expect results. Maybe we should give the new casts a little longer to take effect."

"Oh, we'll give them a chance," Haines said. "But the result is foregone. In a few days time they'll have forgotten the casts they're viewing are any different from the ones they viewed before, and be more bored than ever. Games are the only answer."

"How about a cat to go with their dog," Morganstein suggested. "When kicking the dog doesn't help, they can kick the cat—or maybe step on its tail."

"Games," Haines repeated. "Nothing else will work. We've got to keep them occupied—not simply alleviate their frustrations." He looked around the table. "Any ideas?"

No one spoke.

"All right," he went on, "we'll try something different. Instead of trying to ideate en masse, we'll adjourn and see if we can't come up with something separately. Tomorrow morning we'll pool our ideas."

He lingered in the conference room after the others had gone. It was night, and through the enormous window he could see the lights of Megalopolis 6 glittering like a golden swarm of fireflies en route to nowhere.

He went over and stood before the window so that he could obtain a better view of them. He had seen the lights countless times, and always before they had depressed him; tonight, however, his reaction to them was somehow different. Presently he recognized the symptoms that invariably accompanied the birth of an idea, and he gave full rein to his thoughts.

Once, green land had flourished where the lights now gleamed; green land and trees. He saw part of the land presently—a lush green meadow—and he saw the trees palisading it. A splendid buck stepped into the meadow—a six-pointer—and paused and raised its head. Abruptly there was the sound of a shot, and a tenuous coil of smoke arose from a nearby thicket. The buck gave a leap, began to run. It seemed to run right into the ground. Its magnificent head plowed a furrow in the earth; its legs thrashed, but it did not get up.

A hunter stepped from the thicket. He pumped another slug into the buck. The buck lay still.

Today you gave them dogs to kick. It was a commendable substitute, but it wasn't like stalking and bringing down a deer. The sense of satisfaction wasn't there; the sense of fulfillment. You couldn't strap the dog on your fender and park your car outside a tavern and go inside and drink and brag with the proof of your braggadocio visible for all to see. For one thing, you had no car, and for another, your friends and acquaintances had spite-dogs the same as you did and knew as well as you did that it required no particular prowess to kick them into insensibility.

True, you had all the time in the world to hunt—but what was there to hunt? And if there were anything to hunt, hunting would of necessity be banned for the simple reason that there would be too many hunters, just as private ownership of vehicles had been banned for the simple reason that there were too many drivers.

In the end it all boiled down to three simple words: too many people.

Too many people and not enough work to keep them occupied. No work at all, really, except for the

pitiful sinecures they held, and called "play"

If there were real jobs for them to do, would they be satisfied then?

Haines shook his head. It was useless even to contemplate the question. Machines worked and people played, and that was all there was to it.

But suppose there were jobs, though. Suppose . . . suppose there were make-believe jobs!

Suppose there were a game called WORK. A board you moved pieces on. A square that said, PUNCH THE CLOCK; one further on that said, YOU GET A RAISE, ADVANCE FIVE SQUARES; another that said, THE BOSS WANTS TO SEE YOU, GO BACK THREE SQUARES

Or better yet, suppose that every megalopolis sector had a make-believe factory with make-believe machines in it where off-duty "office workers" could spend their weekends. You'd need space for that, though, and space was scarce. The little of it that wasn't taken up by apartment buildings was pre-empted by Playpens

Playpens!

Haines thoughts leaped ahead. Deliberately he brought them to a halt. The problem still wasn't solved. Sure, the Playpens would make excellent make-believe factories, and they could be converted in less than a week; but factories were for men. There were still the women to be considered. He concentrated. He went way back, back to the days before automation. He visualized a housewife getting up, going into the kitchen and giving Big Bridget an order for—no, not giving Big Bridget an order, but lighting the kitchen stove. He saw her after her husband had left for "work"; she was dumping the breakfast bowls into the disposal chute ... no, she was carrying them over to the kitchen sink. She was going to wash them!—

Haines could contain himself no longer. Two giant strides took him over to the intercom. "Get me Morganstein, Repp and Trask!" he shouted. "Quickly!"

The Promised Land

The Playpen was all lit up. In the foyer a huge gleaming clock was attached to the wall with a rack of cards on either side of it. Dan found his number after some difficulty and shoved his card into the slot just beneath the clock face. There was a thrilling *tling*, and when he pulled it out, the numerals 0700 were stamped on it. He placed it under his number on the other rack and went into the plant proper. Hundreds of men were already there, working at the plastic machines that stood at angles along either wall. It gave Dan a proud feeling to know that soon he would be similarly engaged.

Presently the foreman came up to him and escorted him over to a big plastic turret lathe. He showed Dan how to turn it on and how to rotate the turret. Dan set his brand new lunch pail on an adjacent bench and listened attentively. "Now here's the idea," the foreman said. "We're making parts for strato-jet engines, and we're in production. The part you're machining is the dripple." He took a cylindrical plastic object out of a nearby box and held it up for Dan to see. Then: "You take it like this, see, and put it in the chuck and tighten it. You bore it first, then you hone it, then you ream it, and finally you chamfer it. After you go through those four operations, you take it out, set it on the bench, and mark down `1' on this production chart here. Get it?"

Dan nodded.

"Of course there's no such thing as a real dripple," the foreman went on, "and even if there was, it couldn't be machined on a plastic turret lathe. But it's going to make a swell game, don't you think?"

"I'll say," Dan said, taking another dripple out of the box and securing it in the chuck. He bored, honed, reamed, chamfered, and took it out again. The foreman handed him the production chart and he marked down "1." "Say, you catch on fast," the foreman said.

Dan beamed.

He was still beaming when he punched out eight hours later and went home. Helen was beaming, too. "Wait'll you see, wait'll you see!" she said, pulling him into the kitchen.

There was a plastic stove, a plastic sink with running water, a plastic washing machine, a plastic ironing board and a plastic iron. The stove was placed in such a way that its backless oven was flush with

Big Bridget's apron. "I want to show you something," Helen said, reaching into the oven and withdrawing two bowls of chicken yummy. "See what I cooked for supper!"

"Say, this is going to be a swell weekend!" Dan said. "Me working at the plant and you housekeeping and cooking my meals."

Helen gave an ecstatic sigh. "Just think," she said. "Five whole days and nothing to do but work!"