

Decision

John van der Linden

OUTSIDE it was raining, and Dick could see subconsciously that the windows were opaque, quivering streams. He shivered, and brought his mind back to his questioner.

“If it came to a point of deciding between Veishea and Players, what would you choose?” The voice seemed too loud. Dick couldn’t tell who was speaking; rather, the crisp words seemed to spring at him, all at once, from the two dozen eyes that were directed only at him from across the little yellow room.

Dick shifted in his chair. The steel bar across the back pressed uncomfortably against his lower ribs. He looked down at his feet—curled nervously around the legs of the chair. Shaking his head, he tried to clear the smoke from his brain. Carefully nonchalant, he disengaged his feet, put them on the floor, and looked up at the forest of eyes. “I’d better say something.” Who’d said that? He bit his cheek, swallowed, and put on his most engaging smile.

“Well—aah—I’d be prepared to give Vodvil all the time it deserved. Uuh, I was awfully busy last quarter when I was manager for ‘Ghosts’, and everyone seemed to think I’d done a pretty good job.” The eyes started getting bigger. Not one would leave his. He found he couldn’t look down at his feet any more. A window-pane rattled in one of the October gusts, and a spray hit the brittle glass like corn on Halloween. But the eyes kept on looking.

“Of course, it wouldn’t be fair to Players to desert them now, when they’ve come to count on me so much. But I’ll have most of my afternoons free next quarter. I’ve got a bunch of snap courses, and I can skip studying them very much. I’ll tell you another thing—of course you realize I’ll need a lot of help, and there are a couple of darn good boys over at the house. They’ve never been in many activities, but I tell you they’ve got a lot on the ball. Then, Jim Adams, over at the house, was on the Veishea Central Committee two years ago, and he might help me some. Of course, he doesn’t live there right now, but you all know how valuable his help would be.”

Dick put on his most engaging smile again, and, chin up, looked

around the room. He'd sounded pretty good, if he said so himself.

Some of the eyes left Dick's face, and now he could look at the heads and their bodies. A swishing sound came from nowhere. Dick soared. Boy, it sure would help old Delta Phi when he got this job. But that swishing. It was getting louder, and uneven. Suddenly, right at a big swish, a voice broke through, "Dick, Veishea's just got to have a good Vodvil, and if we don't get someone really interested, the thing might flop like last year." The voice was soft and feminine. Why, that was Anne. The swishing. Oh, of course, the committee had been whispering. He'd noticed their lips moving, now that he thought about it.

The window rattled again, but this time there was no spray. He looked over to the right. No, it was cloudier than ever; the heavy grey sky made it so dark out that he could hardly distinguish a bunch of freshman girls, gay in kerchiefs and halfsox, running down the hill from the fountain, anxious to get back to Welch before the rain came again.

But what was someone saying? "If you're willing to give up Players, Dick, you can have the job. We just want to be sure, you know."

THE whispering was silent. No one moved. Dick heard a pencil drop—he knew it was a pencil, and it had dropped on the eraser end. Must be the pencil of Al, the *Daily Student* reporter, who was waiting to write a story about the new Vodvil director.

Dick felt that smoke clouding up his brain, and he gave his forehead a swipe with the back of his hand to brush it away. But the smoke got worse. Then, in the middle of it all appeared a newspaper, a picture of his face in the middle.

"Yes—" he began, and the face of Anne took the place of the newspaper, and he looked at her eyes and the twenty-two other eyes, and they seemed to be accusing him of something. "Yes—." The window rattled. "I'll do it. Hell, Players can get another manager somewhere." Then he looked down at his feet again. They were wrapped around the legs of the chair, nervously. Carefully, he disengaged them, and nonchalantly put them flat on the floor. He looked up. Al, the reporter, was just opening the door to the hall.