

two years she had known him. She wondered if he had guessed that she had changed her mind—how would she say it?

“Tom—Tom, I can’t come—you know?” Well, it was said, bluntly. She searched his face for the tense lines that formed around his eyes when he was angry.

“Uh-huh, I know. It was written all over your face when you came down that aisle.” He smiled at her as she stood one step above him.

“Tom, is it all right?”

“Sure, honey—we want it right, too—wedding and all, don’t we?” He sounded a little embarrassed. “And Alice—how about dancing tonight . . . I’ve got to catch that one o’clock train, anyway—will you see me off?”

“Oh, Tom!” Alice laughed up at him and squeezed his hand hard.

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## Fantasy

Joseph Waxberg

MATTY watched the heavy snow fall. He opened the window and put his head out. He closed his eyes and breathed deeply. He felt the cool snowflakes land softly on his cheeks.

“I’m going out.”

“What” exclaimed his roommate. “In this snow? Are you daft?”

Matty slipped his heavy mackinaw on and went out into the white countryside. When he reached the little bridge that crossed the creek he turned into a path that led down beneath the bridge.

The creek roared past. The snowflakes floated gently down and fused into the swiftly moving creek.

“Didn’t think I’d find anyone out in this weather.” Matty turned quickly. A tall, dark complexioned, unshaven man came down the path.

“Hello,” Matty said.

“What are you doing out in this weather?” the man asked as he put the rolled up blanket he had been carrying against the bridge foundation.

“Just thinking, I guess.”

“Mustn’t think too much,” the stranger said. “It’s not good

for you." He sat on the blanket, leaned heavily against the wall, and started to light a cigarette.

Matty smiled and stepped back to the stranger.

"Sit down. Get a load off your feet." Matty sat down.

"What brings you down here?" Matty asked. He coughed when the wind blew the smoke in his face.

"Well, I'll tell ya, kid. By the way, what's your name?"

"Matthew Bal—."

"Nough said," the stranger interrupted. "Last names mean nothing to me. Never hang around a place long enough for last names to be important.

"Now what was I sayin'? Oh, yes, well, Matt, every time I pass through this town I like to stop and rest here under this bridge." The stranger's eyes moved in a wide circle. He stared across the creek, trying to find something.

"Hey, Matt, what happened to that hollow elm that used to stand across the creek?"

"Oh, that—a couple of kids sawed it down for a bonfire." The stranger's mouth relaxed slightly, then tightened again.

They sat there in silence for awhile. Matty felt a definite kinship to the stranger.

The stranger spoke: "How do you stand in the Draft?"

"I don't," Matty answered.

"Oh, didn't register yet, huh?"

"Yes, I did, but I don't want to go."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I said."

The stranger flicked the cigarette into the creek. Matty stared at the stranger's profile.

"I've seen your face before, but can't place it."

The stranger smiled. Matty expected him to laugh.

"What's *your* name?" Matty asked.

The stranger hesitated then slowly said, "Everyone calls me Judie. My name is Judas."

"What's your draft status?" Matty said for want of something to say.

"I'm a 4F. I killed a man, so I'm morally unfit."

Matty felt no fear. He was very curious.

"What happened?"

"Don't like to think about it." The stranger pulled out another cigarette. "Why don't you want to go to war?"

“Because I’m young,” Matty answered, “and I don’t want to have my life interrupted. Because I’m afraid to die. And I think that the older folks started it, they should be made to finish it.” Matty found his mind wandering back to the killing that his friend had done.

“You know you’ll have to go,” Judie said. Matty coughed.

“I won’t go. I’ll run away. I’ll hide. But one thing sure, I’m not going.” Matty stretched his legs out, wondering why he was telling Judie all this. Still, Judie told him that he had killed a man.

“I wonder if he’s lying,” Matty thought.

“I see. You’ve given this issue much thought. Well, don’t do it. I’m tellin’ ya don’t do it. You won’t have a friend in the world.”

“How old are you, Judie?” Matty asked finally.

“Guess.”

“I can’t. About 35?”

“No. What day is this?”

“Tuesday, December 17. Almost Christmas.”

“Thanks.”

“Matty asked again, “How old are you?”

“I can’t remember.” Judie spoke hopelessly after a long pause.

Somehow, Matty believed him. He stood up, and said, “Well, I’ve got to go now.”

They walked up to the bridge and stood there. The snow was coming down more thickly than before.

“Give a little thought to what I said.”

Matty nodded his head. Judie continued, “You should feel honored to be able to participate in the war. Not everyone has an opportunity to help a beaten brother.”

Matty watched the snowflakes turn Judie’s black eyebrows white. A truck slid into view, Judie put his thumb out. The truck stopped. Judie opened the door, stepped on the running board and said, “I’ll see ya around, Matt!”

Then Matty knew where he had seen that face. Yes, he was sure. But, no, it was impossible! Judas! Judas!

“I wonder if I’ll ever see him again?” he thought. Judas should know that he liked him.

All the way home he heard Judie saying,

“My name is Judas.—I killed a man.—I’m morally unfit.—”