

a cart. Mary Ellen walked toward Wohlner's, looking at the sidewalk straight ahead of her. She stopped and looked across the street. The car was there, over beside the green delivery truck. She waited for cars with sneering lights to go by. She crossed the street and got into the back seat. She sat very still, looking at the steering wheel. After a long time the band crashed into a noisy march. Another Saturday night.



Pressure

Clyde Zimmerman

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IT WAS two o'clock in the afternoon by the clock on the wall in the dingy editorial office of the Post-Gazette. Sam Barker ran a hand through rumpled, grayish hair. Then he attacked the editorial proofs on the desk before him. The door to the street opened and shut.

Sam looked up. "Afternoon, Jed," he said.

"Afternoon, Sam. Paper out yet?"

"Not quite," said Sam.

"Late, isn't it?"

Sam grinned. "What's your hurry? I never saw you so anxious to get a copy before."

"Never mind—I guess I got a right to want my paper on time. Besides—there's something special I want to see in this one."

Sam scrutinized a sentence, then drew his pencil through it. "Guess you can't wait to begin that new serial we're starting today, "*Beginners in Love*."

Jed snorted. "That trash."

"Right interesting reading, some folks think," said Sam.

"Well, there's something else I'm more interested in."

"About how the legislature's going to reduce taxes, maybe—"

"It's that story about Will Bailey," broke in Jed impatiently.

"You put it in, of course."

"Oh—oh, that," Sam scratched his head. "I'd almost forgotten

that." He rummaged through the papers on his desk. "Wonder where my pipe is. A fellow can't find a thing around this office anymore. That kid, Jerry, is worse than a woman for hiding things."

"Did you use the story?" demanded Jed, his voice heavy with suspicion.

"It's a funny thing, Jed, but I sort of forgot it—got so many important things to print—"

"Well, you can put it in now, can't you?"

"I guess nobody will mind if we leave it out. Wasn't very important news anyhow."

"Not important! Well, if it isn't important news when the postmaster of this town gets hauled into court and fined for drunken driving, then I'd like to know what is!"

"Oh, lots of things, Jed. Weddings and meetings—by the way, did you know the county corn show is going to be here in a couple of weeks? Going to give over \$300 in prizes."

"I want to know why you don't tell the people of this town what's going on?" said Jed angrily.

Sam found his pipe and lit it. Without looking up, he asked, "What have you got against Will Bailey anyway?"

"That hasn't got anything to do with it," said Jed, "and if you know what's good for you—you'll pay attention to what respectable citizens tell you."

Sam leaned back in his chair. "Do you know how long I've been editor of this paper? Twenty years, Jed, twenty years. A man learns a lot about his job after doing it for that long. He has to in order to walk down the street without having people cross to the other side to avoid meeting him."

He paused to look at the other, tapping his teeth thoughtfully with the stem of his pipe. "One of the things I've learned, Jed, is that every man is entitled to one mistake. This one is Will's. If he makes another one—well, then it would be my duty to print it. Right now—well, it would hurt his wife and kids—and maybe cost him his job. I don't want to run the story that bad."

"You're an old fool," said Jed. He stalked to the door. "And you can cancel my subscription—"

"You'll be sorry," said Sam. "That new serial is mighty interesting reading. Yes, sir!"

The door slammed.