

Kaintuck Killin'

By James Oberhausen

*Razored Complacency
in the "Mountings"*

THERE was something fascinating yet strange about these Kentucky hills. As Bert struggled through them with his sample-laden car, he was aware of their ominous spell. Few people in evidence. Houses far apart. Very few small settlements. Just monotonous but beautiful rolling hills.

The sun had set, and Bert was undecided whether he should try to reach Churchill Downs that night or stop and continue in the morning. As he was passing through Possum Hollow, one of the few and far between settlements, one of his tires picked up a nail. That settled it. It was too dark to change the tire himself, and there was no garage in sight. Sighting a small hotel, he drove to it, parked, entered. A wizened little clerk awoke with a start, stared as if he couldn't believe he had a customer, then scuttled behind the desk. "Not much to look at, but you'll find it comfortable," were his recommendations for the room he assigned to Bert.

THE toll of a cracked church-bell awoke him in the morning. Surveying himself in the mirror, Bert found himself in need of a shave. Since he intended to go to his prospective buyer immediately upon his arrival at Churchill Downs, he decided to get all cleaned up here. "Where is the barber shop?" he inquired of the clerk.

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir," the clerk replied. "Did you hear that church-bell this morning? The barber was murdered yesterday."

"Murdered?" echoed Bert. "Well, I've still got to have a shave."

"Come to think of it," mused the clerk, "the blacksmith used to be a barber. Why don't you go and see him? His shop is right down at the end of this road."

Bert thanked him and strode out of the hotel. He could see the little frame building with the smoke curling out of its chimney. As he approached it, the dull clank of the hammer, horseshoe, and anvil met his ears. He entered the shop and was greeted by at least six and a half feet of gaunt, tanned human, a curt nod, and "Howdy."

"The clerk at the hotel informs me that I might get a shave here," ventured Bert.

"Shore thing," countered the smith, motioning toward a chair made from a barrel and a tree stump. "Sit thar."

BERT sat, and the smith went to the pump to wash most of the grime from his hands. Returning, he picked up an old apron, wrapped it around his customer, and pulled a long razor from his belt. Pausing long enough to bite a wad of tobacco from his plug, the smith made some lather and approached Bert.

"Too bad about the regular barber," said Bert, trying to start a conversation. "Do things like that happen often around here?"

"Oh, you mean killin's?" volunteered the smith. "Yass, one of our brothers leaves us that way every now and then."

"But isn't there any law around here?" continued Bert.

"Sposed to be. But the lawman's afraid to come to Possum Hollow."

"That's terrible," exclaimed Bert. "I should think you able-bodied citizens would take the law into your own hands."

"We do," answered the smith as his razor played around Bert's upper lip.

"**T**HIS barber—why was he killed?" queried Bert.

"Oh, he jist got too frisky."

"What happened to him?"

"Ran into somebody else's razor."

"I don't know whether that's tragedy or comedy," said Bert.

"A barber having an accident with someone else's razor."

"It weren't no comedy fer him. That's a cinch," chuckled the smith.

"Where did it happen?"

"Right out in front of this shop."

"Well, I must say you don't seem very concerned over it," accused Bert. "Who did it?"

The smith's razor hovered over Bert's Adam's apple. "I done so," he drawled.

The conversation lagged from then on.

Sonnet

By Agda Gronbech

TODAY at dusk I saw a broken kite
Entwined among the branches of the tree
Above me where I walked dejectedly,
All heavy, too, and weary of the flight.
Once both of us, aloft, looked down to hills,
And felt the golden wind that Aprils blow
Along the tops of clouds. Tonight I know
The drops of pain that happiness distills.

But, like a kite, again in ecstasy
I'll quiver toward the blue to fall again,
To see the farthest depths and heights as one
And thus to know there is a plan: That we
In minor music, harmony of pain,
Find hidden there our destiny begun.