

June Night

Don Cressey

HE SAW the truck turn crossways on the road and heard his own tires scream as he slammed on the brakes. He felt the car swerve and he jerked the wheel quickly to the left, then to the right, then left, left, left. Faster. Faster. To the left . . . Turn it, turn it, turn it.

The road, the fields, the universe became truck, truck, truck as his car slid onward. He saw the white letters on its side; he saw the driver's taut face turned blankly toward him. Then life was black on white and dirty on clean and cold warm slime in his belly as he lay on his face in the grass.

"Holy Jesus Christ. A hole in my belly. Christ . . . Jesus Christ, get me out of here. Let me go home—home with bed and cool sheets and warm love and water. Water . . . a pitcher full of ice-cold water to fill the hole in my belly. Jesus Christ who walked on water, bring me a glass to drink. Here's to your health, you lousy truck driver—I drink to your health with water in a tall glass. And I drink to your health, Jesus, but take me out of here. Take me to town in a car. To Esther and soft music and Chin's on Saturday night.

"Don't go, Christ; don't go . . . play the organ Elsie, for God's sake, play the organ. Jesus Christ let me die, let me die and go with you. Take me with you but don't go away. . . Hold on tight and take me and the hole in my belly along with you."

He felt the moist cool grass on his forehead as he lay face downward where he'd been thrown from the wreck. Far, far away he heard someone coming toward him, then everything was smashing, oozing pain when they rolled him over on his back. The stars blinked prettily overhead but gradually faded as the white-hot mass that had been the sky burned into his eyes. He lifted his hand to shut it out and the stars came back and jingled and hopped and were yellow and blue and pink, and there was Jesus Christ on the water beckoning to him. Slowly he stepped onto the cool water and walked toward Christ's outstretched arms.