

says, 'If'n I don't make it back, you see that ya do a good job o' takin' care o' me, 'cause I'll be ready an' I'm expectin' it of ya.' "

Mr. Weiss stood up, gave the mound a final pat with the shovel, and gently laid the tool in the back of the truck. "Don't ya see, Tom, he decided fer hisself. We can't judge what's right for him or nobody but ourself. It's what he wanted and he was ready."

Tom raised his face and slowly stood up. "Mr. Weiss . . . thanks for talking to me." The old man climbed into the truck.

"Want a ride back into town?"

Tom shook his head. "No thanks. I think I'll walk."

"Suit yerself." The truck clunked out of the cemetery.

Tom stood over the grave for a moment, silently. Then he walked back, quickly, onto the gravel. Toward town, the street lamps lined the road like rows of transforming angels, lighting it. Tom started toward them, knowing the stranger and feeling greater peace.

Snap

Richard Guthrie

Sociology, Jr.

I know what I must do, snap goes another aerial. It really is funny how easily they break. Walking down the street, I reach out and grab another and, with a twist of the wrist, snap another aerial.

It's a beautiful morning. The sun is shining between billowy white clouds. There is a gentle breeze from the south that cools the earth as it sways the trees. And just think, soon I'll be with my friends again. Snap another aerial, and I move on down the street toward the next car.

The squeal of tires brings my attention to a squad car that has just rounded the corner. Snap another aerial. Bounding out of the car comes a policeman. He races over to me and grabs my hand as I reach for another aerial.

“What do you think you’re doing?” he asks.

“Just snapping car aerials.”

“What’s your name, boy?”

“Joe Smith.”

“You’d better come with me, Joey.”

We walked over to the squad car and his partner says, “Get in.” Then the first policeman takes the radio and calls the station. “Control, this is 29.” The radio sounds off. “Go ahead, 29.”

“You’d better send a car to Twelfth and South Elm to check property damage, broken car aerials, bringing suspect in now, 10-4/29.”

It is a surprisingly short trip to the station, the radio squawking all the way. At the station the sergeant takes down some information.

“Name?”

“Joey Smith.”

“Age?”

“Fifteen.”

“Father?”

“I don’t know.”

“Mother?”

“Helen Smith.”

“Address?”

“1402½ South Apple.”

“That’s enough for now. Go over there and take a seat. Bill, you call the boy’s mother and Jerry Norton.”

While I’m waiting I can’t help looking around the room. There seems to be a constant flow of people, like ants going in every direction, and the radio constantly blasts me with chatter. There is a strong smell of coffee, and I sure would like some, but I don’t want to ask.

I don’t have long to wait before the assistant probation officer is in front of me. “What did you do this time, Joey?”

“I just snapped a few aerials.”

“That’s swell, Joey, you’re just begging to go back, aren’t you?”

"I really don't care."

"Where's your mother?"

"I don't know, she's probably off somewhere, drunk. My old lady's a real wonder—I'm always wondering."

"How many aerials did you break?"

"Fifty, maybe."

"Fifty-three," interrupts the sergeant.

"That was quite a haul. Why did you do it?" continues Norton.

"I don't know. I was sort of bored I guess."

"That's not much of a reason, Joey. I talked to the Judge just briefly, before I came over. He will see you this afternoon about two. Do you think your mother will be there?"

"I don't care if she is or isn't."

"I'll see you about two, Joey." Norton leaves, and they hurry me off to a detaining cell where I can spend my time waiting.

I'm just thinking how creepy this place is, when Norton comes back to the cell with one of the guards. Walking up the stairs to the Judge's chambers I begin to wonder what will happen, but there is no time to think. The Judge begins. "Joey, Mr. Norton and I have been talking, and I've come to the conclusion that it would be best not to send you back to the school. What do you have to say?"

"Nothing."

"Consequently, I will turn you back over to Mr. Norton. You will continue to pay your weekly visits to him and I hope you don't ever come back here under these circumstances. In addition you must pay for the damage you caused. Mr. Norton, I'd like a word with you, alone."

"Joey, go out in the hall and wait for me," says Norton.

I amble out into the hall but I don't stop. Walking out to the parking lot, I see the policeman that brought me in. I walk over to the squad car they are sitting in, I say to myself, "This ought to make them send me back where my friends are." Snap another aerial.