

THE BEAVER



ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON, when the Beaver had laid down the last of the Sunday funnies in the Lounge, he lit a pensive cigarette and thought dutifully about his roommate's stern admonitions to work on that eloquently tiresome report. It was very handy to have a roommate to keep you on the ball, the Beaver thought, as he meandered out into the sun-warm court. He moved on, out onto the olive walk and away from the Houses, until finally he stopped to look at a poster for the annual Drama Club play.

There were a lot of little organizations and clubs on campus that hardly ever obtruded on the attention of the majority of the undergraduates. Maybe once a year they rear their gopher heads and people hear about them — like the Drama Club.

Sometime during election week, smothered under campaign sparkle, the first poster for the Club's annual performance appeared on the advertising walk by the ME Building. But for a long time, behind the scenes, the eager stage-struck had been planning and rehearsing. Naturally curious, the Beaver went over to Culbertson to investigate. It seemed an excellent excuse not to study.

He poked his head into a strange ménage of his friends, dressed in stranger costumes—most of them disguised as the most atrocious females the Beaver had ever laid eyes on. Fascinated, he watched villain Fox twirl his insidious mustache and Malonoski fumble over a hopelessly complicated board of light switches. Shirley, the beautiful imported directress, yelled occasionally at on-stage actors; others wandered about the empty auditorium declaiming passionate speeches to silent balconies; somebody dabbled on the piano; people moved ladders around among the actors on stage; and the Beaver stood there and wondered how it was possible in less than a week to produce a play from this madness.

Still, as he sat in the audience Friday night, he saw a finished performance, and after it he stuck his head in on the cast party to hear post mortems and plans to do the play again for the public. Public acclaim is a fine intoxicant, the Beaver noted wisely.

Honors and Others

Another organization of occasional public attention was Tau Beta Pi. The Beaver saw the great gold "Bent" over Throop and knew initiations were on again. Somehow other things had played much hob with his callow freshman intentions to keep a high enough grade point

for Tau Bate, and the Beaver had never been asked to join. In fact he secretly suspected he had never even been remotely considered. With a faint sigh expressive of dead ambitions, he entered his room, where his roommate greeted him with a huge smile, a pile of Tau Bate literature, and a *Guess-Who-Got-Elected* look in his eye. In the next couple of weeks he watched Roommate scuttle about into all the dark, basement laboratories to collect 140 signatures of members in a book touchingly entitled "Schoolday Memories"; he quietly watched him curse and sweat as he machined down and polished the rough brass casting of the Bent; he helped him memorize a lot of things and heard him muttering about secret rituals. As far as he could figure, the purpose of all this Herculean labor was simply to make Roommate appreciate the honor he had received.

The Beaver took up his blanket and sauntered out to generate vitamin D on the sun-lawn. His conception of the Tau Brains had changed: it seemed on close examination like an engineer's variety of the Masonic Order or the Elks. He darkly suspected them of possessing a secret handshake.

To the Victors

The Beaver was sure that house elections were always held a couple of weeks after ASCIT elections so the beaten candidates would still have a chance. Not as much campaigning went into them, but a lot more spirit. Election night he had put on old clothes and helped guard the Lounge doors so no candidates could leave. *The air quivered with suspense and the candidates with misgivings before the evil leers of the waiting electorate.* Then the results—and immediately pandemonium. The winners were overpowered in a short riot with the troops and were carted out, to the accompaniment of blood-curdling Indian yells, to a cold, wet demise across campus.

Meanwhile others went to work on their rooms. The Beaver remembered how last year the new Pope's room had been evacuated—completely; the doors, windows, sink, furniture, radiator, light fixtures, everything disappeared—and a stone bench was left in the vacant cell for the new Pope to perch on while contemplating the hard road of those who win popular favor. The Beaver smiled in diabolical remembrance, slipped the last screw out of the new V.P.'s medicine cabinet, and bore the thing off in triumph.

Prelude to Vacation

As he trudged off to his exam in the bright, hard 8:00 A.M. light, the Beaver tried to figure out how many exams he had written. He had decided this time that exams weren't worth cramming for. It was a delicious, fatalistic feeling. Anyway they frequently never tested you on what you had studied, and that just made you more bitter. There was certainly a minimum of bitterness in not studying hard the night before; so an impromptu mutual approbation society had formed over a pitcher of bock last night. Nonetheless, in the House there was a tangible air of tension, with lots of horseplay at dinner and in the Lounge. Sort of steam valve, probably. The Beaver spread his bluebook on the desk-arm in the exam room, wrote his name on it with infinite care, silently offered alms to Allah, and dreamed briefly of the sunny, beckoning beach for the vacation week.

—Jim Hendrickson '50