

STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

THE SOPHOMORE stumbled through the open door into his room. Gasping for breath, he slammed the door behind him. Acting with the desperate agility of a fugitive from justice, he closed the transom and fumbled frantically with the little transom latch until he was sure he was safe.

A moment later the pounding of feet down the alley to his door told him that he had been just in time. Someone outside in the alley was swearing at him splendidly. He had a moment of panic as he doubted whether his door was really locked as he had planned it to be; but it must be all right, for the knob was vibrating furiously, and the avenging frosh outside seemed unable to gain entrance.

Triumphantly the Sophomore pitched his empty water pistol onto his unmade bed, threw off his sopping T-shirt, and looked again at the door. He laughed aloud at the little streams of water dribbling ineffectually through the jamb. He was untouchable now; a man's room is his castle.

Outside, the alley was quiet now, and he deduced that the frosh had taken their mischief elsewhere.

Next time those guys play bridge on a hot day, they'll keep their door closed, he thought to himself with a smile that had just a bit of a swagger in it. He brushed off a momentary feeling of guilt that he might have ruined their cards.

This was third term, the way he liked it. Warm weather, water pistols, and walking around the courtyard instead of across it. Vengeance and counter-vengeance. Struggle for survival.

If things hadn't been silly enough before, the advent of daylight-saving time had been the final touch. When it had been almost dark after supper, you could force yourself to go to your room and study, or go see someone about a job to be done. Now, though, it was still broad daylight after supper, and who had the will power to study in broad daylight? Little groups of men hung around the courtyard for half an hour or more, talking and laughing and wasting time.

It was a good thing they'd had that week of bad weather, the Sophomore mused. If the weather had been sunny right straight through, he'd be so far behind now he'd never catch up. The showers that had washed April down the drain were a blessing in disguise, for that week-end he'd even gotten some things accomplished.

Not very many, he admitted quietly to himself.

Everyone was silly this time of year. Guys were talking double-talk (at one point "yes" and "no" became 'yaynsenyinyang' and 'yamnoyinyang' but usually it wasn't quite that complicated) and guys were scuffling in the lounges and waltzing with each other in the courtyards and holding slingshot competitions in the alleys.

It was times like this that he enjoyed himself most. Sometimes, though, it would add to the after-dinner merriment if a handful of healthy young lasses were part of the fun! Such was not his lot, though. He had chosen education over co-education when he came to Tech (though he had not thought of it in those terms then).

At least he was getting around to a few dances and parties these days, and they served well to take the edge off his frustrations. The frosh-soph dance (his classmates gaily referred to it as the soph-frosh dance, which was only fitting) had been a huge success, and he supposed the junior-senior prom was as neat as ever. A couple of beach parties and a couple of exchanges had swelled his datebook and his self-confidence, too.

What was he looking for? More goofing off, more dates, more good time, less work. A passing thought struck him: he had spent four years of high school trying to be what he had thought was collegiate, and now he had spent two years of college trying to be what he had thought was high-school. It was a disturbing thought, and he brushed it aside.

A look at the calendar on his wall told him that in a few short weeks he would be home. Summer vacation!—when his mind went into hibernation, while his baser instincts took over. Summer vacation, a time without homework and without grades, a time of gaiety and variety and company.

His nose brought his attention sharply back to the present. Turning toward the door, he saw an evil cloud of yellow fumes creeping up from the crack at the floor.

Vengeance and counter-vengeance! Struggle for survival!

He whipped his windows wide open and then, holding his nose in defense against the unbelievably foul odor that inched toward the center of his room from the door, he threw open the door and kicked the little stink-bomb out into the alley.

I'll get even if it takes all year, he vowed wrathfully.

—Marty Tangora '57