

THE JACK-ROLLER

A DELINQUENT BOY'S
OWN STORY

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With a new Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION

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The Jack-Roller was first published in 1930 and has enjoyed a continuing and well-deserved popularity ever since. It was not the first published sociological life history. That honor goes to the documents published by Thomas and Znaniecki in *The Polish Peasant*.¹ But it was the first of a series to be published by Clifford Shaw and his associates, and was followed by *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* and *Brothers in Crime*. During the same period, Edwin Sutherland published the still popular *Professional Thief*. And similar documents have been published occasionally since, most recently *The Fantastic Lodge* and *Hustler*.²

The life history is not conventional social science “data,” although it has some of the features of that kind of fact, being an attempt to gather material useful in the formulation of general sociological theory. Nor is it a conventional autobiography, although it shares with autobiography its narrative form, its first-person point of view and its frankly subjective stance. It is certainly not fiction, although the best life history documents have a sensitivity and pace, a dramatic urgency, that any novelist would be glad to achieve.

I wish to thank Blanche Geer, Morris Janowitz, Henry McKay, and Stanton Wheeler for their comments on an earlier version of this introduction. In addition, I am grateful to my colleagues in the Sociology Department of Northwestern University, who devoted a faculty seminar to discussion of an earlier draft.

¹ W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (2d ed., New York, 1927), II, 1931–2244.

² Clifford R. Shaw, *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (Chicago, 1931), and *Brothers in Crime* (Chicago, 1936); Chic Conwell and Edwin H. Sutherland, *The Professional Thief* (Chicago, 1937); Helen MacGill Hughes (ed.), *The Fantastic Lodge* (Boston, 1961); Henry Williamson, *Hustler*, edited by R. Lincoln Keiser (Garden City, N.Y., 1965).

CHAPTER IV

STARTING DOWN GRADE¹

To start out in life, everyone has his chances—some good and some very bad. Some are born with fortunes, beautiful homes, good and educated parents; while others are born in ignorance, poverty, and crime. In other words, Fate begins to guide our lives even before we are born and continues to do so throughout life. My start was handicapped by a no-good, ignorant, and selfish stepmother, who thought only of herself and her own children.²

As far back as I can remember, my life was filled with sorrow and misery. The cause was my stepmother, who nagged me, beat me, insulted me, and drove me out of my own home. My mother died when I was four years old, so I never knew a real mother's affection. My father remarried when I was five years of age. The stepmother who was to take the place of my real mother was a rawboned woman, devoid of features as well as emotions. She

¹ This is the first chapter of Stanley's "own story" of his experiences in truancy and delinquency. Aside from a number of corrections in punctuation, the story is presented precisely as it was written by the boy. He is also entirely responsible for the organization of the material into chapters, and suggested all of the chapter headings with the exception of that of chapter x. The sincerity of the story cannot be questioned. Through our numerous personal contacts with Stanley during the last five years we are convinced that the story reveals his fundamental attitudes and typical reactions to the various situations in which he has lived. Furthermore, the events described in the story are confirmed throughout by official records and by information secured directly from persons who had contact with Stanley during the period in which his delinquencies occurred. The story should be read with a view to getting insight into the boy's attitudes, typical reactions, and the social and moral world in which he lived. From this standpoint, as previously indicated, rationalizations, prejudices, exaggerations are quite as valuable as objective description.

² This introductory paragraph is typical of Stanley's self-justificatory attitude toward his own problems and situations. In this paragraph and throughout the entire document, he makes a rather definite attempt to place the responsibility for his misconduct upon fate, circumstances, and other persons, particularly his stepmother. Regardless of the justifiability of this attitude, it reflects a fundamental aspect of his personality.

was of Polish stock, and had the habits and customs of the people of the Old World. She came to America when about thirty years old; was married at the time, and had seven children. Her husband was in ill health and he died soon after arriving in Chicago. After burying her husband, she found herself without financial resources for herself and children. Realizing her predicament and the necessity of immediate action, she ventured out to find a husband, a man to support herself and her seven children; literally to slave and labor and bring home the bacon. Her venture was not so successful at first. Men were not wont to fall for her precious few charms. And, besides, did she not have seven children as an added burden?

My father was in a similar predicament, my mother having died and left three children. His thoughts went in quest of a woman to be his wife and a mother to his children. So it happened that Fate brought about a meeting of the two. A hasty courtship ensued, and in a short time they were married. My father worked for the Gas Company, and my stepmother proceeded to establish a home.

To this day I wonder how my father could have picked out such a woman for a wife. My conclusion is that she, in her desperation, used all her charm and coercion to get a man—any man who was able and inclined to work. My father, being fond of his whiskey and beer, and being in need of a mistress, became intoxicated and, thus blinded to her nature and circumstances, yielded to her coercion.³

She brought her seven children to our home. With us three children, my brother, my sister, and myself, there were twelve to feed and clothe. We all lived in four rooms in a basement. My father did not whimper. All he asked for was his regular meals, a bed to sleep in, and his daily can of beer and whisky. His mind was like a motor, always on one course. He didn't think of his children as boys and girls to be loved. He thought of us as just "kids," who had to be provided for, and he was the good provider. There his parental duties ended. Never did he show any

³ Even if this account of the circumstances attendant upon the father's marriage to the stepmother were entirely fictitious, it would be none the less indicative of the boy's attitude toward his stepmother.

love or kindness. We "kids" were worth boarding and tolerating because sometime we would be financial assets.

For six months things went rather smoothly. Then my troubles began. My father and stepmother began to argue and quarrel about us children. I didn't know much about it at first, for I was more interested in playing with the cat behind the stove. But I soon felt the change. From a quiet woman, the stepmother changed to a hell-cat full of venom and spite. The first time she struck me was when I was in my favorite nook behind the stove, playing with the cat. She pulled me out and beat me, striking me in the face and on the back with her hard and bony hand. That was the first time that I ever knew fear. After many beatings I became more and more afraid, and I crouched behind the stove in fear. Well do I remember my first fears and horrors of her. I became unhappy and did not caper and play with my brother and sister as I had been wont to do. My father gave me no comfort. He spent his time at work, at the saloon, and in bed. Never did he pet or cheer me.

The stepmother favored her own children in every way. They received what luxuries were to be had, while my brother and sister and I had crumbs to pick off the table. She let her children eat at the table, and made us wait. Whenever one of her children would do a wrong they would tell her that I did it, and then I, instead of the culprit, would get the beating. My father couldn't interfere, because if he did the stepmother would threaten to leave. That would have been the best thing for his children, but of course he didn't want her to go.

Things went on this way. We fought with her because she favored her children at meals and beat us for their misdemeanors. Hard indeed it was for me to get enough to eat. Often when I would go to the store to buy food for the family, I would take a little biscuit or anything I could without my stepmother knowing it. So that much was I ahead when I got my portion at mealtime. My father worked steady and received good wages, so there was no good reason why we could not have enough to eat. But the stepmother was saving and fed her own children and let us go starved and half-naked on the street.

The stepmother also made us (brother, sister, and myself) do all the hard work in the house. And then she would beat us if we complained. That is what embittered me against her and her children. I developed a hatred against her that still lasts; a hatred that was so burning that when she would look into my eyes she would read it there, and in that way she knew my feeling. The Lord knows I tried to love her, but my nature could not stand her caresses in one of those sympathetic moods which she seldom had. Occasionally she would seem to feel sorry for her abuses and cruelty, and would ask me to kiss her; but my feelings protested. My fear and hatred made me avoid her and resent her caresses. Then she would get angry and beat me.⁴

So I grew old enough to go out on the street. The life in the streets and alleys became fascinating and enticing. I had two close companions that I looked up to with childish admiration and awe. One was William, my stepbrother. The other one was Tony, a dear friend of my stepbrother, William. They were close friends, four years older than me and well versed in the art of stealing.⁵

⁴ Family situations of this kind are not at all uncommon in the cases of truant and delinquent children. It is probable that such situations not only play an important part in the formation of delinquent behavior trends, but greatly influence the development of attitudes and personality. Presumably Stanley's attitudes of persecution and suspicion originated in the antagonistic family relationship described in this paragraph. Among the more important factors in the situation is the stepmother's attitude of partiality toward her own children and her discrimination against Stanley and his brother and sister.

⁵ As indicated in Healy's case-study, Stanley's initial stealing and sex experience occurred while he was in the company of William and Tony. It may be assumed that Stanley's initial experience in delinquency was an aspect of the play activity of his gang and neighborhood. Cutting lead pipes from vacant buildings, stealing pennies from newspaper stands, making raids on local fruit stores and groceries, and breaking into freight cars were as much a part of the established and accepted play life of the gang and neighborhood as crap-shooting, fighting, stealing rides on trucks and street cars, gathering and selling junk, and playing such games as ball, tag, and cops and robbers. From his point of view, it is probable that his early experiences in stealing had no more moral significance than the non-delinquent practices in which he engaged, and like the latter were acquired through his participation in the social life about him. The study of life-histories indicates that careers in delinquency very frequently originate in the type of social situation described in this paragraph (see Cases 8 and 9, pp. 15-17).

To my child-seeing eyes, I visioned Tony as a great leader in the neighborhood, and he directed his gang around with much bravado. He and William were always stealing and talking about stealing and I fell in with them as soon as I began to play around in the neighborhood.

Tony was a squatty boy, rough features, closely set eyes, and a body that bespoke strength and ruggedness. With his strength and fighting ability, he maintained leadership over his gang. He was also daring and courageous. I remember vividly how awed I was by his daring in stealing and fighting. These things made him a guy to be looked up to and respected in the neighborhood.

Tony liked his whiskey and in our neighborhood one could find as many as four or five saloons in one block in those days. He would dare me to drink and I would, although it burned my throat. I was what they call "game" and I just swallowed it without a word, to maintain that high distinction which I was openly proud of.

Tony had two sisters who always played with us and went on our stealing adventures. They could steal as good as any boy. Also they had sex relations openly with all the boys in the neighborhood. I remember how the boys boasted that they had had sex relations with each of them. All the boys talked about it and the girls didn't care; they seemed to be proud of it and expect it. The funny thing about it was that Tony knew all about his sisters and their behavior and only made merry about it.

The boys in the gang teased me about Tony's sisters, asking me how many times I had had sex relations with them. Even the girls would talk to me about sex things, put their arms around me, and touch my body. At first I was too young to know what it all meant, but I soon learned and developed many sex habits, like masturbation and playing with girls.

Tony didn't work, but made his money by stealing, and he made lots of it for a boy of his age.

My stepmother sent me out with William (my stepbrother) to pick rags and bottles in the alleys. She said that would pay for my board and make me more useful than fretting and sulking at home. I did not mind that in the least. In fact, I enjoyed it, be-

cause I was at least out of the old lady's reach. I began to have a great time exploring the whole neighborhood—romping and playing in the alleys and "prairies," gathering rags, bones, and iron, and selling them to the rag peddlers. This romping and roaming became fascinating and appealed to my curiosity, because it was freedom and adventure. We played "Indian" and other games in the alleys, running through the old sheds and vacant houses. Then we gathered cigarette "buttses" along the street and took them to the shed, where we smoked and planned adventure.⁶ I was little and young, but I fell in with the older guys. Outside, in the neighborhood, life was full of pleasure and excitement, but at home it was dull and drab and full of nagging, quarreling, and beating, and stuffy and crowded besides.

On the trips with William, I found him to be a rather chummy companion. I regarded him, not as a brother, but rather as a boy friend from another home. He was five years my senior. He sort of showed it in his obvious superiority. But I didn't seem to notice that fault. He was a "mamma's boy" at home, but oh, Lord, how he changed on our trips! He taught me how to be mischievous; how to cheat the rag peddler when he weighed up our rags. He would distract the peddler's attention while I would steal a bag of rags off the wagon. We would sell the rags back to the victimized peddler. He also took me to the five and ten cent store on Forty-seventh Street, and would direct me to steal from the counter while he waited at the door. I usually was successful, as I was little and inconspicuous. How I loved to do these things! They thrilled me. I learned to smile and to laugh again. It was an honor, I thought, to do such things with William. Was he not the leader and I his brother? Did I not look up to him? I was ready to do anything William said, not because of fear, but because he was my companion. We were always together, and between us sprang up a natural understanding, so to speak.

One day my stepmother told William to take me to the railroad

⁶ Stanley's description of his experiences with William and Tony illustrates the value of the "own story" in the study of the attitudes and social values prevailing in the community and social group of which the delinquent is a member.

yard to break into box-cars.⁷ William always led the way and made the plans. He would open the cars, and I would crawl in and hand out the merchandise. In the cars were foodstuffs, exactly the things my stepmother wanted. We filled our cart, which we had made for this purpose, and proceeded toward home. After we arrived home with our ill-gotten goods, my stepmother would meet us and pat me on the back and say that I was a good boy and that I would be rewarded. Rewarded, bah! Rewarded with kicks and cuffs.

After a year of breaking into box-cars and stealing from stores, my stepmother realized that she could send me to the market to steal vegetables for her. My stealing had proved to be very profitable to her, so why not make it even more profitable? I knew it was for my own good to do what she wanted me to do. I was so afraid of her that I couldn't do anything but obey. Anyway, I didn't mind stealing, because William always went with me, and that made me feel proud of myself, and it gave me a chance to get away from home.

Every Saturday morning we would get up about three o'clock and prepare for the venture. William, Tony, and his two sisters and I would always go. We would board a street car, and the people on the car would always stare at us and wonder where such little kids were going so early in the morning. I liked to attract the attention of people and have them look down upon me with curiosity. The idea of my riding in a street car at that early hour appealed to my adventurous spirit and keyed me up to stealing. In the street car, William would give me orders on what to steal and how to go about it. I listened to him with interest and always carried out his orders. He had me in the palm of his hand, so to speak. He got the satisfaction of ordering me, and I got the thrill of doing the stealing. He instructed me on how to evade peddlers and merchants if they gazed at me while I was stealing. After arriving at the market, William would lay out the plan of action and stand guard while I did the stealing. He knew

⁷ There are many areas in the city in which stealing from freight cars is a very prevalent practice. It is not unusual to find cases in which the entire family participates in this type of delinquency.

what the stepmother wanted, and he always filled her orders to overflowing. All in all, I was a rather conceited little boy who thought himself superior to the other boys of his age; and I didn't miss impressing that little thing upon their minds. I was so little that the peddlers were not suspicious of me, and it didn't take long to fill our baskets and be ready for the journey home. All spring, summer, and fall did we go to the market, and never did I get caught and never did we go home with empty baskets.

Stealing in the neighborhood was a common practice among the children and approved by the parents. Whenever the boys got together they talked about robbing and made more plans for stealing. I hardly knew any boys who did not go robbing. The little fellows went in for petty stealing, breaking into freight cars, and stealing junk. The older guys did big jobs like stick-up, burglary, and stealing autos. The little fellows admired the "big shots" and longed for the day when they could get into the big racket. Fellows who had "done time" were big shots and looked up to and gave the little fellows tips on how to get by and pull off big jobs.

In spite of all my stealing for her, the stepmother continued to favor her own children, and to beat me. She wouldn't give me any spending money nor any decent clothes. She continued to beat me, and my hatred for her kept getting stronger. I was selling papers in the winter and was barefoot. The stepmother said that I wasn't her "kid," and that she wouldn't spend her money to buy clothes for me. She told me to go out and beg and steal to get spending money.

Things became so bad that my brother and sister ran away just to get out of the stepmother's reach. They put them in jail just for running away. That left only me at home, but I was just about ready to go. Fate had decided against me and my brother and sister. Were my brother and sister not already suffering for the crimes of someone else? Were they not in jail simply because life was intolerable with the stepmother and her brood of culprits? I learned all the meanness of my childhood from my stepbrother William, but never once was he whipped or arrested. Fate was in his favor. I became unhappy, and fear and hatred

took possession of me. One day a policeman came to our house and told my stepmother that he saw William and me stealing in a store. After he left, the stepmother accused me of leading William astray, and she proceeded to tie me to a chair for the customary beating. Fear possessed me and gave me added courage and strength. I tore myself loose from her and ran away.

For the first time in my life I was out of the hole I called home, away from my stepmother. But where would I go? A boy of six years and four months. I didn't lose much time, but went back to our old home in Bridgeport. I met my old chums there and told them that I was bumming from home. We played together all day, but at night I got afraid and lonesome. I thought about home and the beating that was waiting for me. Fear kept me from returning home. I roamed the street until late at night, and then found a dry spot under a doorstep, where I curled up and slept till morning. Thus I roamed and begged and stole food until four days later, when I was arrested. The policeman took me to the station, and the desk sergeant ordered some bread and milk put before me. I thought that, compared with the place I called home, the jail seemed more like a haven of rest. I told them about my stepmother and my stepbrother, but they said, "You will have to go back home." My adventurous spirit sank to zero. They called my father, who came to take me back home. As we got near home, I was growing nervous because I knew I was due a beating as soon as my father went to work. My stepmother smiled when we got home, but when my father left she took a stick, and I got the beating of my life. After she got through, she said, "Run away again, I don't care; I don't want you around here, you'll lead all my boys to be criminals."⁸

⁸ In a recent conversation with Stanley (December, 1929), he made the following significant statement with regard to his stepmother: "I don't believe that I exaggerated the faults of my stepmother, but if I did, I certainly didn't exaggerate my feelings toward her." This statement illustrates one of the primary assumptions of this volume, namely, that in the study and treatment of the delinquent child it is essential to deal with his personal attitudes, his definition of the situation, although these may be exaggerations or even misinterpretations of the objective situation. Even if it were true that Stanley's interpretation of the family situation were somewhat exaggerated, it cannot be doubted that he acted "as if" these interpretations were true (in this connection see the statement of W. I. Thomas, p. 3).

Once away from home, the other times were easy. That was the easiest way to get out of my stepmother's reach, and, besides, it made a strong appeal to my young and adventurous spirit. I ran away so many times that my father grew weary of going to the station to get me. He told the stepmother to keep me at home or he would get somebody who would. From then on, I was tied to the bed, but I continued to loosen myself and run out again. My feelings were to roam without a care on my mind, to be away from home, where I always got the clouts. And roam I did. I would romp back to our old home and neighborhood, and then on down to West Madison Street and the Loop. I would gaze at the movie houses, restaurants, poolrooms, and at the human wreckage that made its uncertain and guideless way along West Madison Street. Their conversations and carefree personalities appealed to my childish imagination. A score of times or more did I thus roam from home to West Madison when I was eight and nine years old.

Freedom now possessed me. I felt that I could get along some way on my own hook. But I soon learned that Fate was still master of my destiny. I was supposed to go to school, but it never appealed to me. To sit in a schoolroom all day was like being confined in prison. I would sit in school and think of traveling and roaming without a care. I always wanted to play hookey, so finally I was arrested and taken to the Juvenile Detention Home, where I learned the first law of nature—self-preservation.

CHAPTER V

THE BABY BANDHOUSE¹

The Detention Home at first seemed like a palace to me. It was clean and in order. The very first night I took a nice bath (the first one I ever had), had a change of clothes, and a good meal. I felt like I'd never want to go back to that "old hole" (home) with my stepmother. I went to bed in a clean little white bed, and I thought, "Well, is this jail? Who ever thought it was so nice?"

Inside the Detention Home I found a motley crowd of aspiring young crooks—young aspirants to the "hall of fame of crookdom." In their own minds they had already achieved fame in the world of crime, and proceeded to impress that fact upon the other boys. The whole thing seemed to be a contest, among young crooks, to see who was the biggest and bravest crook. They loiter about the place, congregating in small groups, talking about their achievements and ambitions in their common vocation, crime. The older crooks are gods and stand around telling about their exploits. Much of it is bunk, but they succeed in making the other boys, especially the younger ones of more tender feelings and not so wise to the world, believe it. I listened eagerly to the stories and fell into the web myself. I was really awed by the bravery and wisdom of the older crooks. Their stories of adventures fascinated my childish imagination, and I felt drawn to them. My timid spirit (you remember I was only eight) wanted to go out and achieve some of the glories for myself.

Well do I remember how Pat Maloney impressed my childish mind. He was seven years my senior, a big husky Irish lad, and a "master bandit." He was in for stealing automobiles, burglary,

¹This chapter is a description of Stanley's experiences and contacts in the Juvenile Detention Home and the Chicago Parental School. The former institution is designed for the detention of dependent and delinquent children, pending the disposition of their cases in the Juvenile Court. The Parental School receives commitments of children charged with truancy from school and other behavior difficulties arising in relation to the school situation.

regularly two and three times a week. So I went on, my spirit of adventure holding me in its grasp.

One day Buddy asked me if I wanted to board and room with him. I said I'd like to but that my sister needed my assistance. He pushed me on by saying I could live with him for seven dollars a week, while at my sister's I had to pay ten dollars. The plan appealed to me, so one night I told my sister that I was going to leave. She protested. My brother-in-law became angry at the thought of losing the ten dollars a week and told me in no uncertain terms to get out of the house and not to come back any more. But I didn't care; I was going to a decent home, where I had a friend; and was not adventure in sight? So I took my scant wardrobe and boarded a street car to the North Side, where Buddy lived.

Gee! but it was a swell neighborhood to me. Green grass, trees, and the quiet pervading air soothed my aching soul. It was a haven of beauty and bliss compared with the drab and dirty stock yards from which I had just come. I arrived at Buddy's home and was greeted by his mother, a kindly and affectionate woman, who led me into a home which was furnished with taste, although not expensively. She, in a very kind and touching way, bade me lay my clothes in Buddy's room, for we were to live together. Right off I felt a new boy. Her kind and gentle voice and nice words, and the nice home, seemed to call up immediately something that had been hidden in me before. It was a deep sense of shame about my past life and also about the things that Buddy and I had done together. For it was I who accompanied him on his trips to houses of prostitution, and here he has such a good mother, who was trying to make a good man out of him. As I gazed into her kind eyes and accepted her generous hospitality I felt guilty of a great crime—a wolf in sheep's clothing.

She told me about her older sons, who were such good men, but Buddy, the youngest one, defying her, just because he was out after adventure, and he couldn't be stopped. Later I talked to Buddy and told him what a good mother he had and that we ought to be different, but he only laughed and said he knowed her better than I did.

CHAPTER X

HITTING THE ROAD

The very first night at Buddy's home he pulled me out to a poolroom, amid the protests of his mother. I didn't know how to shoot pool very good at that time, so I felt a little embarrassed when Buddy showed me how to hold the cue. He seemed to be wiser than me in almost everything, but I was determined to catch up with him as soon as possible. During the first month we made it a habit to go to poolrooms and houses of ill-fame regularly. Although we didn't steal, we did about everything else in the life of the underworld.

During this time I found that Buddy was a different boy from my first impressions of him. I came to see that he was a very selfish and egotistical lad. For example, he didn't have to pay board or room rent, so he put his money in the bank and then sponged off me all week. I began to feel that he was making a fool out of me, so my attitude toward him changed. However, I liked to hear his stories of adventure, and my soul seemed to cry out with impatience for the wide open spaces which he described.

One day Buddy told me that his brother worked in another ink establishment and that I could get a job for more money. I was glad to go, especially if I was to get more money. The next Monday I took the new job, but to my sorrow it paid only fourteen dollars a week. I felt more suspicious of Buddy then and wondered why he hadn't taken this job, since he thought it was so good. I saw it all very clearly after a little reflection. Buddy was trying to rise in the limelight, and my going would give him my old job, which was better than the one he had. He had framed me beyond doubt. I was angry, and told him I was through with him. He put up an oily line of gab, but I cut him short and left his home—going to Madison and Halsted streets to live.

Ever since I went to live with Buddy I had let him run over me, but I had secretly resented it. He often said that he was my boss, and that I was under obligation to him because he had taken

me into his home to live. I didn't like that, although I endured it until he framed me in connection with the job. That was the climax, and for two weeks we didn't "rap" (talk) to each other. He felt very bad and came to my place of employment many times to make up. Finally, he planned a wild party at his home. There were to be ten couples, with lots of liquor, and Buddy invited me, so I felt friendly toward him and we began to "rap" again.

On the day of the party Buddy gave me twenty dollars with which to buy moonshine. I, feeling rather proud, went to West Madison Street and found an old friend with whom I had previously been engaged in "jack-rolling." I told him about the party, and invited him to go. He gladly accepted the invitation, and we put two gallons of "dago-red" and one gallon of moonshine into his car, and were off to the party. This lad was an old pal, but he considered himself somewhat above me, as he had been promoted to the beer racket from "jack-rolling," while I was doing time in Pontiac.

The party got off to a rip-roaring start, everyone taking a drink, and we were soon making merry—dancing, spooning, and singing. I didn't do much drinking; in fact, I never cared much for drinking, as my stomach wouldn't stand it. My girl and I spent most of our time out on the porch spooning. By midnight everyone was thoroughly intoxicated, and the relations were promiscuous and intimate. At four o'clock the party broke up. Buddy could not walk, so I put him to bed, and we sang him a farewell song and parted.

Joe (my Italian friend) and his girl and my girl and I went out driving from the party. Joe drove us to a black-and-tan joint on the West Side. He was a joint owner of the place, so felt at home and led us into a back room, where he ordered drinks. I refused to take liquor, saying I preferred ginger ale. Joe looked at me with a frown of disapproval, ashamed of my childish action. I answered his mental query by saying that I drank too much at the party and that my system would not stand so much. He sneered and said, "All right," and right there I knew that he had changed his opinion of me. I was a weakling in his sight. I knew he would never have anything more to do with me.

After chatting a few minutes, we all went upstairs to bed. At noon I got up, took my girl home, and then went to Buddy's home. He was still sleeping, but I awoke him, and we put the house in order so his mother would not be suspicious. Buddy knew his stuff, so he fixed up the house spick and span. We were back to our old relationship, and I was happy. I gave up my work at the ink company and got another job—at a wholesale grocery house.

My work at the wholesale grocery house consisted of labeling boxes of cheese, and it was humdrum and monotonous, but I had to do it to live and have the pleasures which were so enticing just at that time. I worked among negroes, and, being young and narrow-minded, I was greatly prejudiced against them. They were slovenly and ill-mannered, and it wasn't a day before I had a battle with one. He had the nerve to try to tell me what to do. I told him where to get off at, and added that I never had to take orders from a nigger before, and that I didn't intend to take them at the present time. He tore into me for calling him "nigger," and, although I do not wish to exaggerate my ability at fisticuffs, I would have defeated him easily had not a lot of other niggers come to his aid. Seeing my danger, I grabbed a heavy iron bar and held them at bay until they cooled down. That proved to them that I wasn't to be fooled with. I made up my mind not to let a nigger run over me, but I knew that I was in grave danger there, for they might attack me secretly and do me great injury. So I planned to leave as soon as the opportunity arrived.

Buddy got a new job, where he earned more money. He was planning to make a pleasure trip to Wisconsin as soon as he had sufficient funds. He told me that I could go if I had the dough, but of course I didn't have the money. At the end of one month he had saved one hundred dollars and was ready to make the trip. He and two boy chums and three girls left in a friend's car the next day. He couldn't do without girls. He bade me a fond farewell, and they were off.

On my way to work the next morning I found out how much I missed Buddy. He was such a jolly little pal to have. He always had a smile, a smile that bespoke adventure and a happy-go-

lucky spirit, and now he was gone. My only friend was gone, and I was all alone. I brooded over the good times we had had together and the pleasures we could have if he were only here. I became disgusted and cursed myself that I couldn't get the funds to go with him. I plodded along, staying at home alone after the day's work, because I didn't know what to do without Buddy. He was gone almost two weeks. One day I was working away scraping imported cheese, blue and despondent, when who did I see standing before me but Buddy! Gosh, what a relief for sore eyes was the sight of him! I grabbed his hand and shook it violently. He started to tell me about his trip. He was in trouble. He got in with a girl out at Johnstown and went too far, and her father had filed suit against him. Also the bunch he was with had burglarized a store and were seen in the act. The police had given chase, but the gang had escaped. In the mêlée Buddy had torn his new thirty-dollar suit, which he regretted very much. After telling a line about the "broads" at Johnstown, Buddy said he had to leave Chicago immediately, because if any of the gang got caught they might squawk on him and give the police his Chicago address. He asked me to go with him, and of course I was more than glad to get away from my monotonous work and the niggers.

Buddy stayed at a hotel that night, not wishing his mother to know that he was in the city. The next morning we met and planned our departure. In the afternoon we went up to Buddy's house, and Buddy waited in the alley for my signal. His mother was away, so we both went in, took a bath, put on old clothes, packed our good clothes, and hurried away. Buddy was anxious, but I was more so. My soul seemed to sense the coming of freedom that I craved. I wanted to roam, and to blaze with the world full of conventional shackles that tied me down to slavery. Why should I work with niggers when freedom was in reach? The thought of leaving tingled and thrilled every drop of blood in my body. My childish dreams were to be realized. Maybe I'd see California, the land of which I had dreamed many times. Like Alger's hero, I was going out to seek my fortune. Words could not express my joy.

We took a street car to the Union station, got information

about the train schedule, and then expressed our clothes to Omaha, Nebraska. We shipped them in the same package, collect, and Buddy kept the check. Then we boarded a Grand Avenue street car and went to the end of the line, where we got off, had a bite to eat, and got some sandwiches for the journey. It was still early, so we went into the inevitable poolroom and shot pool until train time. We were both highly excited and elated and talked—or rather, Buddy talked—about the promising future in store for us out West. I dreamed silently, and Buddy's talk was nothing but static that only interfered with the sweetness of my visions. My heart was light as a bubble; my troubles of the day before had vanished. Everybody and everything seemed to be different—friendly and buoyant.

Our train pulled out at 10:57 P.M. The night was very dark, and, being the first of April, was chilly, so we had to wear overcoats. We boarded the "blind"; that is, between the engine and the first car, which was supposed to bring us joy for evermore. Buddy and I got a thrill when the train started off, and when it picked up speed we were so overjoyed that we burst into song. As we sped along I inhaled deeply the crisp night air, and felt braced and invigorated. We smoked cigarettes, made plans for the future, and bade farewell to sorrow and trouble.

Before going farther I will explain the "blinds." As I said before, it is between the engine and the first coach. The road bums ride the blinds when they are in a hurry. It is very dirty; the cinders and smudge soon make one look like a black man. The experienced floater will ride the blind only on a passenger train, because there are usually empty box-cars on a freight train, and these are much cleaner, although not so speedy. In about an hour we reached Elgin, and there we got off, for we were tired. We went up to the Y.M.C.A. and asked for a room, which we got. We went right to bed and slept soundly till morning. At 8:00 A.M. we arose, dressed, and as we stepped into the hall Buddy asked me to help him put his coat on, which I did. He then took it right off and had the nerve to ask me to help him put it on again. He laughed proudly and said, "You're my valet on this trip and you'll do everything I tell you to do. I don't want you to be slow

about your duties, either." I boiled with fury and resentment and told him to go to hell, and that I'd go my own way. I wasn't going to be anybody's slave; that I was out after freedom. The good Lord saved him from a pounding right then, because I could hardly hold myself. I left him there, and as I parted he shot back a haughty laugh and a parting word, saying, "I have the receipt for our clothes, and when I get to Omaha I'll sell yours and pocket the money." That was a challenge, and I took it up.

My one determination was to get to Omaha in record time, to spite that double-crossing rat. I ran to the yards and caught a freight train. In the same box-car that I got into was another human derelict. He was about forty years old. He greeted me in the hobo lingo, like this, "Hello, Buddy, where are you headin' for?" "Omaha," I replied. "That's just were I'm goin' to," he said. He started to chat in a very congenial way and laid his hand on my leg. Immediately I knew he was a moral pervert, looking for a victim. I knew his kind like a book and always resented their advances. He was short, massive, and strong, and could have overpowered me, but he was a coward. He noticed my resentment and withdrew to the other corner of the car. At the next stop I left the freight train because it was a local and too slow. I was eager to beat Buddy to Omaha. I waited at the depot and caught the Omaha Limited "on the fly." I got on top of the coal-heap, and the motion of the train rocked me to sleep. Occasionally I would be awakened by the shrieking of the train as it thundered on through the darkness. I had always liked trains, especially the engines, and here I was sitting behind this steel monster that panted and puffed, seeming to co-operate with me in my eager desire to beat Buddy to Omaha. How I was thrilled! It was a complete sense of freedom that I cannot describe in words. After an hour of such elation I fell into a deep slumber, which lasted until I was awakened in the roundhouse at Council Bluffs.

The "brakie" woke me up, dragged me off the coal-heap, and kicked me out. I regarded that as a natural proceeding and started to get my bearings. I found a lunchroom on Main Street, where I had breakfast, and as I paid my bill the mistress told me that she had roomers. I asked for a room. She asked me where I

was from, and I said, "Chicago." Looking me over in a peculiar way, she said that I could have a room if I paid in advance. I did so, and she led me up to a room. It resembled the rest of the building, which was a dilapidated structure in crying need of repair. After sleeping in the "blind" and box-cars I wasn't so particular. I took a bath, cleaned and brushed my clothes, and inquired of the mistress the way to Omaha. She gave me the directions in her toothless way, for she was old and emaciated but wise in the ways of the world. She had seen better days, and now she was leading a sour existence, repenting the follies of her youth. She gave me advice about how to take care of myself in Omaha—telling me the evils and thieves, and warned me to keep a safe distance from them. I took her advice seriously—feeling that she was right. Following her directions, I boarded a car to Omaha, intending to get my clothes at the express office.

As I was riding on the car I thought of Buddy, wondering where he was. I wanted him to be with me, even if I was angered at him at Elgin. I stood ready to forgive him if I could find him. But Buddy was gone, and I was alone. Suddenly I felt blue, heart-sick, and lonely. Memories of Buddy and our pleasures together filled my eyes with tears. I wanted to go home, back to West Madison Street, to find friends and sympathy that would soothe my feelings. But now the car had reached my destination and I got off, undecided whether to frame Buddy and get our clothes. It was playing him unfair, but I figured that he'd do the same thing by me, as he said he would. So I entered the express office and gave the clerk the details. He asked my name, and I gave Buddy's. My nerves tingled, because I knew the situation called for a good "line." After a rapid fire of questions, which I answered with clever ease, the clothes were delivered to me. He cautioned me about the dangers of lying, and then I gave him my rooming-house address and departed. I felt rather proud of my cleverness, after the episode, and figured that I could take care of myself from then on. Buddy would have done the same thing to me, so I felt no qualms on that score.

It was evening when I returned to my room at the rooming-house in Council Bluffs. At the supper table I was introduced to

the other boarders, who were all common manual laborers—except two, who were would-be traveling salesmen.

After being introduced, they all seemed to distrust me, and cast suspicious glances at me and at each other. I resented these glances, and thought these people a bunch of narrow-minded ga-loots, ignorant of the ways of the world, while I classed myself as a clever young crook, superior to them, even though I was a young boy.

After supper the men gathered around a table to play cards. I, being lonely and desiring companionship, asked to join them. They thought I was too young. But one asked me if I had any money to lose, and after saying that I did, they gladly admitted me to their game of pitch. I soon found that they were sharks and could trim me easily, and I was so thrilled that I couldn't stop. At ten o'clock the game stopped, and I had lost five dollars and sixty cents. Having a few dollars left in my pocket, I offered to buy drinks for the bunch, and they were the kind that never refused. They thought I was a regular guy, although they knew I was only a kid. That episode gained me a lot of friends to talk with, and I didn't think myself the loser by any means. They bade me a cordial good-night, and we went to bed. The homesickness of the afternoon had gone, and I soon fell into a deep slumber.

The next morning I went out to look for a job. There was a depression at the time, and work was scarce. Being young, I didn't have much chance when many strong and skilled men were seeking work. Returning home, I contented myself by playing the piano.

The landlady had two daughters, and I sort of shined up to them. I made a favorable impression upon them, and we were soon going to movies together. Their names were Nellie and Ruth, and I favored the latter. She was just my age, sixteen, and had beautiful blond hair. Her features were finely molded, so unlike the coarse features of the stock-yards girls that I had known before, who were flabby and ill-mannered. I spent most of my time with Ruth, taking long walks with her up to the Bluffs. These trips we enjoyed greatly, and there sprang up a strong friendship and mutual understanding between us. I told

her of the hard luck I had had in life, but I didn't tell her that I had done time. I told her my troubles simply because I had no one else to tell them to. She related her troubles, which were little things, and I soothed her as she soothed me.

Down in my heart there began to develop a great love for her because she was so sweet and innocent. But I was just a cheap crook who didn't deserve the kindness and love which she gave me, but then I concluded that I was not to blame. I could not help being a thief. Circumstances dragged me down. Ruth showed her love by doing nice little things for me, such as sewing on buttons, mending my clothes, making little tidbits or sweets which we ate on our walks to the Bluffs.

Life seemed just too sweet. I couldn't grasp the reality of it. Something seemed to be wrong. Certainly such peace could not last long for me. The sudden change from drabness to a world of blue skies seemed to jar me, so every day I fully expected to awaken from a dream and find myself in a prison cell, as I had done so many times in Pontiac.

About that time I experienced one of the greatest shocks of my life. One evening a large automobile stopped in front of the house, and a young man alighted. He entered the house and greeted everyone in a very familiar manner. As he was talking to Mrs. Rand, I overheard him ask for Ruth. My nerves chilled. I wondered who he was, and I soon found out. He was an old friend of Mrs. Rand's and had just returned from a three-month trip to California. Alas, he was Ruth's beau, and now he was back to claim her. I knew that there was an on-coming struggle for supremacy, so I naturally sized up my opponent. He was about twenty-two years old, good-looking, and had strong features that bespoke a strong character. I was only a gangling youth of less than seventeen years, while he was matured; but I was not to be torn away easily from Ruth.

Ruth evidently overheard Roy (that was my opponent's name) ask for her, for she came tripping into the room, delighted to see him. Then I had a sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach, because it looked as though she had strung me. They exchanged greetings and chatted about how much they had missed each

other, and then Ruth led him to the kitchen, where she prepared a bite for him. I was restless, so I went to the kitchen, and, as an excuse, asked Ruth when supper would be ready. She replied, "At six o'clock," and looked at me in a very troubled way, as if to say that she was not at fault. After I went out she excused herself from Roy and came upstairs to me. She told me not to worry, for she was mine as long as I'd have her, but that she'd had to be cordial to Roy, as she didn't want to hurt his feelings. That was like Ruth. She wouldn't hurt anything, and I loved her for it. Assuring me that she would dispose of Roy in short order, she went back to the kitchen.

Just before supper Roy left the house in a very angry mood because Ruth had told him of her love for me. I thought the matter settled, but it was not, as I soon found out. After supper we gathered for our customary game of pitch. I became deeply engrossed in the game, but suddenly I felt some one grasping me by the collar of my coat. Turning askance I beheld Roy. He was intoxicated and was as mad as fury. As I slipped from his grasp, he flew at me with an oath, and right there I knew I was in for a bitter struggle. The fact that he was intoxicated was the only advantage in my favor. In a normal condition he could have whipped me in short order.

As he came at me, I side-stepped and gave him a blow on the cheek. He fell but was up in a second. We clinched, and then I realized how strong he was. As I felt his strong fingers around my neck, I fought desperately, more so because of the stake involved. Were we not struggling for Ruth? I knew that if I was humbled I'd be shunned as a weakling, incapable of holding my own among men. So I fought like a wildcat, and wrenched myself loose from his vicelike grasp. Avoiding that thereafter, we milled and struggled for about five minutes, until we were separated.

After that episode my relations with everyone at the rooming-house (except Ruth) was strained. Roy, as I said before, had many friends there, so all the sympathy was in his favor. They treated me rather chilly, and I thought it best to seek out a more friendly atmosphere. As I was making preparations to leave, a very dangerous thing happened to me. A girl was living at the

rooming-house. She was well educated and refined. A man by the name of Dick, who also lived there, was sweet on her and tried to make love to her. He was only a day laborer, and she thought herself much superior to him and thus spurned his attentions.

One day Dick came to call on Susie, but she ran away from him and went to her room upstairs. He became very angry at her coldness and pursued her upstairs. She attempted to escape him and ran downstairs. While she was on the stairs he shot at her, the bullet striking her heel and knocking some leather off it. There was quite a commotion, and everybody was talking about it, including myself. Dick came down and asked what the trouble was, thus trying to get out of it in that way. I, like a fool, said I heard a shot. Dick turned on me angrily and said, "You're a liar, you sneaking little coyote, you never heard a shot. That was a tire that blew out." He gave me a slap on the jaw and stuck a gun in my rib and said, "You pack up and get out of here or you'll find yourself in the Missouri River." I was young, so this warning frightened me not a little, for I realized that I was in a tight place. I knew it was well for me to leave, so the next morning I packed up my clothes. I had no money, as I had not worked, so I decided to hit the road, riding box-cars again. The idea rather thrilled me, and I became anxious to leave.

I had a friend at the rooming-house, and he often talked about going to Chicago. So that morning at the breakfast table I described the wonders of Chicago to him. He was just like I was, ready to go at a moment's notice. He was twenty years old, short and heavily build, and had been raised on a farm. He had never been in a large city, and thought Chicago offered something for nothing, so he was anxious to get there. But before breakfast was over a big automobile drove up to the house, and two women and a man got out and walked into the house and inquired for me. I, being present, answered that I was the one they were seeking. The man was a detective from the express company, and he put the cuffs on me and bade me go with him. I got into the machine and we drove away.

As we were riding on to the city jail I looked back on the past

and thought of the good times I had just had, and how I had felt that life had taken a turn for the better. I thought of Ruth, and I wondered how she would feel after hearing about me. And now I was about to enter the city jail, back to disgrace and oblivion. What was there really worth while in living? Why couldn't the world give me an even break just once? As the car pulled up in front of the jail, the officer ordered me to get out and led me to the jail, as the car sped away. I learned afterward that the women who were in the car were Buddy's aunt and cousin. They had found out in some way about the theft of Buddy's clothes and made a complaint against me. It was easy to find me, as I had given my address to the station-master. If arrested, I had intended to give up Buddy's clothes and tell the circumstances of the case.

The detectives led me to the desk sergeant, who questioned me about the clothes. I gave him a truthful account of the whole incident, because I knew that at most I could get only a short sentence. After the questioning, the turnkey put me in a long, lonely cell that was as filthy as the Black Hole of Calcutta. The cell was large enough for fifty men, but it was full of vermin, and the scum and stench was enough to sicken the dirtiest bum that ever walked West Madison Street. I walked up and down the cell, contemplating the future and wondering how much more of my life I would have to languish in jail. I gazed outside at the mild April day, and wished I were one of those free men who could go where they wished. But here I was, a criminal, an outcast, who must be locked up, not worthy of even a clean bed to sleep in. I sat down on the dirty old bed that was black with the filth from a thousand criminals and thought burning thoughts of the past, of fate, and of the cruel stepmother who was responsible for my predicament. My thoughts went back to West Madison Street, to my friends there, and I yearned to go back there and live there forevermore. Because there I was with friends, outcasts like myself, who wouldn't look upon me as an ex-convict. As I brooded over the probable fate that awaited me, I wept like a two-year-old wanting its mother. I felt alone, helpless, and stranded. I cursed myself for the thing that I had done. Why couldn't I keep

going straight? I was in jail just because I was too stubborn to let Buddy have the best of me. But I had lost and I was to blame, so I brushed the tears away and gritted my teeth and prepared to take what was coming, as becomes a brave man of the underworld.

Late in the afternoon the turnkey opened the cell door and ordered me downstairs, where I faced the detective from the express company and the chief of police. They quizzed me about my past and my home. I told truthfully about everything except my incarceration at Pontiac. After prolonged questioning they agreed to free me if I left town immediately. I agreed, very much elated at this sudden turn of fortune, and ran out so fast that my feet could not keep step with my boundless joy.

I went to the rooming-house and found my friend who was going to leave with me. Before leaving I saw Ruth and bid her a rather prolonged farewell. She was very much upset about my going, and pleaded with me to stay with her. I was reluctant to go, but thought of the threat of the night before. She pleaded and protested, and I thought of our pleasures and wanted to tell the chief of police to go to blazes and I'd stay with Ruth. I soothed her by telling her that I would write, and that after getting a job in Chicago I would save money and come back and get her. She prepared a big lunch for me, against my protests, but inwardly I knew that I'd need the food before another dawn. We finally started off, and as I went out the door Ruth put some money in my hand. That was too much for me, so I laid it on the table, and we said goodbye, never again to see each other. It was heart-rending for me, the saddest moment of my life, because she was the first girl I ever loved and had intimate relations with. My soul fairly ached with misery as I left her in the doorway. I walked blindly and with faltering steps out of the yard and down the street to the railroad yards. Here my friend and I were to catch a "blind" to Chicago. The words of one of my favorite melodies kept running through my mind and brought tears to my eyes.

CHAPTER XI

BACK TO MY PALS

As we sat on one of the rails of the rightaway I brooded over my miserable past and of what the future might hold in store for me. My heart was heavy, and I expected fate to pull another trick on me ere many days would pass. My life was always uncertain. I never knew what was going to happen to me. No plan did I ever have. Circumstances were the only plans I ever had. I was blue and my partner was no relief, for he was not sociable—more inclined to be glum and stolid. Besides, he was green, unexperienced in the world of men. He couldn't tell stories of adventure, and so he was not interesting, because I liked the adventurous spirit in men. The care-free, happy-go-lucky always appealed to me.

After an hour of quiet brooding I saw that our "through freight" was pulling out, so we hopped into an empty box-car. Once on the move I felt better. I looked forward to getting back to "dear old Chi," the town of my birth, and to the "main stem," the home of my pals and side-kicks.

In the same box-car with us were seven other floaters, ranging in years from sixteen to sixty years. They were all broke, but that is a minor matter to a bum who finds it rather easy to beg and steal food. As the train was rambling along, we talked about the next town and the chances to bum a feed. The bum's idea of begging was to go down the "main stem" and beg from the butchers and bakers, as well as from homes and passers-by. The conversations centered on bumming meals, daring exploits on the road, and moonshine, the floaters' old standby. I distributed the lunch which Ruth had prepared for me, and I felt sick as I thought of her past caress.

I got to talking with an old veteran of the road who had "rode the rods" for forty years, and I passed the time away smoking and listening to his yarns that were interesting, even to my rather sophisticated mind. I will always remember his parting word to

me, which was, "My boy, you are very young, and if you've got a home, go back to it, and if you have none, then get a job and live a decent, upright life." He added that he regretted his mis-spent life and wished for another chance to make a man out of himself, but it was too late. Age had taken away the spirit of youth that is so necessary in rebuilding. That was good advice and rather struck me at the time, coming from an old veteran, but I was hard, full of nerve, and thought I knew it all. Also I never thought about the future or the day of reckoning. I lived life as it came along—taking things as a matter of course.

At the next town my partner and I went down to the "main stem," and he, being unwise to "stemming," I directed his course of attack—telling him to beg at every bakery and butcher shop, while I received his goods and hid them. I was in no mind to beg, and why should I stoop to such a task when I had someone who liked to do it and who was a howling success at it? When I saw that we had enough, we took our provisions and, following the directions of a fellow-floater, we entered the "jungle."¹ Here we found a couple of old kettles, and I built a fire and cooked an appetizing supper out of the wide variety of foodstuffs my partner had begged. Being ravenously hungry, we ate all of our provisions and then leaned back to smoke; nothing appeals to my imagination any stronger than an evening in the "jungle"—after a good supper, to lean back and smoke and tell stories of adventure and be free, out in the open spaces.

Not fifty yards away from us was a group of "bos" partaking of soup from a kettle—a typical scene to look upon in the "jungle." Although a little lonesome, I did not care to mingle with them, for I well knew some of the scum that travels the road would knife a man for the price of a "shot," and I instructed my companion always to be on the alert. But we were noticed by them, and one of their group—a big, bulky brute of a man—approached us, and I gave a warning signal to my partner. The

¹ Nels Anderson, author of *The Hobo*, gives the following definition of the "jungle": "On the outskirts of cities the homeless men have established social centers that they call 'jungles,' places where the hobos congregate to pass their leisure time outside the urban centers. The jungle is to the tramp what the camp ground is to the vagabond who travels by auto."