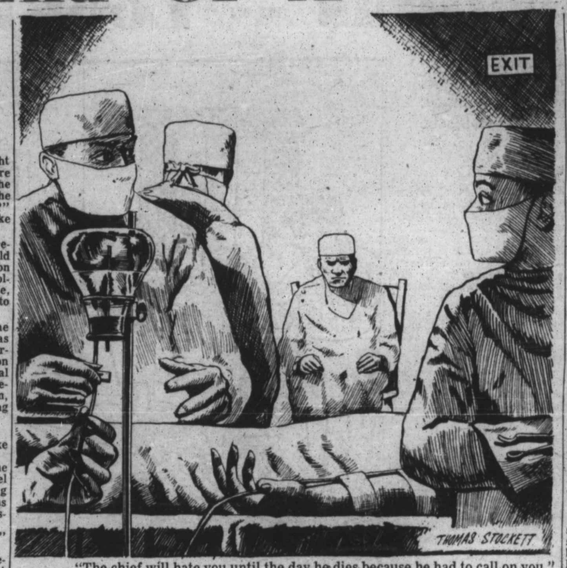
FICTION FROM 'BEST SHORT STORIES' BY AFRO-AMERICAN WRITERS

The End Of A Dream

Pleasant surprises are usually accompanied by hours of anguish and heartbreak. A young surgeon goes through the tortures of the damned before . . . it happens.

By Ollie Stewart



"The chief will hate you until the day he dies because he had to call on you."

Dr. Paul Jannifer, chief of the surgical staff at Bruce Memorial Hospital, was locked in his office with his downfall. Nurses, internes and orderlies spoke in whispers. The very corridors seemed to shudder breathlessly. The air hummed with tragedy.

In Ward "A" Dr. Jimmy Parks removed his rubber gloves and jiggled the gadget that controlled the flow of liquid soap. On either side and behind him members of the staff talked with accented words and gestures.

"Did you ever tackle a cardiac operation before, Jimmy?"

"No."

"Well, where did you ever acquire such marvelous technique?"

Dr. Parks let the water gush over his wrists and hands. He was popular with the staff; young, clean cut and ambitious. Too ambitious for his own good, some hinted — but they all admired him just the same.

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HE PURSED his lips now before replying. "Picked my technique up in my dreams, I guess," he stated finally.

"I can't understand it," one of the older surgeons remarked deliberately. "I've been operating for years and years — but I'd hesitate before tinkering with an operation the chief had just flunked out on."

"How'd you feel, Jimmy," another surgeon popped at him, "whenever you thought about the fact that you were not only pinch hitting for the chief, but your patient was the wife of one of the directors?"

"I still say it was all like a dream."

And it had been, Jimmy reflected slowly. When they told him soon after he came on duty that Dr. Jannifer had collapsed and couldn't operate, something had happened to him.

And when word had come that the surgeon on duty was to substitute — and the operation called for an incision on the patient's heart — mental numbness had immediately reduced him to an automation, with the subconscious directing his movements.

* * *

"THE CHIEF never did like you, did he, Jimmy?"

Dr. Parks came back to the present — back to the towel with which he was swabbing his hands, and the surgeons who were still asking him questions.

"Oh, we've had our run-ins," he said.

A masterpiece of understatement, that, Jimmy thought wryly. His disagreements with Dr. Jannifer had been frequent and almost violent.

They had been due, he had to admit, to his love for work and his persistent efforts for recognition; but that was because of Pat. He wanted so much to make good for her sake.

"POOR OLD Jannifer," said the older surgeon. "He was a tyrant, and I have no particular love for him. But I hate to see a man crack up like he did. Just lost his nerve and crumbled like a sack of meal. I thought he was going to break down and cry."

"All I know, " the surgeon said, "is that he was standing right here putting on his gloves and mask. Suddenly he stagered to a chair and sank down and held his head in his hands.

"We rushed to him, but he waved us away and gave orders that the surgeon on duty was to operate in his place. Said he didn't feel up to it."

"Then he went upstairs," one of the other doctors added, "and locked himself in his office, and we sent a hurry call for you. Young fellow, you did a fine job today — but you made a enemy for yourself.

"These old - time medical men have more professional pride than anybody on earth. I know, I'm one of them. The chief will hate you 'til the day he dies — because he had to call on you."

* * *

THE DOCTORS then drifted out. Jimmy thoughtfully and deliberately removed his white uniform and decided he'd ask to be relieved for the rest of the day.

For a young surgeon who had carved his name among the great in the medical world, he was far from jubilant. In addition to what he had just heard, he had a secret worry to plague him. Only now it would be more acute.

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PATRICIA JANNIFER was the chief's only child — and Jimmy wanted to marry her more than he wanted anything in the world — well, next to medicine he wanted her more than anything else.

She had recently promised to become Mrs. Jimmy Parks when, and if, her father gave his consent. But she had flatly refused to consider eloping. Now, with things as they were, there didn't seem much chance of the chief giving his consent — not for her to marry the one man he had cause to hate.

"Looks like curtains to a very lovely dream," Jimmy muttered as he put on his coat. "I would have to nick the old man in his tenderest spot."

And there was another ordeal that had to be faced immediately. Dr. Jannifer had to be told of the success of the operation, which Jimmy could easily imagine would be like turning a knife in a flesh wound.

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HE DID not relish the idea of going upstairs and breaking the news to a man who disliked him, and whose daughter he hoped to marry.

Jimmy knew he would find a broken man in that upstairs office — a man whose resignation would probably be demanded in the near future. It was a legend that when a surgeon lost his nerve, he was finished, washed up.

Yet it had to be done: Jimmy went up the stairs and along the spotless corridor with leaden steps. He didn't see the nurses and internes who looked at him as he passed with new respect, and gestured in admiration behind his retreating back.

He walked into Dr. Jannifer's outer office and asked the girl on duty about her health, about the weather — about everything but what he had come to ask. Finally he blurted out:

"Dr. Jannifer — is he — may I see him?"

The girl shook her head. "I'm sorry, Dr. Parks, Dr. Jannifer told me to tell you, if you came in, that he could not see you."

It was like a blow between the eyes, Jimmy blinked. "Can't see me? You mean, he doesn't want to see me?"

* * *

HE TURNED and walked slowly toward the door. The surgeon in the washroom had been right, he realized bitterly. The chief had never liked him — now the old man really hated him.

"Oh, Dr. Parks," the girl called after him. "I almost forgot. Dr. Jannifer said for you to come to his home tonight."

Jimmy whistled. "Old boy must mean to lay it on strong," he thought to himself. Aloud he said, "Thanks," and hurried out of the office.

* * *

AT THE DOOR he almost barged into Dr. Masters, nerve specialist, who had retired voluntarily a year ago. Jimmy turned and saw the girl admit him directly into Dr. Jannifer's private sanctum.

"Umnn, probably asked old Mac Masters to come over and cheer him up," Jimmy decided. "He knows his days are numbered."

But this fact afforded him little satisfaction. It occurred to him suddenly that his days with Pat were also numbered.

"A sweet bunch of irony for you," he snorted. "Something makes you famous on the one hand — and destroys your chance for happiness on the other. I wish somebody else had been on duty today."

He couldn't, of course, hear what was being said in Dr. Jannifer's office. Dr. Masters burst in and demanded, "What's this I hear about you losing your nerve over a little thing like a cardiac operation? Answer me, Jannifer?"

* * *

DR. JANNIFER smiled tolerantly, shifted a fat cigar to a corner of his mouth and removed his legs from a corner of his desk. The corners of his mouth crinkled, and he looked very fit for a man who had just collapsed.

"Mac," he said, "I've been envying you for a year — and I've decided to do something about it. Answer me two things; are you still taking fishing trips to White Lake,

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SMALL AMERICAN AUDIENCES ARE SENDING

Modern Jazz Into Exile

Probably the most misunderstood music being played today is "modern jazz." Though it is supported by a small devoted cult in this country, in Europe, it overshadows both Dixieland and rock and roll.

By Baker E. Morten

DIZZY GILLESPIE — Just before take off on a world tour for the U.S. State Department. 25,000 turned out to hear Diz and his band in Athens, Greece.

MODERN JAZZ QUARTET — Consistently voted Number One Jazz Combo, they played before 15,000 in London.

Ask the average American to name five top jazz men, and nine out of ten will include Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

Mention the names, Bud Powell, Thelonius Monk, John Lewis, Gigi Gyrce, or George Duvivier, and you will get only blank stares.

Yet, in Europe, and especially Scandinavia, both groups of names are equally well known.

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WHILE Americans have succumbed to the beat of rock and roll, and revived Dixieland jazz, Europe has gone all the way for modern jazz.

Practically every jazz group imported from overseas is a modern jazz group: Jutta Hipp, John Graas, the Australian Jazz Quartet, Toshiko, etc.

The youngest member of the jazz world, the "cool schools" or modern jazz idiom has all but exiled itself to Europe.

More and more, the prophets of progressive jazz are looking to Europe as a refuge to play the music they love.

In America they see a gradual, but continuing ebb in audiences. Dixieland jazz, commercial jazz and rock and roll are garnering practically all the gate receipts and glory.

The small, select, school of modern jazz advocates in the states do not seem able to support the flood of musicians turning to the craft.

When asked, "Why not go commercial and play what the people want to hear?" one frustrated jazz musician put it like this:

"SURE, I CAN PLAY Dixieland, commercial jazz, swing or rock and roll, but my heart's not in it.

"And I can only play best what I like most."

* * *

A YOUNG jazz tenorman lackadaisically mentioned Europe and smiled. "Diz knocked 'em out when he was there, didn't he?"

He had reference to the U.S. State Department sponsored tours that the Dizzy Gillespie band had made recently to Europe and Asia.

Add to this conjecture similar statements by other modern jazz artists and you come up with the not-too-surprising deduction that America is losing out to Europe in its own created art.

The Modern Jazz Quartet, a dedicated and proficient aggregation of progressive tone improvisers, has scored on European tours.

Other modern jazz artists of substance, pianist Bud Powell, Dave Brubeck and clan, Dizzy Gillespie and cohorts, have had nothing but praise for Europe's reception of American jazz artists.

While in America, many say that aside from the Ivy League area, a relatively small clientele in the Midwest and a spotty West Coast following, modern jazz has suffered a nosedive.

* * *

A TASTE for modern jazz, just like a taste for caviar, must be acquired since the music itself is not as conventional as most American music.

Since America is the foremost breeding ground for jazz messengers, the art will thrive or die here, depending upon the love it receives.

The typical popular definition of what modern jazz is it can be summed up in a few words:

"A bunch of crazy sounds put together that sound like nothing."

Charlie Parker appeared at the Beehive Lounge in Chicago several months before his death in 1955. He summed up modern jazz to this writer as:

"Music expressed through feeling, governed by no set formula, played by no set standard."

Parker concluded his verbatim on modern jazz by stating:

"The beauty to me in modern jazz is not the beat of the music, but the way the artist masters and executes his instrument.

"When every note is distinct, clear and different, no matter what the tempo, it tells the audience that the artist is thinking.

"And a good modern jazz horn man must be constantly thinking. The sounds that come from the horn amount to no more than the ideas from the player's mind."

It might be added here that modern jazz has had from its start two main sources from whence came its ideas, namely Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

Others, of course, have been instrumental in the development of the art and there are today any number of musicians dedicated to that sphere.

* * *

BOTH PARKER and Gillespie played together for the most part between 1944 and 1946 when Yardbird was a featured soloist in Gillespie's then small outfit.

They later separated, each to go his own way up the ladder of success, but not before enriching modern jazz and elevating it to a lofty pinnacle to be admired and emulated by others.

A reputation as a good modern jazz artist comes only through the cumulative efforts of years of intense study and training, the diligent application of time and talent.

Strains and influences of Parker can be found in many from Sonny Stitt to Sam Most.

And yet there are only a handful of reed men who rank high in the progressive jazz world.

Stitt, Sonny Rollins and Stan Getz figure among that number also. But even some of these artists have found the states a difficult place to peddle their brand of merchandise.

In contrast, big band jazz merchants such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Stan Kenton, have found a fairly open market as can be attested by their success.

Ellington and Basie are big band jazz by themselves. Kenton, while commendable, is farther distant from progressive jazz and closer akin to a riff-type music.

WHAT WILL happen to modern jazz lies in Father Time's future. Its status in the states indicates that Europe's taste in the jazz sphere is elevating while America turns to rock and roll.

"Every day reveals some fascinating, new facet of your personality!"

Jest For Laffs

It seems the best time to buy anything is a year ago.

* * *

Golf is a lot like taxes — you drive hard to get to the green and then wind up in the hole.

* * *

If you're troubled by the noise in your car let her drive.

* * *

A bachelor is a fellow who doesn't think the bonds of matrimony is a good investment.

* * *

FLORIDA TALES

A man told his lawyer that he had purchased some worthless real estate.

"The property is little better than a swamp," he said. "And it's not worth a tenth of the purchase price. What can I do about it?"

"There's nothing you can do," the lawyer said. "You're left holding the bog."

Sign along a Florida highway: "Keep Florida green. Bring Money."

End Of A Dream

(Continued from Page 4)

and do you still want me to go along with you?"

"I wouldn't miss going for anything — and you know I'd rather have you along than anybody else—"

Dr. Jannifer waved his hand, "Say no more. It's a deal."

Dr. Masters stared. Then his lips parted in a smile. Then he laughed.

"You old faker," he said, "I should have guessed. Easing yourself out to give a young man a chance. But look, suppose this boy Parks doesn't measure up to what you expect of him?"

"He will," Dr. Jannifer said. "I've been grooming him for months."

"He doesn't happen to be related to you, does he?"

Dr. Jannifer blew smoke in the general direction of the ceiling. "In a way, yes," he said. "He's going to be my son-in-law. He doesn't know it yet, so I'm having him out to the house tonight for a little celebration before I break the news. Better drop around, Mac — I'm opening that last bottle of champagne."

Must Be Heard

Modern jazz is essentially listening music. This may be a part of the reason for its lack of support among the masses of music lovers in this country.

Rock and roll, Dixieland, and commercial pop jazz is usually loud, brash and calculated to induce a positive response, usually in the form of toe-tapping.

On the other hand, modern jazz is smooth, subtle, and hushed. It has to be heard rather than felt.

One of the top modern groups, The Chico Hamilton Quintet, employs a cello in its arrangements. The flute has become a welcome addition to modern jazz instrumentation.