

The Sleeping Soul

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Oney Fred Sweet

I'd picked up with Hard-Faced Mike out in the North Dakota harvest field, had seen him off and on all winter while we was both loafin' around Chicago barrel-houses, and in the spring we'd shipped out together for a railroad construction job in Montana.

It was in Miles City that Hard-Faced Mike runs onto some acquaintance of his in a pool hall, and right away he wants me to beat it back to Iowa with him. He'd argued me into gettin' off at a little junction before pullin' into a certain tank town, and we was hittin' the dusty road between the Iowa cornfields when I got out of him why he was so anxious to "make" the town, and yet so all-fired sneaky about it.

"I ain't been back here for 17 years," he explains, pullin' the rim of his black hat down over his eyes as an automobile zipped past us. "But I don't feel like takin' any chances of being recognized."

"What was it?" I asks. "What's the constable in the town ahead here apt to pick you up for?"

He didn't answer for a minute—just shifted his hot black coat to his other arm and kept poundin' along in the dust with those clumsy shoes of his.

"She was a hired girl that worked in the neighborhood," he grumbles finally. "She wrote me a letter about her troubles while I was down at Chickamauga with the militia company for the Spanish-American war. I fooled her. I didn't come back with the rest of the boys that fall. After gettin' that letter I didn't intend to ever come back, but Hank Bayles tells me out there in Miles City that the old man havin' dropped off. The old man had a place here, and I'm goin' to cash in on it and go back and buy a share in Hank's pool hall."

Well, it was all out in a breath. How he'd been livin' the past 17 years was written all over him. He had the hobo way of carryin' his coat; there was the bo dent in his limp-brimmed black hat, the bo twist in his mouth when he talked, and the suspicious squint to his eyes.

"This has got to be a great country through here," I remarks, glancin' over the June-high cornfields. "I hope the old man left you quite a place. So you was one of the soldier boys, eh?"

"It was just an acre or two and the house," he mumbles, "but Hank seemed to think it would bring me plenty enough to buy an interest in with him. There's an old guy who's livin' in the neighborhood who'll be glad to close the deal with me provid' he gets his rake-off big enough and he's the kind, too, who'll keep mum about me bein' around here."

"I see," I says, "you're anxious to see this old guy who's strong for first mortgages, and you're just as anxious about not seein' this hired girl?"

"Just playin' safe," Hard-Faced Mike assures. "She really didn't have nothin' on me. Hardly anybody had ever seen us together; we'd always taken the back streets. See that court house tower and the water works' standpipe stickin' out above the maples there? That's the burg. We'll cut through these here woods. It's just as close, and I ain't stuck on passin' any more of those d—n auto mobiles."

You see, there wasn't much of a home-comin' thrill in Hard-Faced Mike's system. Henry Klage, the alderman who owned the barrel houses in Chicago where we'd hung out most of the winter, had given my partner his name, and it was a good one. Here he was within a mile of his old home town and he merely looked tired, dusty and disgusted.

You could see plain enough that the cool, green cornfields, shimmerin' in the sun, that we'd walked through had been just cornfields without the cool green and the shimmer. He wasn't hearin' the finches singin' in the sumac bushes on the roadside, and the woods we was gettin' to was awakin' no more memories than a rabbit. The expression on his dusty and sweaty and sun-peeled face as we climbed through the barbed wire fence to get into the woods showed how the callouses had layered about his heart.

It took an effort for him to crawl through the barbed wire fence, too, and he must have laughed at that same dinky barricade as a kid. It made me think of the way the sport fighters in the bout that leaves them a "has-been."

But with Hard-Faced Mike, youth had not only gone out of his body, but out of his soul, too. It's the both of 'em gone that makes for a real knockout.

He was complainin' about some underbrush that had got in his way, when he stopped short at the sudden sound of a voice. His bloodshot eyes took on more squint. He was leary about runnin' into anybody; we was gettin' pretty close to home.

There was more than one voice. There was an echo of voices—a jump-bled echo, but nothin' to see ahead of us but the big walnut and butternut trees.

When there came the sound of a

"M-hm," says Hard-Faced Mike, with a knowin' jerk of his head. "We'll have to steer shy. It's the gang in swimmin'."

"You old fool," I says, "do you expect any of that bunch ahead there know you?" I honestly believe he didn't think long enough but what at first he figured he was just about to run into his old gang!

A few rods farther and we was able to look down on the naked forms cavortin' in the water. The far-inland "erick" had widened at the spot to a distance, I should say, of about 15 feet. There was a slippery place close to the dark-green water that was being used to dive from and there was lumps of wearin' apparel scattered around the big walnut tree near the bank.

Of course the faces bobbin' around in the water was none of 'em familiar to Hard-Faced Mike, and into none of 'em came any sign of recognition or welcome. When we come and stood above 'em on the edge of the bank they cut out their barterin' just long enough to make sure we wasn't too near their clothes to steal 'em, and then kiddie, they lost interest in us.

To them we was just a couple of old men, that was all—rank outsiders.

"How does she look?" I asks.

"I can almost step across it," poohs Hard-Faced Mike.

"I guess your old gang is gone scattered by now," I says. "What was the freckle-faced kid's name then, and the one that was afraid to go in deep, and the one that always stayed in until his lips was blue? Where are they now—runnin' corporations, or doin' time, or in a place where there ain't no coolin' water like this?"

Hard-Faced Mike tilted his black felt hat on the back of his head until the sun that was goin' down struck him straight in his squinty eyes. At times I had an idea that by the way the sun hurt his eyes perhaps he was gettin' in need of a half attempt to straighten his damp hair. His hair was gettin' thin on top.

"Come on," he says.

Lookin' at that swimmin' hole wasn't makin' no more difference to him than if it was just the dusty road we'd left. He was dull, Hard-Faced Mike was. He'd got through takin' interest in things.

"Come on," he says again.

But just as we started to go, a naked form rushed past us and reached the edge of the "erick" bank, zip-ped head first into the dark green water. When I looked up at Hard-Faced Mike I saw him turned ready to go but his head was lookin' back waitin' for the kid to come up.

"It'll be d—d!" says Hard-Faced Mike. "That's the very stunt I used to do myself when Hank Klein and the McNell kids and Jim Wirt and Earnie Sopere didn't das't."

The kid that had just made the dive was no more than up out of the water than he started to duck the kid nearest him. I don't know that I can describe the kid that made the dive, except that he had "youth" written all over him in circus poster letters. There was a cowl in his whitish hair that the "erick" water hadn't plastered down the wetness just glistened on his tanned skin, and he was shakin' the drops out of his blue eyes like a regular river animal.

I was lookin' over at Hard-Faced Mike and he was starin' at where the kid had come up in the water. Some how his eyes had lost their squint; there was a dreamy look in 'em. If you've been around with a guy long you can pretty near read the thoughts, sometimes.

Do you know what Hard-Faced Mike was imaginin'? He was imaginin' that the dark-green water was creepin', lukewarm cool, about his own tanned and sunburnt self, an his toes had left his clumsy black shoes an', in fancy, they was wriglin' again in the slimy creek bottom among the crawfish and boodsuckers.

The ripples just before the spot where the erick widened, had started to sing a song again for Hard-Faced Mike, and when a snake-like came floatin' along to dip down to the troubled waters and skim on to lose itself in the cattail reeds on the opposite shore, Hard-Faced Mike had even seen the red design on the insect's yellow wings.

The overhangin' willows was castin' mysterious shadows on the smooth surface of the erick just above the swimmin' hole, and lookin' up, Hard-Faced Mike could see a hawk circlin' high in the sky, beneath the white floatin' clouds that, with their gold edges, was sailin' along like treasure-ships.

And the yellin' and the splashin'! Hard-Faced Mike was hearin' the echo come back from the shadowy pockets beneath the law-branched plum and choke-cherry trees.

I saw Hard-Faced Mike crop down on the bank, an' for the first time he was noticin' the June-high blue grass in which he'd been layin'. He was catchin' the smell of the June-warmed earth, and he was hearin' the insects—the insects that was keepin' up a snare-drum effect to the alto of the creek ripples and the tenor of the echo back in the

shadows. Over on the dusty road a lumber-wagon goes rumblin' along, an' I could see Hard-Faced Mike recollect the rumble—a farmer drivin' homo from town.

Seventeen years had suddenly dropped off of Hard-Faced Mike; a seventeen-year growth of scales and for the minute cleared away from his eyes, and his heart was poundin' hard against the seventeen-year-thick callous about it.

The cynical squint was all gone as he followed the antics of the young savages in the dinky erick, and listened to the new kind of lingo they babbled when they came out on the bank to dress.

"Can you pick 'em all out?" I asks, "the old gang?"

He didn't answer. He was watchin' the kid with cow-lick in his whitish hair, that had made the dive from the bank.

You could see the kid's muscled ripple beneath his shoulders that was particularly sunburnt on top when he used his arms to brush his hair back smooth, like the gent's in the collar advertisements. His clothes wasn't much when he came to put 'em on. To them we was just a couple of old men, that was all—rank outsiders.

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carrying in coal and carryin' out ashes for, and the organ against the wall with a crayon portrait above it some agent had sold. On the whatnot was stereopticon views of the Chicago world's fair, an' a glass globe full of sand that some relation on a visit from back east had brought as a relic from Niagara Falls.

There was a lounge that sagged where the springs was broken, an' a crocheted tidy was coverin' a place where the upholstery had been worn through.

"Some fancy place in its day," I comments. "Do we go in and 'jungle' here for the night?"

"I'm takin' no chances," answers Hard-Faced Mike. "I want to drop down and see old man Harlow about settlin' the thing up for me, and be gone. He lives in that unpainted shack under the poplar trees at the bottom of the hill. The tallest poplar's the one I shot the crow out of with a catapult. It's just the kind of a deal that'll appeal to old man Harlow. He'll still be livin' alone, and let him see a little extra in it and he'll be willin' to keep as mum as a clam about my bein' here."

There was a half a block of vacant lots that was bein' used for a pasture on the side of the hill that we walked along by on the way down to old man Harlow's. I reckon Hard-Faced Mike had walked down that old plank sidewalk a thousand and one times—hurrying out after supper to join the gang; pickin' his way along, barefoot, on some errand to the five blocks beyond Main street; saunterin' along it of an evenin' when he had become big and sassy enough to be a loafer in front of the restaurant; takin' it that morning on the way to the depot in his blue first-sergent uniform.

We got to the row of poplars an' walked through the vegetable garden, to knock at old man Harlow's door. While we was waitin' for him to come to the door—and we had to wait a long time—I see that the swimmin' hole gang had come out on the vacant block for an evenin' of "work-up," a feller bein' allowed to stay at bat till he was caught out and then the next feller gettin' a whack at the ball.

When the kitchen door finally opened it wasn't no old man who opened it—it was a woman with whitish hair and pale-blue eyes.

All in a glance I could see she had come over from north Europe in the steerage as a young girl, and had laid straight for her acquaintances in the middle west, where she'd pitched in right away washin' other folk's dishes. She was a robust-lookin' person, but the pink goes out of her cheeks when she sees who's at the door.

Hard-Faced Mike stammers around for a while and then he explains that he wants to see Mr. Harlow.

The woman looks down at the freshly scrubbed floor. The room back of her was dark. There was a clock tickin' on the mantel.

When she answers I see that she's got a trace of accent. "Mr. Harlow ain't here no more," she says. "He's over here in the cemetery."

"Oh, if he ain't here no more," says Hard-Faced Mike, "why, we won't bother."

But he didn't hurry away from the door. An old couple was comin' along the board sidewalk on their way down town, and Hard-Faced Mike steps into the kitchen just in time before they see him. I follows on in. There was a wash tub by the window, some cookin' and flat-irons on the stove, and the dishes was set out on a red table cloth.

She offers us each one of the kitchen chairs that had the bird's egg blue-paint on 'em practically scoured off.

It was up to Hard-Faced Mike to say something. "How is everything?" he asks weakly.

The woman goes over to the stove and tests the heat of a flat-iron with a quick slap of her forefinger. I guess there was a washin' had to be delivered that night.

"The Norton's have got clear on by now," she says pretty soon. "You can get out without bein' seen."

Hard-Faced Mike does go and open the kitchen door again, an' his openin' the door lets in a full whiff of that game of work-up out on the pasture lots. It was the kind of a game that darkness couldn't interfere with until it got so pesky dark you couldn't see the ball.

Ever hear the echo of kids playin' like that on the edge of a small town on a summer evenin'? It's a peculiar kind of an echo that only youth can make. Just a "once over" at Hard-Faced Mike, and I knows how many times his kid voice had been a part of that same kind of an echo on the same pasture lots.

Maybe part of it was his voice echoin' back down seventeen years. I knew that suddenly for Hard-Faced Mike and the poplar trees that stood in a row outside the unpainted shack had begun to tower higher, and he was seein' the silver sides of the leaves as they fluttered in the dyin' evenin' breeze. That faint breeze was comin' from "somewhere out West," and Hard-Faced Mike was seein' that "out West" not as he'd recall seen it, but as he'd imagined it 17 years before. "Way out beyond the pasture a lighted train was jinglin', faint-like, on its start toward far-off big cities.

Dark as it was gettin' we could make out most of the swimmin' hole gang in the lot. We could tell it was the whitish-haired kid who had made

the dive from the erick bank that was up at bat, and it was while we was watchin' him that he gives the ball a whack clear over the white picket fence across the street.

I see Hard-Faced Mike bendin' over with his arms rigid, as if he himself was doin' the runnin'. I couldn't have told you what the kids was yellin'. It was in their own lingo, and we only got the evenin' air echo of it.

The next thing we knew, instead of the kid runnin' on around the bases he figures the game over an' comes laughin' and all out of breath plump into the doorway in front of us.

Hard-Faced Mike steps aside for him just in time.

About this time the woman lights the lamp, and we finds the kid, white-and-red cheeked, blinkin' at us out of his pale-blue eyes.

Through the open doorways comes the mellow notes of some kind of a night-bird, high in the quivering leaves of the poplars, an' there drifts in the smell of lilacs that was about all in for the summer. The yellin' and laughin' out on the hill comes echoed back from way, way off on the dark prairie.

The boy blinks at me and then at the woman and then at Hard-Faced Mike.

Sizin' up Hard-Faced Mike, I could see plain enough that he'd never dodged cinders with me on the blind baggage again, nor keep me company on freight-train "rods." You could see he'd found "home" and was goin' to stick.

The woman had been quick to read him, too.

It was she who finally started the explainin'.

"It was a mistake what I'd always told you," she says to the kid. "Your pa wasn't dead; he—"

"No," I finishes, seein' she was tumblin', "it was just that his soul had gone to sleep."

You May Write Your Personal Letters With a Typewriter

By Margaret Roche

Nowadays, when the modern maid takes her pen in hand, it's usually a typewriter. She has found she can gush and go and protest and promise quite as effectively, twice as legibly and three times as convincingly by machine. Besides, it does save such a lot of valuable time for her shopping, matineeing, bridging and Red Crossing. Not nearly so many serious lovers' quarrels and complications arise therefrom, either. In the old days, when Perry or Clarence misread all sorts of wild things from the undecipherable pothooks of her chirography, it was frightfully upsetting. Many a crossed love was caused by an uncrossed T, and an undotted I occasioned many a moist one.

Lovers really owe an awful lot to the typewriter. Oftentimes as like as not, they even owe for it. It is not only a complete love letter writer, however, that the typewriter is now the thing. For all sorts of personal correspondence the 1920 maid, wife or widow has pressed, or rather pounded, it into service. She uses the smartest stationery in severe gray, cream or white, expensive of texture and large of size, with great square envelopes to match. A legible monogram or initial is embossed in a color which the typewriter ribbon must shade up to. Oh, it is all very chic and efficient, and the best of all easily read, the newest typewritten first-class female mail.

Don't for a minute think, though, that we are to be free forever more from the fine flowing Spencerian or heavy black back-hand script adorned epistles of yore. They still clutter up the 1920 mail bags with all the assorted accompanying paraphernalia of perfumed sealing wax, weird monograms, violent tints and exciting shapes.

True to type, if the 1920 female can't be true to the typewriter she reverts to the other extreme and goes in for quill pen and sealing wax accessories of the Victorian era complete letter writer. There are no half way measure for her.

Have you a little "encrier" in your home? If you are just back from

Paris it's a sure bet you have. Of course all we post graduates of "How to Parlez vous in Five Lessons" know that an "encrier" is simply French for inkstand. But there's nothing simple about the revived vogue of Parisian encriers that all of us are bringing home. No, indeed, they are as complete and complicated with all the comforts of home as a latest model limousine, with hot and cold running ink, one candle power light, and a place for everything and everything, in its place for fascinating correspondence.

The encriers are of china with gilt metal finishings, and the most attractive are copies of not actually antiques. Fitted according to size with one or two inkwells, they are equipped besides with a stick of sealing wax, a small candle and a flaunting quill pen all in a matching tint, a seal whose handle is of the same china as the encriers, a pencil and a depression full of gold dust for drying the quill after use.

The whole effect is so antiquesque and charmingly convenient that it tempts to a mad attack of writer's cramp, especially as most litching stationery in enchanting colors, smartly monogrammed as the seal is engraved, is an accompanying adjunct to the encrier.

It certainly is a far cry from the typewritten form to the encrier form of correspondence, but you may rest assured if you just choose one or the other you are sure to write right.

The Humiliation of Getting Pinched

Being arrested—it matters not how trivial the offense may be—is an experience that no one relishes. The mere thought is repugnant. Yet in a big city like New York many persons are arrested nightly for a great variety of offenses of high and low degree.

The professional criminal usually displays little emotion on being arrested, even when the crime is of a serious nature. A burglar who has spent half the years of his life in the penitentiary explained this philosophical attitude by saying that when a man embarks on a life of crime he assumes the risks that go with it, and when he falls into the toils of the police it is all a part of the game. It was far from pleasant, he realized, to be sent "up the river" for a term of years, but if a fellow took such an experience too much to heart he would be better if he gave up the life altogether. He, for his part, had been arrested so often that he was used to it, and on being arrested his chief concern was whether he could "beat the case" or not, or get off with a light sentence, which presented a difficulty in these days when there was a disposition on the part of judges to hold a man's past record against him and give him the limit.

Some such criminals as this man nevertheless often weaken considerably under a severe police grueling, and lose much of their ease and poise. Some, after being arrested, though outwardly calm, betray extreme nervousness in other ways, such as smoking one cigar or cigarette after another. Others, on the contrary, crack jokes, converse or fall easily asleep. Among this class are those who, on finding themselves "in Dutch," never lose their appetites. If they have not eaten for some time they are insistent that food be brought to them.

Persons arrested for the first time are naturally somewhat upset. Some do not realize the seriousness of their predicament, and others are prone to exaggerate it. No two persons, on being arrested for the same offense, it

would seem, take the experience in the same manner. Some are crushed and wounded, and others take it as a matter of levity. They are all alike in one respect. On being arrested their first thought is to regain their liberty as quickly as possible, and they want to know if the offense is bailable, and obtain a bondsman.

A few years ago a good many college boys from one of the city's universities were arrested when they demolished windows, furniture, crockery and glassware in a Broadway restaurant in an attempt to break up a freshman dinner. They had, as they called it, a good natured battle with the cops, and they were taken prisoners to the station house cheered on by their comrades. At the station house they displayed considerable levity. When they were arraigned later in the Night Court, and when what they regarded as heavy fines were imposed on them by the Magistrate, they admitted that the joke was on them after all, and that being arrested was not all that it was cracked up to be.

The next indignity of being arrested is the police search the prisoner, which takes place before a desk Lieutenant after the prisoner has had his pedigree taken and his name entered in the station house blotter. Like the arrest, prisoners take this experience differently. Their pockets are stripped clean of everything, and their money, valuables and belongings are placed in a sealed envelope which is returned to them when their cases have been acted upon and disposed of.

The first thing that the policeman who institutes the search looks for is a weapon—a penknife or sharp instrument—which with a prisoner might do himself harm. Policemen are supposed to "frisk" their prisoner for concealed weapons the first thing on placing them under arrest. This is always done by a careful policeman. There are, however, careless policemen who do not always take this precaution. Such policemen have been shot, stabbed and mortally wounded by prisoners who, on being escorted to a station house, have unexpectedly drawn a hidden weapon and attacked them before they fully realized what was happening. Occasionally, when prisoners are searched at stations, daggers or loaded automatic pistols are brought to light.

Old offenders take the search much as they do the arrest. They hold their hands above their heads, and at times assist the officer to go through their clothes, and these old offenders, having had painful experiences in the past, seldom carry an incriminating evidence on their persons, so that little which may be used against them is revealed by the search. The police, however, now and then get the better of them. On such occasions the criminal is caught off his guard and sometimes incriminating evidence is found on his person.

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