

## ARE YOU CRAZY, OR SOMETHING

That is what everyone says when I start to explain the patterns on the ceiling. My room-mate tells me they are only cracks, but he just uses that as an excuse for his lack of imagination. He admits, though, that if he closes his right eye and peeks through his fingers with his left, he can, after a little concentration, make out the features of the Old Man. But he can't for the life of him see where the ears are, though I try to tell him that ears aren't so very important, especially in a case such as this. That was when I had given up my room-mate as hopeless, and started to figure out the patterns for myself.

Just where the wall joins the ceiling above the closet door there is a break in the plaster which extends in a long arc to the light outlet in the middle of the ceiling. This line forms the back and the back legs of the chair. Another line joins this at right angles to form the seat. The Old Man, of course, is my favorite. His long nose is straight and blunt. His one eye appeared one day when a dirty baseball was thrown at the ceiling. His chin is pointed so sharply that I think he must wear a vandyke. That is why I call him Old Man, because only old men wear vandykes.

I find that the best time for looking at these patterns is in the morning just when the sun begins to lighten the shadows in the far corner of the room. It was on a morning such as this that I first noticed the bell. It was mounted on a rather crooked stand that was tilted over to one side. I suspected it was a bell buoy dancing on the waves, even though there weren't any waves.

One October night the wind veered around to the sou'west and a storm came swirling in off the coast. The building danced on its foundation with glee. In the morning there were more additions to my wierd collection on the ceiling. Many times I tried to figure out this new pattern when all at once it struck me — it could be none other than a sail boat. It had no sail or any rudder that I could see, but the mast and bowsprit were there so it must have been a sail boat. The picture was somewhat broken, however, by having the bowsprit extend to the chair. If it had gone a little further, I might have obtained a bottom rung for the chair, but this pleasure was deprived me until another windy night. I often tried to imagine sliding the chair along the bowsprit into the boat, but every time I tried it seemed as if it would topple off.

Last night I went to bed early, but try as I might I



just couldn't get to sleep. Finally I resorted to my old pastime and made one last determined effort to fit the puzzle together. But solemnly the Old Man would wink down as if mocking me for trying such a thing. My eyes were getting heavy and unconsciously I winked back at him. His sharp face broadened into a smile, and from behind him, he drew out his missing arm — the one I had always been searching for — and beckoning for me to follow, he placidly sat on the chair. I was expecting it to tip over, but instead it slid silently into the boat.

Darkness closed around me and I found myself sitting beside the Old Man. I looked down and saw water all about me. The wind tossed the boat back and forth on the waves but the Old Man merely smiled and started groping in the bottom of the boat as if looking for something. He must be looking for the sail, I thought.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"What, the sail?" I exclaimed.

"No, the barrel," he returned crossly. "Don't you know where it is?"

I hadn't seen the barrel. Perhaps I was slipping in my duties and had failed to notice it on the ceiling.

"I don't know where it could be," I replied.

"If you don't," he replied, "who does?"

Then he added: "You'll have to look for it in the morning."

Wanting to know what the barrel was for, I began to question him further, but he silenced me with a lone growl.

Far off in the distance a bell was ringing. I thought this would be the bell I had seen on the ceiling so often. Suddenly the Old Man looked up "It's the bell buoy," he shouted. "We'll go aground."

I didn't answer.

"What's wrong," he seemed to scream in my ear. "Didn't you hear the bell?"

"Yes, I think so," I replied meekly.

"Well why don't you get up — are you sick?" I thought this rather a foolish question so I said nothing.

"Get up! Get up!"

I was fully awake by this time. I sat half upright in the bed. There standing in the doorway, was the prefect.



"Get up when you hear the bell after this," he said and slammed the door.

I started to turn over and go to sleep again, but glancing upward I caught sight of the Old Man, his face as solemn as ever. Then slowly he closed his one eye and nodded his head as if wanting me to do the same. But I had enough of that for one night. My dreams could wait, but breakfast couldn't.

To-morrow night should solve the mystery of the barrel, but when I hear the bell buoy ringing again, I'm going to jump out of the boat and swim ashore as fast as I can.

—JOHN S. MACDONALD '49

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## PAPER BOY DAYS

About ten years ago I used to spend my Saturdays delivering a weekly paper. I would start about nine o'clock in the morning and would not be finished until four. I usually spent about an hour uptown, around the stores and offices, and the rest of the time around the railroad yards, the ships and the wharves. Of course an hour would have been sufficient for me to deliver all my papers, but I spent the remainder of the time watching the men working on the ships, on the docks and sheds, in the railway yards and shops. Even though I invariably received a tanning when I got home for wasting time, I always considered it was worth it. Now that it is all behind me, I am glad I did it.

I remember how I used to think I was an authority on any question, that I was the smartest kid on the block, and knew more than any of the others. I knew all about the repairing and building of boats, steam engines and locomotives, about cattle-loading, dredging, ore-smelting, sail-making, turnip-waxing, unloading railway cars, and all sorts of things—yes sir, I guess I knew more than any other kid on the block.

I remember the kind men who, to me, were the most wonderful people in the world. They were always glad to see me, and always bought a paper—even though they really didn't want one. They would sit me down and ask me what I was going to be, and tell me to work hard and study so that when I grew up I would not have to slave as they did. Then they would tell me about the kids they had, and always they seemed to have one just my age, and just like me. I remember the wicked lies they told about when they went to school, the things they did to their teachers and