



THE TREE

By J. M. Collins

SHE was very young when they brought her here. Sometimes she thought she remembered it all. How they had uprooted her from her old home. Her quivering terror when strong hands grasped her slender body and how she had lain trembling with so many others as the truck roared into the suburbs. How alone she had been when, their work done, they had gone away leaving her tied to a square wooden stake. True, the copper beech had been there too, but it stood thirty feet away from her. In the plantation she had been able almost to touch her sisters and as darkness fell she missed the soft murmur of their voices and the sense of companionship she had always known. She drooped a little and clung to the stake, which, though lifeless, was of wood and something she knew in this new world where there was so much that was strange to her.

The night came creeping up the

avenue, sending its advance guard of writhing shadows before it and increasing her loneliness by hiding even the beech tree from her. Suddenly she found herself bathed in a warm light. The moment for which the nearby street lamp had waited all day had arrived. Its radiance was a soft yellow cloak which fell about her slender form, shielding her from the slinking shadows as they passed.

In the autumn of her nineteenth year the tree was beautiful. On a night early in October she swayed softly in the light of the street lamp, a thing all color, yellow and gold and brown with a hint of still-fresh, cool greenness in her depths. A young man wearing a white scarf came slowly and a little unsteadily up the avenue and paused to gaze at her. He came closer and rested his warm hands on her cool bark. With face uplifted in the lamplight he stared up through her branches.

"Poems," he said, "poems are

made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree."

The tree trembled and stretched her arms to embrace the rising wind, and then shuddered at the coldness of its touch. The first sad falling of her leaves began. For three days the wind and the rain beat her; and then there came a time when she thought spring had returned. A clear blue sky and a soft warmth in the air almost tricked her into putting out fresh buds, but something within herself wanted only to rest in this lull. She had lost many of her leaves and even now some of them were dropping tiredly from her still branches. So, sometimes in great numbers and sometimes one by one they left her, all during the remainder of October and into the winter months, until she stood gaunt and dark against a December sky.

Then came January. With its shrieking, sleet-laden gales, and its wild, clamoring shouts, it drove away all memories of summer and hopes of spring alike. She writhed in the cruel nights, twisting her agonizing arms in anguished searching for something that seemed to have become forever lost to her — some warm, half-forgotten touch of the sun's caressing fingers. She wept, great rivulets of water streaming down her wind-scarred bark.

THE WIND grew tired of its useless battering of the world. A robin flew into the avenue one day crying, "Spring is back, spring is back!"

The tree stirred, feeling the very earth grow warm about her roots and the sap flow through her veins. She began to put out her buds. When she had dressed herself in green again she forgot the winter winds and only swayed her leafy arms for the very joy of their shimmering splendor.

Spring became summer and a choir of birds hid in her green coolness. Through the long days the tree opened her arms to the sun as if she would take him to the very heart of her. At night she seemed to draw her green cloak, silvered by moonlight, a little closer about her, and her gestures before the pale cold queen of the night sky were modest and subdued.

Came July and with it a night of terror such as the tree had never known. Great clouds which had been rolling into the sky all during the weary heaviness of the evening suddenly burst with a voice of thunder and spilled a gleaming cascade of water on a trembling world. The wind whipped the branches of the tree in a maddened frenzy. Her very roots heaved in the earth as if they would tear their way to freedom, but the soil that had nurtured them held them prisoner until the end, which came with a searing flash of fire that showed for one instant, in a light brighter than they had ever known, the beauty of those shimmering green-clad arms as they swayed in a last wild dance of death.

BERLIN'S *Spy Market*

By KURT SINGER

THERE'S a chilly wind blowing along the *Kurfurstendamm*, in West Berlin. The awnings and pavement tables of the cafés have disappeared. Germans are taking their coffee and beer behind the garish metal fronts, and habitués are already reserving their places near the stove.

But you can still see the solitary men wandering furtively along the street, and then selecting tables near a café door so that they can watch the passers-by.

They are Berlin's sellers of secrets — self-appointed espionage agents to half a dozen countries. For seven years they have lived on their wits. In 1945-47 they were hawking drugs, cameras, cigarettes on Berlin's fantastic black market. Smuggling is still a profitable profession, but spying goes very easily with it. These men trade in a little fact mixed with a vast amount of fiction.

They are completely cynical about politics. They hold no brief for Communism or Western democracy, but exploit both. Theirs is a dangerous trade in a city where you can go through the Iron Curtain simply by crossing the street.

If the Soviet intelligence agents consider that any Berlin secrets-seller is too friendly with Western Germans, he will be tempted or tricked across the city control boundary. Usually he will not be heard of again.

These espionage traders, who work quite as willingly for the East as for the West, were some of the people referred to by General Chui-kov, Russian Commander-in-Chief in Germany, when at the beginning of October he demanded that "spy and sabotage centers in West Berlin" should be closed down.

The Allied authorities are tolerant about the activities on the *Kurfurstendamm*, because long experience in espionage has proved that it is wisest to let agents have sufficient rope to hang themselves before they do any harm.

Checks have shown that the information that they peddle is usually worthless, and no properly conducted trial could possibly find them guilty of having official secrets.

An operative of the American Central Intelligence Agency, the master U.S. organization controlling all espionage and counter-espionage