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## DOUBLE CROSTICS

### BOOK: No. 31

BY DORIS NASH WORTMAN

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of Max Shulman, a dash of W. H. Auden, a soupçon of John Held, Jr. It's not easy.

Gillis aims to be a poet. We meet him first as he and a corrupt pal, Marty Feldman, try to peddle one of the poems to Monica Satterfield, nubile wanton who edits the college lit magazine. Following this promising encounter, the two young men pick up Jane, a hungry young streetwalker, and her baby. During the course of the weekend, the oddly assorted four (and baby) spend varying amounts of time in the apartment which Gillis shares with his absentee older sister. A fattish younger brother joins them as casual bystander, as does Mrs. Simsich, the agitated landlady. And quietly lecherous Professor Kempthorne serves as host at a climactic (and wildly funny) party in which Jane asserts herself by heaving a chunk of cement in the general direction of the piano player, who happens to be Mrs. Kempthorne. But all of these people and all of this action are simply background to the poetic words, thoughts, and childhood memories of Gillis. He tastes life on this particular weekend, and—for richer or poorer—the reader tastes it with him.

One wishes that the book could measure up to its spasmodic flashes of insight and sardonic humor. This: "So you wake up sometimes and find out

for the first white-hot second that you are you, and for the rest of your life you're going to have to put up with it. It's like waking up, finding you're in the dark, because the parents have slipped in and turned out the lights. How is it, there in the dark, a little man alive? It's a buzz. You never sleep easy again." Or this: "Art is, I realize, not enough. Just as, damn it, sex is not enough. If I don't soon hook onto a way of subliming the two together, I expect I am going to be a burned out son-of-a-bitching cynic, tired of life and with a frozen bloodstream, by the time I am twenty-six. The only opening I'll have left will be turning into a religious. Maybe I'll have to sell out as a latter-day Thomas Merton, though I really hope not."

"Why I Am So Beat" has its faults, but dulness is not among them. Even parents who start this racy memoir will stay dazedly to the end.

## Fiction Notes

**METAPHYSICS, ELEMENTARY BUT AMUSING:** When an extraordinary young lady in a diaphanous chemise, "low necked with bishop sleeves and a skirt pleated on Greek classical lines," lugs a valuable harp into an East End London pawnshop, an ordinary tale



## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

### FISCAL FANCIES

Here are twenty titles each of which makes some reference to money (though the author may not, in every instance, have intended it so). Alongside are the names of twenty authors. Kindly relate the correct authors to the correct titles. If you are successful in fifteen tries, consider yourself solvent; sixteen to eighteen, comfortably off; nineteen or twenty, sitting real pretty. The payoff is on page 41.

1. The Big Money
2. Dollars Only
3. Fifty Grand
4. Finch's Fortune
5. The Financier
6. Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford
7. Hard Cash
8. Love Without Money
9. Money Mad
10. One Kopeck
11. Paying Guests
12. The Price of Love
13. 7½ Cents
14. Seven Iron Men
15. Sing for a Penny
16. The Twelve-Pound Look
17. Soldier's Pay
18. Ten Thousand a Year
19. The Treasurer's Report
20. Wampum and Old Gold

- ( ) Hervey Allen
- ( ) J. M. Barrie
- ( ) Samuel Warren
- ( ) Rex Beach
- ( ) George Randolph Chester
- ( ) Edward Bok
- ( ) Ernest Hemingway
- ( ) Charles Reade
- ( ) Arnold Bennett
- ( ) Paul de Kruif
- ( ) Walter Duranty
- ( ) William Faulkner
- ( ) Theodore Dreiser
- ( ) Mazo de la Roche
- ( ) Floyd Dell
- ( ) John Dos Passos
- ( ) Clifford Dowdey
- ( ) Richard P. Bissell
- ( ) E. F. Benson
- ( ) Robert Benchley

of whimsey is clearly unavoidable. But perhaps *"The Angel Who Pawned Her Harp,"* by Charles Terrot (Dutton, \$3), is a bit more enjoyable than most expeditions into that difficult and elusive borderland of the imagination. Its hero is a sympathetic, strangely inarticulate young man named Len Burrows (when elated, he says "Crumbs, it'd be smashing," when depressed, simply "Crumbs!"), who wants to marry Jenny Lane, and change his job in Mr. Webman's pawnshop for Submarine Service in the British Navy. The only obstacle to these wishes is his attachment to his desperately possessive, widowed mother, who has, incidentally, always spoken badly to him of his father, the late Mr. Burrows.

The Angel, speaking the sub-celestial language of a textbook on Psychology for Beginners ("If everybody studied their dreams . . . this world would be a different place," and "If more marriages took into consideration people's faults, there wouldn't be so much divorce") goes into action against Mrs. Burrows. Through her mystic efforts, Len is put in touch with an old soldier who tells him the story of his father's bravery in World War I. The Angel also contrives to have Len overcome a pair of holdup men who are about to "knock over" the pawnshop. The hero-status he achieves thereby is enough to speed him into the embraces of both Jenny Lane and the Royal Navy. Although the metaphysics of all this are downright elementary, the characters (excepting the heavenly visitor) are always amusing, and the dialogue they speak is delightfully apt.

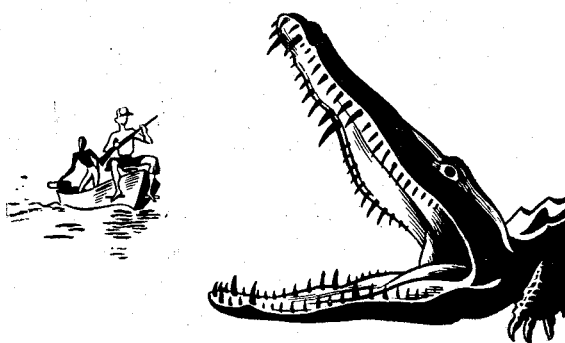
—NICOLAS MONJO.

**CLASSROOM CRUCIBLE:** Nathaniel Burt, forty-year-old son of Katharine and Struthers Burt, shows himself the assured master of a lucid, elegant style in his first novel, *"Scotland's Burning"* (Little, Brown, \$3.50). His musical talent (he has received degrees in music from Princeton and NYU) perhaps contributes to his lyricism. Describing a mill pond: "I can remember how Alan and I would come there in June, after a hot walk, having gorged upon wild strawberries. First we would dip our wrists in the classical water and then wet our hot foreheads, our napes with it. And then, and then, delicate reward, we would drink, lowering ourselves to the dark edge, sucking with our whole faces in the element." In an analogous spirit of reverence and intensity, Mr. Burt has lowered himself to the "dark edge" of adolescence, and has drunk in classic memories of life at boarding school. For *"Scotland's*

*Burning"* takes place almost exclusively on the campus of a shabby-genteel institution in Maryland, during the Twenties. Unfortunately, Dickens, Thackeray, Forster, and Orwell have been to school before him, and have bequeathed their reminiscences with such rancor and exactitude that Mr. Burt's codicil only negligibly alters our portion of classroom experiences. Unfortunately, too, the morality of this "morality set in a boy's school" (the author's phrase) is more than questionable. In order to make certain allegiances quite explicit for his hero, Mr. Burt supplies him, by way of illustration, with the

death of a classmate. The hero's comfortable acceptance of the scapegoat (he believes the sacrifice was an oracular warning sounded for his benefit) seems insufferably self-centered when it is remembered that not even the most homicidal tragedians have suggested that the moral redemption of the surviving *dramatis personae* was worth the blood shed by their villains. It has always been difficult to sympathize with heroes who use disasters which befall other characters—sometimes better ones—for the rungs on which they mount toward some sort of mild self-understanding and maturity.

—N. M.



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