



The professor stared dazedly at a large, extremely dirty foot

CORPSES IS CORPSES

By RICHARD BRISTER

A college prank becomes a matter of grim reality when Professor Harry Dinwoodie suddenly digs up a dead body!

PROFESSOR Dinwoodie found the body just a few minutes before Martha called him to dinner. He was spading things up a bit behind the garage, in preparation for an early planting of string beans and limas, when he felt the spade catch onto something heavier than plain black earth.

He eased the prongs of the spade under the buried object, and then used the tool as a crowbar, prying down on the handle until the hidden obstruction rose, Phoenix-like, from the enveloping dirt.

"Well, bless my birthmark!"

The professor stared down dazedly at a bare human foot. It was a large foot, extremely dirty, and the professor retreated from it in shocked repugnance. He leaned his frail weight on his spade and stood trembling like a plate of jello in an express train diner.

"B-bless my—*birthmark!* How in the name of—"

"Harry—Oo-hoo, Harry-y-y!" Martha's voice carried plainly from the kitchen step. "Dinner's ready."

"C-coming," the professor croaked weakly. "Coming, dear."

He thanked his blessed stars that the garage lay between the garden plot and the house. If poor, excitable Martha had ever laid eyes on that shocking thing—The professor sent a quick furtive glance at his neighbors' houses, then rapidly spaded fresh earth onto that accusing pale foot.

He propped the spade against the garage, and walked dazedly in to his dinner, wondering how in the name of sin a corpse had come to be buried in his garden plot. He was still shaking like a stage-struck schoolgirl, and there was a tight, lost feeling in the pit of his stomach.

He shook his head angrily and tried to get a grip on himself. Never do to let Martha see what a state he was in. Until he'd thought this weird business through, he must get a grip on himself.

"Why, good heavens, Harry!" Martha was staring at him through the screened kitchen window. The professor hadn't realized it. "What's wrong? You're pale as a daisy."

"I'm all right, Martha."

A corpse. How the deuce had the fool thing got there? And what in Hades was he to do with it?

Some of the first brutal shock of this thing had sifted away now, and he found he could think much more clearly. As head of the Physics Department here at State, he was used to being treated with a good deal of respect by most folks. He supposed his mind was a cut or two above average. But he was a babe in the wood when it came to tackling this sort of problem.

A corpse. In his garden!

"Harry! What is it?" Martha was wiping plump red hands on her checkered apron, her pleasant round face pinching with concern. "You're sick. Now, don't you deny it!"

"I'm all right. Don't imagine things, Martha. I—I've just been thinking out a problem for the mid-term quiz I'm giving my classes tomorrow. You know how it affects me, sometimes, when I concentrate too hard on a certain problem—Come now, let's see what sort of delectables you've concocted for dinner."

HE ATE what was placed before him in silence, and having laid down a smokescreen to hide his real burden from Martha, he returned to his personal problem in earnest.

The proper thing to do, in the circumstances, was to march straight to the phone and call the police. But he couldn't do that. Martha was as

high-strung as a whole yardful of hens. Her heart was far from strong. If the police came rampaging into her house with their clumping big feet and started to grill her and the professor himself, as they surely would, in view of what the professor's spade had unearthed out there in the garden, poor Martha would go to pieces completely.

On the other hand, it was his duty, the professor supposed, to advise the police somehow about what had happened. Corpses usually mean murder, and to conceal that body any longer than necessary would be helping the killer, whoever he might be.

The professor hit on a plan of action while Martha was clattering about in the kitchen, washing the dinner dishes.

"Going to spade a bit more of the garden," he told her, and sauntered out toward the garage.

It was quite dark already, and luckily the garden was surrounded by tall hedges, so he could work in comparative safety. He found an old pair of work gloves, and gingerly scraped dirt away from the buried corpse. The thing to do was to transport the awesome thing somewhere. Let the police find it, identify it, but not connect it with him. That way, they could start tracking down the murderer, without scaring the daylights out of poor Martha.

He finally unearthed that foot, which was all he had seen of the corpse so far. He got a good grasp of it with both gloved hands, and tugged mightily on it.

The professor was a small man who seldom exercised. The corpse was heavy, and the surrounding earth clung to it. It didn't budge, no matter how the professor puffed and strained at it.

"Could I—uh—give you a hand there, Professor?"

The professor jumped back and away from the voice as if the speaker had snapped a whip in front of his face. In the filmy glow of dusk, he could make out a tall, clean-cut young fellow, dressed in the unmatched trousers and coat combinations that most State students affected.

"Where'd you come from, young fellow?"

Hurriedly, the professor started to heap earth atop the bare leg on which he'd been busily tugging.

"Don't bother to try to conceal that thing from me, Professor." The student had a pleasant, even voice, but he seemed to be feeling sad about something. "I know what you've got there."

"D-do you?"

“Yes. A corpse.” The young man’s voice was strangely matter-of-fact, considering his subject.

“Now, look, young man,” the professor said quickly. “I know this looks rather—uh—compromising, from your standpoint. But—” He groaned, and wiped the back of a sweating hand across a hot forehead. “What’s your name, son?”

“Jack, sir. Jack Davis.”

“Well, then, Jack. As I say, this looks bad, but it’s easily explained,” the professor went on pleadingly.

“Oh, I know all about it, sir,” Jack Davis announced, somewhat shamefacedly. He waved a long arm toward the thing at the professor’s feet. “That’s Harvey Stoneman, sir. I—uh—I helped put him there.”

The professor gasped.

“Stoneman! Good grief! Why, you young rascal, do you mean to stand there blandly and admit you’ve murdered one of the most brilliant men on the faculty?”

“Oh, it’s not really Professor Stoneman, sir,” Jack Davis cut in hurriedly, in that same guilty voice. “We just tacked that name on this sti—on this body, up at the dissection lab. That’s where we study anatomy.”

The professor’s quick mind began to unravel the mystery now.

“You’re a medical student, Davis. This was one of the corpses you were working on up in the laboratory. I’m beginning to see, now. And you called this one Harvey Stoneman, hey? I’d heard you fellows have that cute trick of naming the specimen bodies you work on up there. Naming them for faculty members of whom you’re not particularly fond.”

“That’s right, sir,” Jack Davis mumbled.

The professor asked an irrelevant question. “What’d you have against Stoneman?”

“He marks too hard. Doesn’t give his students a break. Everybody can’t be as brilliant as he is. But he seems to think so.”

The professor smiled thinly. He had heard that about Stoneman. Of course, he didn’t hand up passing grades on a silver platter himself, but he wasn’t quite as rough on the students as Stoneman was.

He began to feel more in control of this situation. He took Jack Davis firmly by the elbow.

“Come into the garage, young man,” he said crisply. “I think you’ve got some things to

explain.”

“Y-yes, sir.” Jack Davis’ voice sounded pretty miserable, and for good reason.

It didn’t take the professor long to pump the whole story out of him.

IT APPEARED that some weeks before, the driver of the truck which hauled in the corpses for State’s huge medical lab had trundled up to the doors with an extra body. He had made deliveries at several other small schools already that day, and the instructor in charge at one of the medical plants had refused to accept delivery of the three corpses he had ordered. He had taken only two off the driver’s hands, which left the man with one dead body he did not know what to do with.

Unless he could get rid of it, he was in for a sixty-mile trip back to the city, and as he had a date with a waitress here in town, he was eager to have State College relieve him of his extra “cargo.”

“Corpses is corpses,” he had told Jack Davis and some of the other third-year med students whom bumbling, absent-minded old Dr. Prentice had placed in full charge of the lab that morning. “Far as I’m concerned,” the driver had told them, “I could be deliverin’ packages for a department store, or bootleg coal, or anything else you wanta mention. I got a corpse to spare, and you fellas can save me a whole heap of trouble, if you want to. How about it? Could you take an extra one this trip?”

Jack Davis and his classroom cronies, being red-blooded young men, and as fond of a grisly prank as tradition would make all medical students, had put their mischievous young heads together, and decided that this was a golden opportunity for them.

They had rigged up a set of papers in receipt of the corpse, making it appear that the college had acquired the body. They had paid for it out of their own pockets, however. The receipt they prepared for the corpse satisfied the driver, who went away happy. Actually, however, a clique of five young students had acquired a corpse of their own, and there was little chance of doddering, misty-eyed Dr. Prentice discovering what kind of skullduggery the boys had been up to.

At this point, the professor broke into young Davis’ story.

“Young rascals! So you named him Harvey Stoneman, hey?” A thought came to him. “Sa-ay,

you don't have any corpses down there named Harry Dinwoodie, do you?"

Jack Davis sighed limply. But he was an honest sort. He didn't try to falsify around that direct question.

"Yes, we do, sir. He's a—a Filipino, Professor."

"Filipino!" exploded the professor. "What in thunder! What've they got against me?"

"Same thing they have against Professor Stoneman, sir. You mark too hard. You flunked two of our best football players last fall. We'd've won the league title if you hadn't done that."

"Those two men were absolute imbeciles," exploded the professor. He couldn't help grinning wryly. And he'd been so smug about Stoneman! "They couldn't possibly have finished the year out. It was the merciful thing to prevent them from wasting their time any longer as college students."

"The—the students thought you could've carried them along a bit, sir. At least, till the end of the football season."

"You thought so too, eh, Davis?"

"Yes, sir."

Despite himself, the professor liked this youngster. The boy was one hundred percent honest.

"Go on with your story."

"That's how we decided to plant the—to plant Professor Stoneman in your garden, sir. We were—well, to be honest, we were all a bit under the weather the night we brought him out here. It was a fool trick, I know, and it's bothered me, plenty. Because I'd heard your wife isn't too well. And then, I knew you'd soon be spading up your new garden. The others would never forgive me if I removed the body. But I've been watching your place, thinking when the time came, if it looked like you were going to do anything drastic, or get in serious trouble about it, or—"

"Or phone the police?" the professor said grimly.

"Wel-l-ll—"

"It's lucky I didn't, eh, Davis? Planning to be a doctor in a few years more, aren't you?"

"We—we all are, Professor."

"What did you young idiots expect I'd do when I discovered"—the professor chuckled despite his attempt to maintain a dignified sternness—"when I discovered Harvey Stoneman out there in the garden?"

"I don't know, sir. Maybe get rattled. Lose your

nerve and leave college, or—or something."

"And quit meddling with your precious footballers. Is that it?"

"We—were not quite sober, Professor."

"All right. All right."

Harry Dinwoodie was not so old he couldn't remember certain regrettable escapades from his own days as a student.

Of course, he had not done anything quite so drastic as this buried corpse stunt, but he might have, had the opportunity been presented.

IN THE circumstances, he could not feel too harshly disposed toward young Davis. The boy had at least shown enough sense to worry about the consequences of the stunt, and he had been painstakingly honest. The professor couldn't help liking the youngster. It would be a terrible thing, he thought, if the poor kid was expelled from college because of his part in the fiasco.

"Just what do you propose that we do with our dead friend now, young man?" the professor asked. "I appreciate the change of heart that brought you down here this evening. However, the corpse is still definitely your responsibility, as I look at it. You'll have to get rid of it."

Jack Davis looked self-consciously upward.

"Can't take him back to the lab, sir. He's a bit the worse for wear, after his stay underground. Doctor Prentice may be dodder and almost blind, but he'd be sure to notice a—er—a body in that condition."

"So?"

"I was thinking. That driver who sold him to us five in the first place—he's in town permanently now, sir. He married that waitress he's been going with, and they've taken a small house in the suburbs. But he still hauls corpses, and there's a chance he'd take this one back. I mean, he could get rid of it the same way he passed it on us, and turn himself a tidy profit."

The professor felt a small stir of excitement run up his backbone. The plan didn't sound quite legal to him, but it was an idea. He felt a trifle devilish, just at the moment. This evening's excitement had toned him up more than any tonic could have.

"What's the fellow's name?"

"Mart Stevens. I think he has a phone, sir. I—I could phone him, if you think best."

"Do that, young man. Go out the back way, so my wife won't see you. There's a pay phone at the

drugstore, two blocks down on your right. I'll wait here for you. We can use my car, if it turns out this Stevens fellow wants to do business."

Jack Davis was gaping at him. "Gosh, you're all right, sir." He walked out quickly. "Be right back," he promised.

The professor sat on the running board of his black sedan for some moments. He was being quite foolhardy, getting embroiled in this business. But the excitement was like whisky within him. And perhaps he had been getting a bit crusty in his attitude toward the students. There was really no good reason why he couldn't have passed those football men till the end of the season. Tonight he would change at least one student's opinion of him. He thought a bit, then walked quickly into the house.

"Martha, I'll be out in the garage cleaning things up, in case anyone phones. And I may drive over to Harvey Stoneman's later on, to get that reference book he promised to lend me."

"All right," his wife's unperturbed voice called from the second floor.

The professor rubbed his thin hands and chuckled softly as he went out to wait for the return of young Davis. Old stick-in-the-mud, was he? He was apparently as good at intrigue as the next man. He smiled at the pleasure he had felt in the few simple mistruths he had fabricated to keep Martha from worrying about him.

Davis came back promptly.

"He says it's all right, sir. We're to bring it right over. He'll keep it in the cellar tonight, and haul it away in the truck tomorrow."

"Fine—fine." The professor grinned. "I'll get the car out, young man. You get the body. I—uh—you're a bit more experienced handling cadavers than I."

Davis had the corpse waiting when the professor backed out of the garage. The garage lights were out, and the auto's lights were not turned on, so they worked in safe darkness. The professor rummaged about for an old Army blanket, and handed it to the youngster.

"Here. Put this on top of him. Hate to have someone peep in the back of this car and see what we're carrying."

It was only a fifteen-minute drive to Mart Stevens' place. Stevens was a burly, thick-necked man with a bulbous red nose, and small eyes. He was waiting on his porch as the professor drove up.

He waved the professor into the lane, and came over to stare in the sedan's window.

"Hi-yuh," Jack Davis said. "This is Professor Dinwoodie, Stevens. He's—"

"Hunh?" Stevens' small eyes glittered. "You didn't say there was anyone else in on this deal, young feller."

"The professor's okay," Jack said.

Stevens still looked suspicious.

"I assure you I am not here to make trouble, my good fellow," Dinwoodie said. "It's just rather a shame to have such a rather pointless prank end in tragedy for the five young men who are involved in it. Davis hit on a plan that seemed to solve the mix-up, and I lent my car to it. So you need have no qualms about me."

"Yeah? Maybe."

Stevens had a flashlight. He opened the rear door of the sedan, lifted the blanket that covered the body, and shone the beam of the torch in the dead face.

"Sa-ay, lissen! What in the Sam Hill you two tryin' to put over on me?"

"What?"

The professor turned, steeling himself, and stared weirdly at the shapeless mass that had once been a human face. The stay underground had swollen the cadaver's features out of all recognition.

"We're not putting anything over on you," Davis said. "What's the matter?"

"This ain't *him!*"

"It looks like the same one."

"Listen, fella"—Stevens was emphatic—"I know corpses, see? That's my business. This ain't the corpse you young fellas bought off me. I'd swear to that on a stack of Bibles. Head's too big, for one thing. The nose is hooked, an' that other one had a pug nose. Don't you try to tell me about corpses!"

The professor was speechless.

"Well, I guess you could have something," he heard young Davis saying doubtfully. "But—"

"Bless my birthmark!" the professor stammered. "Then what can it mean? That someone changed corpses, dug up the first one and buried a fresh one out there in my garden?" He turned a bit snappishly toward young Davis. "I think you'll hesitate before trying another practical joke, young man. Someone must have seen you young idiots planting that corpse in my garden. They've turned the

circumstance to advantage against us. What a convenient thing for whoever murdered this poor fellow! Some killer simply switched corpses. and got rid of the original one that Stevens delivered to your laboratory.”

“But why, sir?”

“I don’t know,” the professor replied. “Maybe just to confound the police and avert suspicion. Maybe in the hope that this body, the body of a murdered man, would be accepted as the body of an experimental corpse when it was finally discovered, and taken back to the lab to be hacked out of all recognition by you students, or perhaps cremated. At any rate, it leaves us in a pretty spot, as I don’t have to tell you, young man!”

Jack Davis looked sick.

“Are you sure this isn’t the one?” he said wistfully, to Mart Stevens.

Stevens shook his head grimly.

“I know corpses,” he repeated. “It ain’t him, that’s all. I don’t know just what you two are up to, but I know well enough the deal’s off. I wouldn’t touch that stiff with a ten-foot stick. So get it outa here. And fast.”

“You needn’t get so excited about it,” the professor said huffily.

“Lissen, pop, my business is truckin’ corpses, see? I’m used to ‘em, unner-stand? Only the kind I’m used to is the ones that died natural. This here one prob’ly didn’t. That kind, I don’t mess with. Now get it outa here, before I get sore and call the cops on ya.”

Jack Davis was getting red in the face.

“Come, boy,” the professor said softly. “Settle down, now. We’re in rather a tight spot. No time to be losing your self-control. We’ve got to think.”

He nodded obliquely toward Mart Stevens, and kicked the sedan’s starter.

“Good day to you. Stevens.”

He backed out of the lane and got the car going swiftly down the street.

“You seemed to doubt Stevens’ story back there, Jack. The corpse did appear to be the same you bought from Stevens. Is that right?”

“Y-yes, sir. Of course, it’s all out of shape, so I could be wrong.”

“Think, Jack. Hard, now. Did the one you bought have a hooked nose, or as Stevens says, a pug nose? Get it right now. It’s important.”

“Why, a hooked nose. I’m practically certain.”

The professor slammed on the brakes.

“Wh-what’s wrong, sir?”

“Can you drive, son?”

“Yes, sir.”

The professor was getting out of the car. “Drive to the nearest phone and tell the police to come out to Stevens’ place quickly. Hurry, boy. Hurry!”

The boy gaped at him, then did as ordered. The professor was already out of earshot, racing back in the way he had come, toward Mart Stevens’ house.

He had seen or heard no signs of a watchdog at the place, so he approached the house with more speed than caution. Besides, if his hunch was correct, Mr. Mart Stevens would be too busy preparing for an abrupt departure to bother looking out for intruders. He was. The professor could see signs of hectic excitement within the small house.

STEVENS and a dumpy blond woman, undoubtedly his wife, were rushing wildly from one room to another in an attempt to gather the belongings they meant to take with them. The professor stood under a half-opened window and shamelessly eavesdropped.

“Forget that kitchen stuff!” Stevens was rasping. “All we need is the dough, and a change of clothes.”

“Don’t you tell me what I’m to take, Mart Stevens!” the blond woman snapped back angrily at Stevens. She was plainly a vixen. “You had everything fixed. You had the perfect murder. Telling me you’d got rid of the corpse where nobody’d ever think to look for it! And now two men drive up to the house and try to give it back to you! Perfect murder! You’ll probably burn for it. For a few measly thousands!”

“You better shut up, baby. I’m tellin’ ya. How was I to know those crazy kids was gonna plant that stiff somewheres?”

“How was you to know—how was you to know. Just don’t try to run everything your own way from now on, that’s all. I should’ve married Joe Miller.”

“Ah—shuddup an’ pack. We gotta roll, sister. Maybe I scared them two into keeping their traps shut awhile, and maybe I didn’t. We may get a flying start on the bulls, an’ we may get a visit here any minute. So pick out what you want an’ let’s get goin’!”

The professor drew a sharp breath through his teeth. It was clear enough now. Stevens had killed a man for several thousands of dollars, and had conceived the plan of planting his victim in the

medical lab, where police in search of a missing person wouldn't think to search. The plan had blown up in the murderer's face when Jack Davis had tried to return the body.

Stevens had agreed to young Davis' proposal over the phone, merely as a play for time. Then he'd sworn there'd been a switch of the corpses, so as to scare Davis and the professor into a frightened silence. That, Stevens hoped, would give him time to get miles away.

He had another thing coming. The professor was too old a man, and much too frail to stand up to the man and his wife in a physical affray, but there were other ways to prevent the two from leaving before the police arrived.

He made a beeline toward the Stevens' garage. It was not locked and he plunged recklessly into the pitch-dark interior. If he could just have a minute or two alone with that car, maybe his lifelong study of physics would not go unused in this situation.

He had thought to sever a couple of wires under the dashboard, but the car door was locked. And to compound the bad luck, it had one of those special hoods that was released from the driver's seat. So he couldn't even get at the engine. He swore, and backed up against some tin drums standing by the garage wall. One of them sloshed merrily as he stumbled against it. He leaned down, removed the cap, and sniffed.

Gasoline. The professor grinned in the darkness, and probed about till his hands encountered a rag. He soaked the rag thoroughly, then hung it over the end of the auto's bumper. He poured a bit more of the acrid stuff on the cement floor, just under the car's rear bumper.

He was turning toward the garage door for a hasty exit, when he heard footfalls.

"Snap it up, baby," he heard Stevens rasping. "One extra second now is worth a year in the Big House, I keep tryin' to tell ya."

"You! You've told me enough already. If I'd had any sense, I'd—"

"You'd've married Joe Miller. I heard it the first time. An' it ain't funny. Come on."

The door opened. The professor retreated against the back wall. It was pitch dark, but any minute Stevens would be reaching for a light switch.

Just before the lights flashed up, the professor managed to conceal himself from view behind the car's radiator. Stevens slammed into the car hastily

and failed to see him. But the woman was sniffing. "Mart, I smell gas."

"Forget it. Come on."

"No! I do smell gas!"

"You hear me, sister. Get in here—if you're goin'."

"Don't think I wouldn't turn down the invitation if—Mart!"

She had seen the professor.

"What is it?"

"Company, Mart. There—between the end of the garage and the radiator."

The professor groaned. He could see the car tilt as Mart got out from the driver's seat to stand on the running board and peer down at him.

"So you hadda get smart, pop. You hadda mess in." Mart Stevens reached a hand to a shoulder holster and drew forth a snub-nosed automatic. "It's that professor, baby. Get in the car an' gun up the engine."

"Mart, don't! What for?"

"Get smart, baby. I'm gonna sign my name on this guy."

"Mart, please! No more killing!"

"You hear me?" Mart swung furiously on her. "Gun that motor!" He kept the gun on the professor, smiling. "That kid's prob'ly callin' the cops right now, pop. You hadda be smart, didn't ya? They'll fry me anyhow, but you're goin' out with me!"

The professor was too frightened to say anything. Even if he'd been able to talk, it would have been of little use, for the blond had stepped on the starter now, and the motor was coughing.

The professor supposed his time had come. He thought of Martha, and he tried to cry out, ask for mercy, for her sake. But he couldn't make the words come. His only hope was that that gas-drenched rag on the muffler would catch fire promptly, that the fumes from the gas on the floor would explode in time to beat Mart's trigger finger, and still not blow them all to their graves.

The motor coughed jerkily a couple of times, then died. "Choke it!" growled Stevens. "Choke it!"

The blond woman was nervous. She made it catch on her next try. The professor heard the steady throb, the muted coughing, then the blasting roar as she stepped hard on the accelerator. He saw Stevens pressing the gun's trigger, and he jerked back, hands up to his eyes. He waited for the bullet.

And then it came!

But not the bullet. The explosion. It was a lucky thing he had put his hands to his face. As it was, the car was still between him and the brunt of the explosion's impact. He felt flame sear his legs, over his high-button shoes, and he was flung bodily against the garage wall. Something dropped off a shelf in back of him, hit him a clubbing blow on top of the head, and it was as if an electric switch had blinked off awareness. . . .

The police brought him to, in the Stevens' kitchen. Stevens and his blond woman were there too. Stevens was a bloody mess of raw burns from head to toe, but the blond was just badly shaken.

"Any missing persons reported hereabouts in the past few months, Officer?" the professor said.

"Yeah. Travelin' man from Dubuque who was carryin' three thousand bucks disappeared somewhere on the highway last March. You figure that stiff in your car could be him?"

"I do," the professor said firmly. He looked at the stunned Mart Stevens. "Why not admit it, man? The fingerprints on that corpse will prove it."

"Aw right, so it's him." Stevens looked venomous. "If those fool kids hadn't been so funny, nobody woulda known."

The professor thought fast.

"You're wrong in blaming that group of students, Stevens," he said. "As a matter of fact, I rigged up that whole story we told you. I happened

to stroll through the anatomy lab one afternoon, and noticed a series of suspicious bruises on the corpse. I talked to young Davis here, learned the strange circumstances by which the college had obtained that particular dead man, and decided to try to smoke you out of your hole. You fell into the little trap very nicely."

"Y-you mean"—Stevens was scowling—"that corpse wasn't never buried?"

"No. We made it look that way, to back up our story." The professor lied gamely, and shot a swift glance at Jack Davis. The kid was grinning at him hopefully. "So we knew you were our man when you swore there'd been a switch of corpses."

That final lie broke down Stevens' defenses completely. The police got a complete confession from him.

Jack Davis moved to the professor's side. "Gosh, thanks, sir," he whispered gratefully. "Guess that clears us up at the lab. And—I've learned a lesson."

The professor shrugged. "It's all right, son. No use spoiling your whole career over a fool stunt like that."

Maybe now, he thought, the students wouldn't take him for such an old fuddy-duddy. He turned toward the door. Better not keep Martha waiting for him. When he was out alone nights for more than an hour, she always worried.