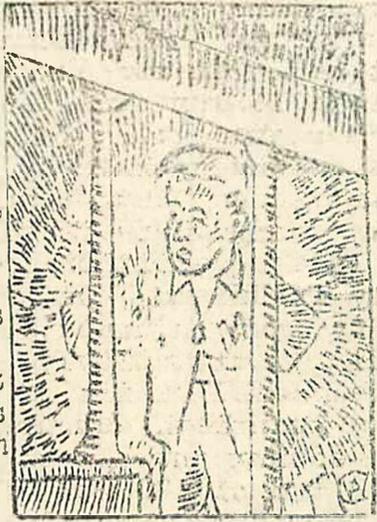




EDITED BY: James Parkhill Rathbone. PRINTED BY: J. M. Rosenblum.

"THUNDER" by Hilary St. Clare.

Jackie crept up the stairs with his candle.
 "Mother!" he called.
 "What is it?" came her voice from the kitchen.
 "It's dark! it's dark!"
 "Haven't you lit your candle, you silly boy?"
 "Yes, but come up with me, please!"
 "Oh, I'm busy, you're a man now, aren't you?
 You said that you couldn't cry any more?"
 "Please, Mother!"
 "No! You've got to learn independence. There's
 nothing to be frightened of".



The little boy put his left foot on the next
 step. He peered between the thick oak banisters
 at the inch of comforting light streaming from
 the kitchen.
 "Mother!"

The inch of light widened a moment, then disappeared altogether
 as the door slammed, its reverberation, echoing through the old ho-
 use. Jackie felt the tears coming to his eyes. But it wasn't the
 thing People inbooks always laughed at danger He tried to laugh now
 But it didn't work - not like it did when old Tommy Tirney got hit
 in the eye with a tomato in the old Quad a week ago. A man's got to
 feel like laughing.

But he'd got to get upstairs.
 The thought made him a little more certain. His candle wavering,
 he mounted a few steps. That brought him to the window, then he'd
 have to turn round, and the Thing could come through and get him,
 from behind.

But God always looked after little boys. Only, God always looked
 something like Father when you got to talk to him in Church and Ja-
 ckie always wanted to laugh.... No, God wasn't much use, unless you
 wanted a new set of marbles, or an aeroplane - and even then it was
 Father who gave you those. His mind turned to Elsie.

Elsie was a girl.
 Not an ordinary sort of girl, the kind Bill Jones and James Farn-
 er snickered at through the playground railings. Elsie was very spe-
 cial, she was the girl who kept the sweetshop round the corner. Of
 course, he hadn't spoken to her, but he'd get to that yet. Elsie
 was better than Mother. Jackie was sure that if Elsie had seen him
 she'd come over and speak to him that very minute!

God! Elsie! He'd got to turn round to go up the rest of the stai-
 rs! Hastily, he blew out the candle and peered between the thick
 blackout curtains. The street was dim and weird under the moonlight
 and for the moment there was no one there. Then a cloud came over

the moon, and the scene became very dark. He could just discern the chimney-pots opposite, then the first roll of sound came to his ears. He quaked in terror, for his enemy was coming.

He had felt him coming all day. When his curly head had first popped up underneath the blankets to be bathed in sunshine he had known his enemy was after him. It wasn't good sunshine, it was too yellow and hot and stifling. But his enemy knew he went to bed at 7 And now, now he almost had him! The sound came nearer and a terrific crash followed by a streak of light sent him scuttling into the corner by the window. He began to pray, "God don't let him come and take me away. I've been a good boy; don't let him take me away God! Oh, Father, come quick, Amen." and then he rose, hardly able to stand because his legs were trembling, and walked slowly up the stairs.

And then when he got to the top the storm descended in full strength on the house. Cra - a - a - sh!

"Elsie, oh Elsie!"

Jackie was shouting at the top of his voice, and somehow there didn't seem to be any sound coming from his mouth. But it was alright now, because Elsie was on the floor, kneeling beside him, taking him in her arms.

His next memories were strange and confused. There was God, or was it Father? beside him, and Elsie and Mother. He couldn't make out much, but he heard Elsie cry into her handkerchief and he suddenly noticed she looked as frightened as a mouse.

"I tell you I don't know how I got here," she was weeping, "I don't know at all I tell you. I was in Manchester jerst five minutes ago!" Jackie didn't like her voice, now that he heard it for the first time.

He decided to forget Elsie.

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NEWS DEPARTMENT.

I am home now, but unfortunately in hospital, and may get discharged from the Army, though I doubt it. Greetings to all my old friends and enemies, and I hope you like the story! JPR

WHAT IS THIS DEPARTMENT???

RITA PITMAN (1940): "Yes, I grew out of SF some years ago."

RITA PITMAN (1941): "I enclose FIDO and some other bits & pieces (GARGOYLE, STAR PARADE & THE GENTLEST ART!) to keep you out of mischief".

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