

Or Leave a Kiss within the Cup



(Mr. Saroyan, drawn from life by Script Artist.)

IT WAS dinner and the restaurant was all right, not too flashy, a Greek place with the clean Greek smell and the sporty Greek headwaiter, and it was the little, tired waitress trying to be gay, bringing with her two Scotch and sodas, two crab cocktails, two consommés, two salads, two filets, rare, two coffees, two pieces of pie, and it was fine, it was dinner, it was eating food at night and being alive, it was talking to Irma at the table, it was the world, the amazing sadness of the world, and it was saying to her, You can never tell, maybe it is true: maybe they will kill Hitler before summer and then everything will be all right.

It was talking quietly about Hitler from the small booth in the Greek restaurant.

Maybe they will kill Mussolini, too, he said. I guess maybe they will kill all them bastards.

He sipped the Scotch and looked at her, the sad quiet shadow of her face, the sad sealed lips, the sad eyes, the sad smiling.

I'll ask the waitress, he said.

They won't kill anybody, said the girl.

I know they won't, he said, only I like to believe Hitler will be dead by summer.

And the thick glass ash-tray was very sad, and the tall sad glass of Scotch, and the sad salt and pepper shakers with their sad shadows, and the sad people in the next booth, and the sad street outside, and the sad buildings, the sad windows and doors and halls and rooms.

Hitler is a rat, he said. He is a major rat. Nobody minds a minor rat.

The waitress came with coffee and pie.

You ought to know, he said to the waitress. Is Hitler a rat, or isn't he?

The waitress looked at Irma and understood. It was joking. She wouldn't lose her job or anything.

I'll say he's a rat, she laughed.

You see? he said to Irma. Everybody knows Hitler is a rat. The whole world is waiting for Hitler to die. Nobody will be happy again till Hitler is dead.

The waitress went away smiling to

by WILLIAM SAROYAN

herself, but not altogether bewildered.

They'll think you're crazy, said Irma.

No, he said. Everybody is secretly hoping Hitler will be dead by summer.

It was sitting at the table and talking like a fool because he loved Irma. It was wanting everybody young and alive to be unhindered by Hitler and the other rats.

From the Greek restaurant they went to a movie. It was a lousy movie, and the idea was to prove that love and love alone is what the world is seeking. So it was a good movie, too. You could tell how much of it was lousy: the rest of it was good: it was people in clothes wanting to be naked together, so it was good. There was a lot of trouble, but the idea was for the man and the lady to step out of all the artifice and falsity of civilization and be naked together. This part of the idea wasn't greatly stressed in the movie, but you could tell what the idea was, anyway. Every man, woman, and child in the theater was in favor of the idea. Everybody thought it was an excellent idea.

It was Saturday night and they could sleep till noon Sunday, and they had worked all week, so they were in no hurry to get home, and they went to a quiet little democratic beer joint, no

orchestra and no fuss, just beer and a table, and they drank beer till two in the morning.

A little after one in the morning a young Italian came to the place with an accordion and began to play. He was a very sad-looking Italian and the music he played was very sad. He wasn't altogether blind, but he couldn't see very well. When he played certain passages of music he would lose himself in the music and his face would be full of all the love-sadness of the Italian race. He played *O Sole Mio* and *A Vucchella*, and you knew it wasn't the Italian race, it was Mussolini.

Irma was a little drunk and he himself was a little drunk, but it was all right, it was music, *O Sole Mio*, my sun, Italy, simple people singing of love, it was the whole world in sadness, wanting love, and every time he sipped beer Irma sipped beer and this was part of their love, part of their innocence together, part of their kinship, to be awake together, in a little beer joint, drinking beer together, hearing the sad music of the young Italian together, being alive in the world together, in the same place, each of them one of millions, each unknown, yet unlost, each fixed in time and the universe because of love, and it was splendid, and within the cup was the kiss, and they drank to one another with their eyes, and he knew they were drunk and immortal, and he believed firmly that Hitler and all the other major rats would be dead by summer and everything would be all right again in the world.



Drawn by Walter Schmidt

"I know you're busy, Doc, but can't you pick this up on your way back?"