

Allen Wheelis, a San Francisco psychoanalyst with a true writing-flair, got his "The Illusionless Man and the Visionary Maid" first into May 1964 COMMENTARY. Here is my reduction of it--reduced so it will not take two much of the first part of a two-hour session. I suggest that my #591 be used during the reading drama and the groups and plenum that follow. (Cf. Herman Hesse's NARCISSUS AND GOLDMUND: meal vs. hotdog.)

Once upon a time there was a man who had no illusions about anything. While still in the crib he had learned that his mother was not always kind; at two he had given up fairies; witches and hobgoblins disappeared from his world at three; at four he knew that rabbits at Easter lay no eggs; and at five on a cold night in December, with a bitter little smile, he said goodbye to Santa Claus. At six when he started school, illusions flew from his life like feathers in a windstorm; he discovered that his father was not always brave or even honest, that Presidents are little men, that the Queen of England goes to the bathroom like everybody else, and that his firstgrade teacher, a pretty round-faced young woman with dimples, did not know everything, as he had thought, but thought only of men and did not know much of anything. At eight he could read, and the printed word was a sorcerer at exorcising illusions--only he knew there were no sorcerers. The abyss of hell disappeared into the even larger abyss into which a clear vision was sweeping his beliefs. Happiness was of course a myth; love a fleeting attachment, a dream of enduring selflessness glued onto the instinct of a rabbit. At twelve he dispatched into the night sky his last unheard prayers. As a young man he realized that the most generous act is selfserving, the most disinterested inquiry serves interest; that lies are told by printed words, even by words carved in stone; that art begins with a small "a" like everything else, and that he could not escape the ruin of value by orchestrating a cry of despair into a song of lasting beauty; for beauty passes and deathless art is quite mortal. Of all those people who lose illusions he lost more than anyone else, taboo and prescription alike; and as everything became permitted nothing was left worthwhile.

He became a carpenter, but could see a house begin to decay in the course of building--perfect pyramid of white sand spreading out irretrievably in the grass, bricks chipping, doors sticking, the first tone of gray appearing on white lumber, the first film of rust on bright nails, the first leaf falling in the shining gutter. He became than a termite inspector, spent his days crawling in darkness under old houses, living in a basement room and never raised the blinds, ate canned beans and frozen television dinners, let his hair grow and his beard. On Sundays he walked in the park, threw bread to the ducks--dry French bread, stone-hard, would stamp on it with his heel, gather up the pieces, and walk along the pond, throwing it out to the avid ducks paddling after him, thinking glumly that they would be just as hungry again tomorrow. His name was Henry.

One day in the park he met a girl who believed in everything. In the forest she still glimpsed fairies, heard them whisper; bunnies hopped for her at Easter, laid brilliant eggs; at Christmas hoofbeats shook the roof. She was disillusioned at times and would flounder, gasp desperately, like a fish in sand, but not for long; would quickly, sometimes instantly, find something new, and actually never gave up any illusion, but would lay it aside when necessary,

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