

copy 2.

FRIEND or FOE

by ERIC MIVAL.

P. wakes one morning to the clamour of voices in different languages and accents, drifting over to his house. He dresses and soon finds himself amidst the centre of High Park Corner, an array of gaily coloured soapboxes and speakers to match. The current no. 2 greets him, and explains that here, as in England, there is an opportunity for blowing off steam about the conflicts of the world, with no danger of doing anything about ~~it~~^{them}. The best speakers of previous weeks get the highest perches, and a negro Mike X predominates the proceedings. P. is struck by the individuality of thought held by this man, and no. 2 explains he is a recent intake, and they had thought it better not to number him, to obtain the necessary information they required, ~~and~~^{which} he had been unconsciously giving during past weeks from his platform. (What passionate man can always withhold his innermost thoughts with highly trained hecklers goading him.) P. queries some of Mike's ideas and a healthy mutual respect develops as individuals.

Soon they are walking around the village together discussing their similar desires to escape, when Mike, in a moment of trust, reveals he has a foolproof plan. He is about to explain it when Rover appears, blocking their path.

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In panic Mike starts to run off. It takes only moments for Rover to reach him, and apparently obliterate him.

Unlike many, Mike receives practically a State funeral, the authorities knowing full well the respect many villagers had for him, and how it would be bad for morale were it not so. However, P.'s morale is at its lowest ebb. He has lost a good friend and a possible escape route, and he watches from a distance within the precinct of the surrounding woods. An uncanny, but familiar laugh behind him reveals Mike, watching his own funeral. It worked, planned suicide was the only answer - no one seeks information from a corpse. The corpse he had planted just where Rover had done his duty - the timing had been perfect. There were enough corpses to be found to replace P. at a moment's notice.

No. 2 shows concern at P.'s morose condition, recognising how the death of a new found friend can completely undermine an individual in the village's bizarre environment, and is hardly surprised, but shows acute concern when P. pushes him out of the taxi ne's driving and heads full tilt for the edge of the cliff - not seeing that it was only the buggy that sailed over the top.

Mike and P. wish that they'd not had to get rid of the taxi as they tramp along the London road.

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The familiar sound of Big Ben is a cue for celebration. Both men march straight to a pub, Mike suggests. He is greeted by friends, who wonder where he's been. He winks at P. and declares he's been having a holiday. The alcohol loosens many tongues - and Mike begins to reveal the occasional secret, encouraging P. to do likewise. P., feeling at ease, laughs at the absurdity of the situation and is about to succumb, when he notices a white streak on Mike's face. Mike is alarmed and puts his hand to his face. P. twigs it, and rips off an outer rubber skin - revealing the familiar face of one of the more prominent clockers.

A fight ensues, but naturally all of "Mike's" friends reveal their loyalty to the village.

P. pays a grim tribute at Mike's grave, saying at least they didn't get all his secrets.

They talk - plans of escape? - ~~Michael~~ spying on me?

say Mike - No. B says Part - later no. 2. says

because of trust they have chosen P. to get final information
from Mike - or else they use extreme measures that

may mean him

Crash up at high parts cont. S. Suicide?