Oh, Brother

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Abstract

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ANY ADDITIONS or corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting?" asked the president. "If not, we'll go right into committee reports. Social, Brother Swank.

"I've got Jimmie Sloan's band lined up for the house formal, and we can get five pieces for a hundred and fifty, or seven pieces, that includes a vocalist, for one-ninety. What is the opinion of the active chapter? Brother LaGrange?"

"I'd just like to know what kind of an outfit this is, quibbling over forty bucks. You can bet the Sigs'll spend a hell of a lot more than a hundred and ninety bucks on their dance!"

"Do I take it then that this is the opinion of the chapter?" queried the social chairman. General sounds of "sure" and "you bet" assured Brother Swank that this was no parsimonious group. "Okay then, we'll get all seven. And then there is another matter regarding our social calendar which I feel should be brought before you gentlemen for discussion. The Tri U's called off the dance exchange for Friday night."

With this announcement the formerly quiescent forms of the active chapter perked up and exclaimed as a body, "The high-hattin' bitches!" Yes, it was a snub, a premeditated unmitigated snub. But Brother Swank had not completed his report yet. "Don't think this is the end, Brothers; remember we have a dinner exchange with the Delta Gams this Wednesday."

The active chapter, with all its dignity and brotherhood, met this proposition with, "Aw, let 'em stay home and eat with the rest of the pigs." And so it was decided. With an intramural basketball game to be played at seven-thirty, to which all of these good, loyal Epsilon Deltas always went, either to root or to perform, a dinner exchange was out of the question for Wednesday evening.

"We'll hear next from the scholarship committee," said the president. "Brother Mason."

"No report."

"Well then we'll hear from the house manager. Brother Fowler."

"I have been observing the prices of divans, and have
located one, a real super-duper, for only a hundred and seventy. I believe this will be our bottom price. Do I hear a motion?"

"I so move," said Brother Bauman without so much as lifting his head, which hung sleepily on his chest.

"All in favor signify by saying 'aye,'" called the president. "Those opposed? The ayes are unanimous. Do you have anything else to report, Brother Fowler?"

"Yes. I have two more items. First; some more of you actives are gonna have to move into the house next quarter in order to fill it. Besides from the money we'll lose if you don't, think of the reaction on the pledges. 'Actives can't even stand to live in their own house!' And second: "I've been observing the part-time maid this week, and do you know what? She's been working only an hour and three-quarters a day and been charging us for two. At fifty cents an hour that means seventy-five cents a week she's been cheating us out of! I therefore think we oughta fire her. Do I hear a motion?"

Back in the corner Brother Lewis stood up and said, "I recommend, worthy brothers, that instead we raise Mrs. Haldene's pay to seventy-five cents an hour. I believe she earns it, and does not deserve to be compelled to 'cheat' as you say."

His sentiment was met with the silent thoughts of "Oh, you righteous bastard!" It was finally broken by Brother Wulf, the young up-and-coming recording secretary of the Epsilon Delta Fraternity, saying "You're a good one to talk, Lewis. You aren't around here enough to even know who the maid is."

The impasse was bridged by the president's appointing a committee of three impartial Brothers to investigate the issue and report back at the next meeting. The president next called for the report of the song chairman, Brother Henmick.

"Don't forget, song practice is Tuesday at seven. We have to be in shape by Saturday night for Dick's pinning serenade. I also move that the fine for missing song practice be raised from twenty-five to fifty cents, and for missing a serenade from fifty cents to a dollar. Do I hear a second?"
The mercenary songsters of Epsilon Delta did not care for this proposed raise in wages, so they promptly defeated the bill.

The next official to report was the intramural chairman. He was angry at the Epsilons for not going to see more of the games. He quoted figures of attendance at Kappa Rho games and thought it mighty poor that the loyal sons of Epsilon Delta couldn’t do better; he did not even seem hopeful in view of the ‘postponed’ dinner exchange with the Delta Gams serving as a gentle impeller.

Then came the report of the rushing chairman. “We’re having Dick Karnigan and Max Feldburg over for dinner again tomorrow night. How many of you have met them? Twelve. They’re nice fellows. Dick got his numeral in football last fall and he’s an engineering student. He got a two-point-two fall quarter. He’s a nice looking kid. I think we ought to bid him while he’s over tomorrow. Any objections? Okay, we’ll bid him. About Max Feldburg: he’s majoring in psychology—a sophomore. He’s got a three-two average. He’s played some minor parts with the college theater, and he sings in the glee club. Any comments?”

Brother Patterson, last quarter senior and sage of the Epsilons, said, “I’ve never seen ‘Feldburg’ spelled with a ‘u’; its always been F-e-l-d-b-u-r-g as long as I can remember. That sounds like a Jewish trick to me—to change the spelling of a Wop name! Now maybe this Feldburg is a nice guy, and maybe he’s a Gentile, but you know as well as I do what the other fraternities would say if they thought we was pledging Wops. So I ball him.”

With that ejaculation, ten insurgent voices were heard at once. “Pat, that’s pretty damn dirty!” But other voices were heard too, saying, “A ball’s a ball. A guy don’t have to explain why.” And so the matter was left. Max Feldburg would be to dinner the next night (suffer their reputation if they cancelled the date), and then he would be kissed good-bye. Poor old Max doesn’t know what a good deal he’s been left out of.

The committee reports being over, the president called for old business. It was getting close to nine-thirty so there wasn’t any pressing. Same with new business. So the presi-
dent led the Brothers in the closing chant. "We bind men together in a brotherhood based on certain immutable principles with a bond as strong as right itself. We know no north, no south, no east, no west but man as man."

"Meeting adjourned."

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Anna Mae

Anna MAE scooped the chicken mash out of the blue printed sack into the feed bucket. She wheezed as the white dust puffed into her nose.

"Hurry, Annie . . . the school bus is coming."

Anna Mae emptied the bucket into the long trough and hurried through the squawking chickens to the house.

"Here's your lunch bucket . . . now don't forget to get me some brown thread and a can of baking powder. John, open the gate for Annie," called the short, pudgy woman, Anna's mother.

Anna nodded goodbye. She didn't run to the bus. The kids would like that. She knew how they tittered behind cupped hands at the way the hanging fat from her arms and the overlapping folds of her stomach jiggled when she moved too suddenly.

"Bye, Pa," she mechanically muttered as she hurried through the gate. Pa looked across the road, deep into the next field. Pa hadn't said goodbye since she had started to high school two years before. Pa didn't believe in girls going to school. He had damned the law that said she had to go until she was sixteen. Now she was sixteen and he cussed more because she didn't quit and stay home and help with the work. But that was what Aunt Effie had done. Aunt Effie was an old maid. Anna didn't want that.

Anna lifted her pounds up the bus steps. She tried not to hear the usual titters.

'Oh, darn. I gotta walk clear to the back and sit with that Wilkins boy!' With lowered eyes she shuffled to the back. An elbow accidentally poked her in the ribs.

The Wilkins boy shoved himself next to the window.