And Four to Go

Peter Pruessing*
“MORNING, gentlemen. Either of you ever seen EST before?” Dr. Lightburn, the head psychiatrist at Wood, moved across the room and extended a gangling hand. Two huge orbs looked out from behind thick magnifying glasses, and Randy felt awkward.

“No, this is our first time,” Randy said, noticing that John was studying his shoes in an effort to avoid that calculating stare.

“Well, you may find it a bit shocking.” Dr. Lightburn waited, then decided to excuse their lack of appreciation for his humor. He motioned to them and started down the hallway. Several men, enveloped in a low-hanging cloud of smoke, stopped their pool game and nodded to the little procession as it marched by.

“Morning, Doctor.”

A controlled smile wrinkled the psychiatrist’s face and he nodded in return.

The staff nurse, stuffed like a turkey into a stiff, white uniform, unlocked a large steel door, and they all entered Ward D together.
“Should be a good session,” Dr. Lightburn was saying. “Two depressives, a paranoid, and a classical example of a process schiz. They all look alike when they’re on the table though.” He gave Randy a fatherly smile and followed the nurse down the hall to a large room walled with beds. In one corner was a urinal with a small wash basin next to it, and on the far side of the room a door let into a small chamber, which was their destination. Three Negro attendants were straightening the sheets on a table in the center of the room. Dr. Powers, a second year resident, was preparing a hypodermic.

“It’s good experience for you psychology trainees to sit in on these EST sessions,” Dr. Lightburn said thoughtfully. “We don’t know exactly what the shock does, but it works wonders for some of our depressives. Anyway, this will give you some idea of just what goes on up here.” He sat down and fingered through a copy of the Milwaukee Journal.

Randy had never felt particularly close to John before, but he was glad now that John was there. They stood silently in the corner while Lightburn scanned the funnies.

“Right this way, Mr. Wolzak,” the nurse said cheerily, leading a pale middle-aged man, dressed in hospital greens, to the table. “Just sit up here and loosen your robe. Now then, roll up your sleeve and lie down with your head on the pillow.”

A technician rubbed a small amount of Graphite Conducting Salve on each of the man’s temples. Then he wrapped the headband, with things—they looked like little metal earphones to Randy—around Wolzak’s skull. He put the metal discs over the graphite salve and stuck a tongue depressor in the man’s mouth. Then he stepped back to survey his handiwork. Through the entire process, Wolzak had watched him like a cornered rat.

Dr. Powers injected something into the man’s arm with the hypodermic needle. “A muscle relaxant,” he explained for the benefit of the trainees. “It reduces the severity of the convulsion.” He crossed the room to a small black box full of wires and electrical fixtures. He watched Wolzak un-
til the relaxant had taken affect, then pushed a button on the face of the box.

Wham! Wolzak's neck bulged with blood vessels, his face swelled to a bright red, and his back arched violently toward the ceiling. Three . . . four . . . five seconds. He started to shake with the induced convulsion, worse and worse, until two attendants had to hold him on the table. A wet stain appeared, then grew until it darkened the entire front of the green hospital pants. Slowly the convulsion subsided, until the little room was silent. A faint smell of singed fear hung in the room like a fine smoke.

"As you can see, there's really nothing to it," said Dr. Lightburn, looking up from his paper. "He'll be confused for a while, but by tomorrow he'll be a new man. I hope you two are learning something this morning. Well, we've got four to go."

Randy could hardly wait.

The Blue Ribbon Quilt

by Jane Herm

Modern Languages, Sr.

Mrs. Sutter rocked back and forth, rubbing bare parallel lines into the faded roses of the carpet. Her eyes were fixed in a semi-trance on the dusky wallpaper, which looked as though it might suddenly disintegrate into a powder on the floor. Everything at Maple Borders Rest Home gave the impression of being aged and frail; that was probably the worst part of being cooped up there. She just wanted to go away for a while and pretend that Maple Borders and about forty years were still ahead of her. No, not that exactly. That things like Maple Borders could never happen to her or to anybody. Instead, she was here and miserable, and right now she had to suffer through another visit with her daughter.

Doris Payne visited her every Thursday evening; it was one of the good works she devoted herself to. Tonight she