THE PETTY CASH

THIRD IN THE TRILOGY

I.O.U.

by John Dos Passos

(alias Mike Wilson)

THE PETTY CASH

"Herein a novelist takes a young Midwestern war hero, an idealistic young girl, a trollopt-turnier-Hollywood-star, and a young advertising executive, and five hundred and fifty pages, and with them weaves a tale that makes a mockery of the English language.

The Petty Cash, which Malcolm Cowley called "an intellectual sombrero, even more revolting than "The "sets Land."

"
I. O. U.

A man stands on the highway with thumbextending hand.

This is I. O. U. Hopes of the Pilgrims, voices of the Founding Fathers, Son of Godzilla. Endlessly, boundlessly yawning continent between Columbus Atlantic and Balboa Pacific:

Oklahoma dustbowls
Pasadena rosebowls.

And a man stands on the highway, hand thumbextending, with the look of ageless generations on his face; a wandering, vagrant look. It:

A look familiar to the continent. The look of no job
no woman
no dessert unless you finish your supper.

Voiceless, but in his face the voice of America, rising from the filthy-dirty grime of postindustrial mechanical debauchery into the new hope, the new light;

when the oppressed will enjoy the American experience. Buying toasters automobiles my books.

Minibarstoppers gaze at the horizon. A truck passes.

It honks its horn.
I. O. U. is many things: the sound of a bulldog climbing a pine tree,
the smell of freshly-mined anthracite, but mainly
it's the sounds of the voices of the people.

Barley wakened up as his steamer eased into New York Harbor. Gee whiz golly
yosh hunky dory, he thought. What a headache! Too much Dr. Pepper. Gotta cut
down on the carbonation; no doubt about it, he mused.

He dressed and went on deck. The air was graywithsmog. He could smell the
sirens that bloomed ashore. No one else was on deck. He buttoned up his letter-
men's jacket against the morning cold.

He felt really neat. He fingered the letter on his jacket, the one the
Army'd given him when he'd refused the Congressional Medal of Honor. The jacket
felt light, and no wonder; he'd left the Purple Hearts downbelow.

"Hey, Barley!" he heard. He turned around and saw the tall, dark and handsome
frame of his bosom buddy, Joe Asgard.

"Hey, Joe! Twenty-three skidoo!"
"Hull-a-vulla balloo to you!"
"Hey, like y'seen the shore yet?"
"Nope. Ain' serious for a second, my patience is wearin' thinner'n
men's teeth. How 'bout you, ol' buddy ol' pal?"
"Like wow. That's what I'm gonna say when I see it. Wowosh. You know?"
"You betcha, Barley. I've seen ol' Ollie Vater?"
"Nope. Guess he's still gettin' forty winks. You know," he nudged Joe,
"sleepin' it off."
"You bet."
They laughed. The sound ricocheted off the waves of the cold, polluted green water of the bay.

"Tell me we're gonna make dough, Joe."

"Don't think hardly, Barley. What with your head for coin-operated rocking-horses and mine for development, we'll be on Easy Street making a mint."

Barley thought Joe was really swell. He couldn't talk to hardly nobody else.

He looked over the side and seemed to see his successful future in the smog.

"Joe, let's go down below and see if the gang's up yet."

"Okay. You still got the diagrams?"

"Snug as a bug in a rug, if you know what I mean."

They went down below into the lounge. Ollie Vator, Eveline Nixon, and Doris Agnew were playing poker on a marble-topped table that smelled of brass polish.

It was love at first sight for Barley when he saw Doris. He really liked the way her body was powdered: all powdered sugar white, sweet as all get out. He thought it'd be neat to rub his hand between her shoulderblades.

"Hey guys!" Joe said.

"Hey!" they chorused. "Did you darlings sleep well?"

"War heroes always sleep well," Joe said, and laughed at his funny joke.

Ollie Vator looked as tight as a lock washer on a Coney Island Ferris wheel.

His hair was all slicked down with gross smelling VO5 that he'd bought on his

Barley ordered a double Dr. Pepper from the waiter and unwrapped a piece of

all-American chewing gum.

"Wolly, whatcha' in' for?" Barley said.

"Hey, you tow-headed Midwestern middle-class symbol, talk English!" Joe said, slapping his thigh.

Barley took the gum out of his mouth. "We'll make a million dollars!"
"Yo, bet."

Barley reached over and rubbed Joris' back. It rubbed back.

"Let's just be friends, Barley," she said.

"Sure! You bet! I bet the view from your room sure is great."

The ship rocked back and forth.

"Wanna tell y'all a story 'bout a man named Jad.

Poor mountaineer, barely kep' his family fed.

MUSLIME OBLITERATES DISNEYLAND

DOZENS MOURN DOS PASSOS' RETIREMENT

Heinous? Inflammable? Such was the greatest outburst of stereochemical anthroconormorphism recallable to this reporter. Solicitous and finical, possibilities depended on the subterranean.

Then one day

He was shootin' at some food

An' up through the ground co e a bubblin' crude

AUDUBON SOCIETY DECLARED EXTINCT
MAURIE MENSCH

Doctor Mensch seemed to work so hard when Mary was little. Whenever she came home from school, she'd ask her mother, with ingenuous shining blue eyes, "Where's Daddy?"

Mother would look up from the cat-o'-nine tails she was cleaning and give Mary a maternal sneer.

"Probably looking after those filthy animals again. That's why we're living in this stuck-up one-horse town and not gettingucked on Park Avenue, like civilized people. The best years of my life!"

Then Mary would go to her room and cry till her pillow dissolved. She didn't like to hear Mother talk about Daddy like that. Daddy was a veterinarian; if not for him, Muncieburg wouldn't be even a one-horse town.

Some rainy nights the miners who lived in the unfleeced shanties near the edge of town came to the back door and asked, "Fes Bok-torr Mench een? I have a sick coalt." And Daddy would put on his mackintosh and get his black bag and go help some horse or make it through the night. Mother said someday he would get sick and give them all anthrax.

In high school Mary usually didn't come home from school, but went to help Daddy at his office. Mother didn't mind; she spent most afternoons machine-gunning small children.

One day she told Mother she was going to college with Aida Coln.
"Cohn?" Mother scowled. "Dirty Yid." She bit off the end of her cigar and spat it in Mary's face. "Go ahead. See what I care."

Mary and Aila went to Vassar, where they were bosom friends and roommates for the term. Aila started to play the violin. Mary couldn't stand it; the sound of catgut and horsehair reminded her of Daddy's compassion for animals. She wanted to do something real.

She joined the local chapter of the ASPCA, where she worked from dawn to dark gathering statistics, raising milk funds for orphaned cockerspaniels, and inspecting city pounds.

She met a leader in the canine rights movement, George Bareall.

"Really, my dear," he told her, "you do not realize the importance of what we are doing. The population must know! Must! And we must be the ones to do it. And don't you think you'd be more comfortable with your clothes off?"

She worked and worked, until one day she received a telegram from Muocusburb. It was from Daddy.

Dear Mary,

Spanish fleas epidemic. Need your help?

Love,

Daddy

Mary caught the express to Muocusburb.

The whole town had it. Not a pup was safe. When Mary walked into Daddy's office, she could barely stand the hopelesslyitchful stares of the anxious doggies. Daddy looked terrible.

"Daddy, you need some rest."

"Nonsense. I think I'm good for at least another month without sleep. You just tend to the filing, dear. I have to make my rounds."
"But Daddy, you might catch it, too."

"Absurd."

Daddy hopped out of the office, scratching his ear with one foot.

THE CASE I HIS

rubberbabybugyumpers bobble helplessly in the groinsweat of workers
strangled by
mugwumps malthusian
billyclubs in faces of yidswopspollacksookies
bloody sundays get me down
reeling realizations alas! babylon! cries the harlot as socioeconomic
ramified preraephelite implications make themselves felt on the
very meeny mo
of history

your sister can't twist
but she can rock and roll
cries the lonely thumbextending man on the highway

ships at sea the charm of the double screw and
she sells sea shells at the sea shore

take my wife
please

SONG IN HIS EARS, NOT IN HIS MOUTH

Alvin, an American chipmunk
born on April 15, 1955
in a studio
in Hollywood
where the fluorescent lights flickered off and on with the current
and ink bottles glittered.

"I'm the Great, singer for Dave,
mad smile inducer for millions of children
brought up in dark projection rooms that smelled of
raunchy cigar smoking men (they do not hear the Baskin Robbins)
whose suitcase handles bit into their palms.

We knew success had gotten you
the day you took to the bottle
of ink
that spilled remorsefully over your twodimensional orange hide.

"Alvin, you're inking too much," they said. You did not listen
but plummeted cancellationward until
the network
refused to renew
you
one soft spring day.

Nevermore the glamour;
nuts for the winter
snow-covered and futile.
BARLEY BLONDEBUSS

After he sold his stock in Asgard-Ferret Rocking Horses, Barley went over to Bumbyou Playthings, Inc. It seemed he'd lost everything he'd ever had; he'd gone through one and a half wives, four affairs, gained three hundred pounds, and was drinking a gallon of scotch at every meal. The only one who stuck with him was his old mechanic friend, Bill Suremac.

"Bill," he said, "let's go check out the new X9 Electro-Palomino."

"Sure, mac," said Bill.

"Bill, why do you call me 'mac'?"

"'Cause you're the boss, mac."

They walked out to the testing field. The new model sure was a beauty: tawnygold, plenstichide, brightwhitetail. It had a double saddle. Bill got on behind Barley.

"Boy, it sure feels good to be back in the saddle. I'm just a dumb mechanic at heart," Barley said, putting the nickel in the coin slot and pushing the button.

She rode smoothsasbutter for a few minutes. Then something grabbed in the mechanism. She went insanecrazy. The last thing Barley remembered was flying off the saddle.

He woke up in a hospital. A whiteandsmiling nurse stood over him.

"Nurse," he asked, "is my ol' buddy ol' pal Bill all right?"

She gave him a rosalids and left.

They told him later that Bill died of a fractured skull when his head hit the coinbox.

Barley was operated on for an ulcer the size of a woodennickel. As the ether grabbed him, he felt himself slipping down into
MARY KENSCH

Mary came back to the office one day to find Daddy on the couch, face toward the wall. At last—he’s getting some rest, she thought. Then she saw that his body was covered with scratches. Oh, not the epidemic had gotten him! She walked over in a catatonic daze and looked: his eyes were open. Daddy was dead.

Without emotion, she called the pet cemetery. She knew that’s how Daddy would want it. She caught the next train to New York to start in on the movement to save an Airedale and a Chow from unjustified extermination.

"Ida called her in New York."

"Mary, you’ve got to come. My poor little Pedro is so sick!"

"I’m sorry," she said. "I can’t waste time worrying about distempered chihuahuas."

SMAG

A novelist sits at his typewriter, curving his thumb ever so slightly to hit the space bar. Overhead he hears the roars of the top planes that belong to the kids that live upstairs. He writes on, looking for wealth, power, recognition.

They seem out of his reach. He looks at his typewriterribbon and contemplates strangling himself.

He is blocked and frustrated by blindness, bigotry, injustice, and lack of talent. He writes on using every gimmicky trick he can think of to touch the souls of the critics.

"It’s no characters, no story, no style; he doesn’t know where he is going, what he is doing."
Undaunted, he continues to shove overdone ideas down the reader's throat.

A man in search of a bestseller, he gropes like a periscoped submarine, waiting for inspiration to come.

A hundred pages down the road.

Dear Mike,

Frankly, I didn't know what the devil to do with this when I first got it. I asked for a critical review of one of the books you'd read, and you fulfilled that prescription very literally. What you wrote about Dos Passos was obviously critical—i.e., negative—but not directly related to themes, ideas, or your ability to deal with them. On balance I decided that since the main purpose of these papers is for you to learn more about what you've read, and since you've demonstrated that you understand what you were parodying—especially in the newsreels—that what you wrote was a serious attempt at satire and not an attempt at spoof. I hope, though, that you'll have learned enough respect for good thought—providing traditional criticism—to be able to use it.