

It was the most incredible apparatus ever built. But not even the inventor knew the amazing things it could do. . . .

The Happiness Machine

By RAY BRADBURY

In front of the corner cigar store this evening the men were gathered to burn dirigibles, sink battleships, blow up dynamite works and, all in all, savor the very bacteria in their mouths that would someday stop them cold. Clouds of annihilation loomed and blew away in their cigar smoke about a nervous figure who could be seen dimly listening to the sound of shovels and spades and the intonations of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust." This figure was that of Leo Auffmann, the town jeweler who, widening his large liquid-dark eyes, at last threw up his child's hands and cried out in dismay.

"Stop! In heaven's name, get out of that graveyard!"

"Leo, how right you are," said Grandfather Spaulding passing on his nightly stroll with his grandsons Douglas and Tom. "But, Leo, only you can shut these doom-talkers up. Invent something that will make the future brighter, well-rounded, infinitely joyous. You've invented bicycles, fixed the penny-arcade contraptions, been our town movie projectionist, haven't you?"

"Sure," said Douglas. "Invent us a Happiness Machine!"

The men laughed.

"Don't," said Leo Auffmann. "How have we used machines so far—to make people cry? Yes! Every time man and the machine look like they will get on all right—boom! Someone adds a cog, airplanes drop bombs on us, cars run us off cliffs. So is the boy wrong to ask? No! No!"

His voice faded as Leo Auffmann moved to the curb to touch his bicycle as if it were an animal.

"What can I lose?" he murmured. "A little skin off my fingers, a few pounds of metal, some sleep? I'll do it, so help me!"

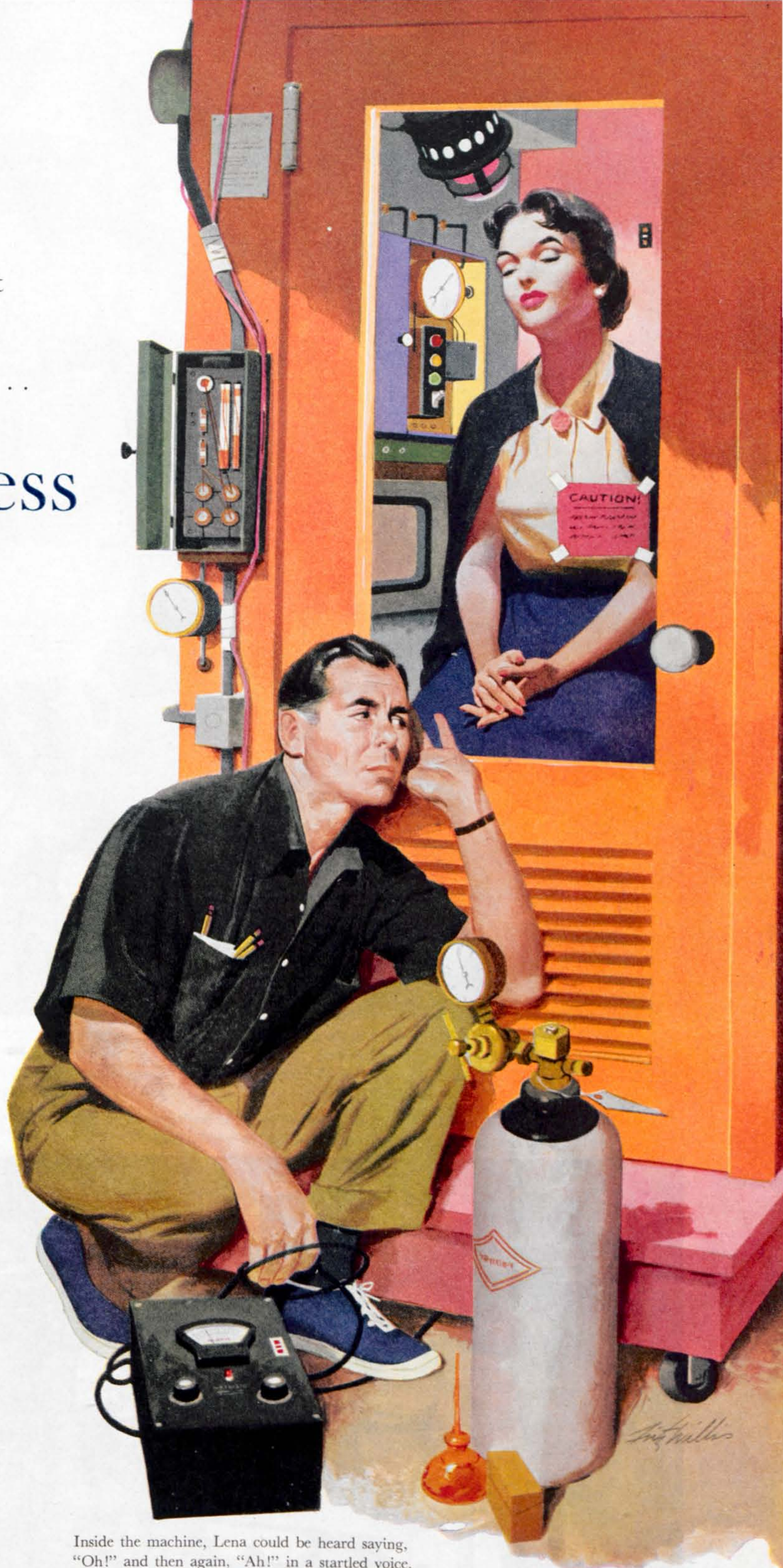
"Leo," said Grandfather, "we didn't mean —"

But Leo Auffmann was gone, pedaling off through the warm summer evening, his voice drifting back, "... I'll do it."

"You know," said Tom in awe, "I bet he will."

Watching him cycle the brick streets of evening, you could see that Leo Auffmann was a man who coasted along, enjoying the way the thistles ticked in the hot grass when the wind blew

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Inside the machine, Lena could be heard saying, "Oh!" and then again, "Ah!" in a startled voice.

The Happiness Machine

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like a blast furnace or the way the electric power lines sizzled on the rain-wet poles. He was a man who did not suffer, but pleased in sleepless nights of brooding on the great clock of the universe running down or winding itself up, who could tell? But many nights, listening, he decided first one way and then the other.

The shocks of life, he thought, biking along, what were they? Getting born, growing up, growing old, dying. Not much to do about the first. But the other three?

The wheels of his Happiness Machine spun whirling golden light spokes along the ceiling of his head. A machine, now, to help boys change from peach fuzz to brier bramble, girls from toadstool to nectarine. And in the years when your shadow leaned clear across the land as you lay abed nights with your heartbeat mounting to the billions, his invention must let a man drowse easy in the falling leaves.

"Papa!"
His six children, Saul, Marshall, Joseph, Rebecca, Ruth, Naomi, all ages from five to fifteen, came rushing across the lawn to take his bike, touching him at once.

"We waited! We got ice cream!"
Moving toward the porch, he could feel his wife's smile there in the dark.

Five minutes passed in comfortable eating silence, then, holding a spoonful of moon-colored ice cream up as if it were the whole secret of the universe, to be tasted carefully, he said, "Lena? What would you think if I tried to invent a Happiness Machine?"

"Something's wrong?" she asked quickly.

Late at night, Leo Auffmann, on the front porch, wrote a list he could not see in the dark, exclaiming, "Ah!" or "That's another!" when he hit upon a fine component. Then the front door screen made a moth sound, tapping.

"Lena?" he whispered.
She sat down next to him on the swing in her nightgown; not slim, the way girls get when they are not loved at seventeen; not fat, the way women get when they are not loved at fifty, but absolutely right, a roundness, a firmness, the way women are at any age, he thought, when there is no question.

She was miraculous. Her hands, like his, were always thinking for her, but in a different way, shaping the children or moving the bread dough like floured wrestlers on the wooden board. There seemed no long period of thought for her; thinking and doing moved from her head to her hand and back in a natural and gentle circuiting he could not and cared not to blueprint.

"That machine," she said at last, "we don't need it."

"No," he said, "but sometimes you got to build for others. I been figuring what to put in. Motion pictures? Radios? Stereoscopic viewers? All those in one place so any man can run his hand over it and smile and say, 'Yes, sir, that's Happiness.'"

Who wouldn't sweat his soul out through his pores to invent a machine like that, he asked the world, he asked the town, he asked his wife.

In the porch swing beside him, Lena's uneasy silence was an opinion.

Silent now, too, head back, he listened to the elm leaves above, hissing in the wind.

Don't forget, he told himself, that sound, too, must be in the machine.

A minute later the porch swing, the porch, stood empty in the dark.

On Sunday morning Leo Auffmann moved slowly through his garage, expecting some wood, a curl of wire, a hammer or wrench to leap up, crying, "Start here!" But nothing leaped, nothing cried for a beginning.

Should Happiness, he wondered, be something you can carry in your pocket? Or, he went on, should it be something that carries you in its pocket?

"One thing I absolutely know," he said aloud. "It should be bright!"

He set a can of orange paint in the center of the workbench, picked up a dictionary and wandered into the house.

"Lena?" He glanced at the dictionary. "Are you 'pleased, contented, joyful, delighted'? Do you feel 'lucky, fortunate'? Are things 'clever and fitting,' 'successful and suitable' for you?"

Lena stopped slicing vegetables and closed her eyes. "Read me the list again, please," she said.

He shut the book. "What have I done you got to stop and think an hour before you can tell me? All I ask is a simple yes or no! You're not 'contented, delighted, joyful'?"

"Cows are contented; babies and old people in second childhood are delighted, God help them," she said. "As for 'joyful,' Leo? Look how I laugh scrubbing out the sink."

He peered closely at her and his face relaxed. "Lena, it's true. A man doesn't appreciate. Next month, maybe, we'll get away."

"I'm not complaining!" she cried. "I'm not the one comes in with a list saying, 'Stick out your tongue.' Leo, do you ask what makes your heart beat all night? No! Next, will you ask: What's marriage? Who knows, Leo? Don't ask. A man who thinks like that—how it runs, how things work—falls off the trapeze in the circus, chokes wondering how the muscles work in the throat. Eat, sleep, breathe, Leo, and stop staring at me like I'm something new in the house!"

Lena Auffmann froze. She sniffed the air.

"Oh, my heaven, look what you done!" She yanked the oven door open. A great cloud of smoke poured through the kitchen.

"Happiness!" she wailed. "And for the first time in six months we have a fight! Happiness, and for the first time in twenty years it's not bread, it's charcoal for supper!"

When the smoke cleared, Leo Auffmann was gone.

The fearful clangor, the collision of man and inspiration, the flinging about of metal, lumber, hammer, nails, T-square, screwdriver, continued for many days. On occasion, defeated, Leo Auffmann loitered out through the streets, nervous, apprehensive, jerking his head at the slightest sound of distant laughter, listened to children's jokes, watching what made them smile. At night he sat on neighbors' crowded porches listening to the old folks weigh and balance life, and at each explosion of merriment, Leo Auffmann quickened, like a general who has seen the forces of darkness routed and whose strategy has been reaffirmed. On his way home he felt triumphant until he was in his garage (Continued on Page 156)



The Perfect Squelch

Playing in our foursome at Pebble Beach, California, recently was an Army general with a low handicap who had drawn as a partner a chap who only played several rounds of golf a year. He was a real hacker with a high handicap. In fact, it was actually a 24. It was evident after drawing that the general was not happy over his selection. After riding around on the general's shoulders for sixteen holes and not figuring in one, he finally drove the 17th green—a tough 3-par hole, and left himself a thirty-foot putt. Here was a chance to win a hole, since neither I nor my partner hit the green with our tee shots and a par would win the hole and permit the hacker to get back in the general's good graces. Walking up to his ball and looking over the break carefully, he proudly turned to his irate partner and said, "General, how would you hit this putt?" The general looked at him grimly. "I'd keep it low," he said.

Frank S. Timberlake

(Continued from Page 154) with the dead tools and the inanimate lumber. Then his bright face fell away in a pale funk, and to cover his sense of failure, he banged and crashed the parts of his machine about as if they really did make sense. At last it began to shape itself, and at the end of the ten days and nights, trembling with fatigue, self-dedicated, half-starved, fumbling and looking as if he had been riven by lightning, Leo Auffmann wandered into his house.

The children, who had been screaming horribly at each other, fell silent, as if the Red Death had entered at the chiming of the clock.

"The Happiness Machine," husked Leo Auffmann, "is ready."

"Leo Auffmann," said his wife, "has lost fifteen pounds. He hasn't talked to his children in two weeks; they are nervous, they fight! Listen! His wife is nervous; she's gained ten pounds; she'll need new clothes. Look! Sure, the machine is ready. But happy? Who can say? Leo, leave off with the clock you're building. You'll never find a cuckoo big enough to go in it! Man was not made to tamper with such things. It's not against God, no, but it sure looks like it's against Leo Auffmann. Another week of this and we'll bury him in his machine!"

But Leo Auffmann was too busy noticing that the room was falling swiftly up. *How interesting*, he thought, lying on the floor.

Darkness closed in a great wink on him as someone screamed something about that Happiness Machine three times.

The first thing he noticed the next morning was dozens of birds fluttering around in the air, stirring up ripples like colored stones thrown into an incredibly clear stream, gonging the tin roof of the garage softly.

A pack of multibred dogs padded one by one into the yard to peer and whine gently through the garage door; four boys, two girls and some men hesitated in the driveway and then edged along under the cherry trees.

Leo Auffmann, listening, knew what it was that had reached out and called them all into the yard. The sound of the Happiness Machine.

It was the sort of sound that might be heard coming from a giant's kitchen on a summer day. There were all kinds of hummings, low and high, steady and then changing. Incredible foods were being baked there by a host of whirring golden bees as big as teacups. The giantess herself, humming contentedly under her breath, might glide to the door, as vast as all summer, her face a huge peach-colored moon gazing calmly out upon smiling dogs, corn-haired boys and flour-haired old men.

"Wait," said Leo Auffmann out loud. "I didn't turn the machine on this morning! . . . Saul!"

Saul, standing in the yard below, looked up.

"Saul, did you turn it on?"

"You told me to warm it up half an hour ago!"

"All right, Saul. I forgot. I'm not awake." He fell back into bed.

His wife, bringing his breakfast up, paused by the window, looking down at the garage.

"Tell me," she said quietly. "If that machine is like you say, has it got an answer to making babies in it somewhere? Can that machine make seventy-year-old people twenty? Also, how does death look when you hide in there with all that Happiness?"

"Hide!"

"If you died from overwork, what should I do today—climb in that big box

down there and be happy? Also tell me, Leo, how is our life? You know how our house is. Seven in the morning, breakfast, the kids; all of you gone by eight-thirty, and it's just me and washing and me and cooking and socks to be darned, weeds to be dug, or I run to the store or polish silver. Who's complaining? I'm just reminding you how the house is put together, Leo, what's in it! So now answer: How do you get all those things I said in one machine?"

"That's not how it's built!"

"I'm sorry. I got no time to look, then."

And she kissed his cheek and went from the room, and he lay smelling the wind that blew from the hidden machine below, rich with the odor of those roasted chestnuts that sold in the autumn streets of a Paris he had never known.

A cat moved unseen among the hypnotized dogs and boys, to purr against the garage door, in the sound of snow waves crumbling down a faraway and rhythmically breathing shore.

Tomorrow, thought Leo Auffmann, *we'll try the machine, all of us together.*

Late that night he awoke and knew something had wakened him. Far away in another room, he heard someone crying.

"Saul?" he whispered, getting out of bed.

In his room, Saul wept, his head buried in his pillow. "No, no," he sobbed. "Over, over."

"Saul, you had a nightmare? Tell me about it, son."

But the boy only wept.

And sitting there on the boy's bed, Leo Auffmann suddenly thought to look out the window. Below, the garage doors stood open. He felt the hairs rise along the back of his neck.

When Saul slept again, uneasily, whimpering, his father went downstairs and out to the garage, where, not breathing, he put his hand out. In the cool night, the Happiness Machine's metal was too hot to touch.

So, he thought, *Saul was here to-night. Why? Was Saul unhappy, in need of the machine? No, happy, but wanting to hold onto it for good. Could you blame a boy wise enough to know his position who tried to keep it that way? No! And yet —*

Above, quite suddenly, something white was exhaled from Saul's bedroom window. Leo Auffmann's heart thundered. Then he realized that the window curtain had blown out into the open night. But it had seemed as intimate and shimmering a thing as a boy's soul escaping his room. And Leo Auffmann had flung up his hands as if to thwart it, push it back into the sleeping house.

Cold, shivering, he moved back into the house and up to Saul's room, where he pulled the blowing curtain in and locked the window tight, so the pale thing could not escape again. Then he sat on the bed and put his hand on Saul's back.

"A Tale of Two Cities? Mine. The Old Curiosity Shop? Ha, that's Leo Auffmann's all right! Great Expectations? That used to be mine. But let Great Expectations be his now!"

"What's this?" asked Leo Auffmann, entering.

"This," said his wife, "is sorting out the community property. When a father scares his son at night, it's time to chop everything in half. Out of the way, Mr. Bleak House, Old Curiosity Shop. In all these books, no mad scientist lives like Leo Auffmann, none!"

"You're leaving, and you haven't even tried the machine!" he protested. "Try it once, you'll unpack, you'll stay!"

"Tom Swift and His Electric Annihilator—whose is that?" she asked. "Must I guess?" Snorting, she gave Tom Swift to Leo Auffmann.

Very late in the day all the books, dishes, clothes, linens had been stacked one here, one there, four here, four there, ten here, ten there. Lena Auffmann, dizzy with counting, had to sit down.

"All right!" she gasped. "Before I go, Leo, prove you don't give nightmares to innocent sons!"

Silently, Leo Auffmann led his wife into the twilight. She stood before the eight-foot-tall, orange-colored box.

"That's Happiness?" she said. "Which button do I press to be overjoyed, grateful, contented and much obliged?"

The children had gathered now.

"Mamma," said Saul, "don't!"

"I got to know what I'm yelling about, Saul." She got into the machine, sat down and looked out at her husband, shaking her head. "It's not me needs this; it's you, a nervous wreck, shouting."

"Please," he said, "you'll see!" He shut the door. "Press the button!" he shouted in at his wife.

There was a click. The machine shivered quietly, like a huge dog dreaming in its sleep.

"Papa!" said Saul, worried.

"Listen!" said Leo Auffmann.

At first there was nothing but the tremor of the machine's own secretly moving cogs and wheels.

"Is mamma all right?" asked Rebecca.

"All right, she's fine! There, now! There!"

And inside the machine, Lena Auffmann could be heard saying, "Oh!" and then again, "Ah!" in a startled voice.

"Look at that!" said his wife. "Paris!" and later, "London! There goes Rome! The Pyramids! The Sphinx!"

"The Sphinx, you hear, children?" Leo Auffmann whispered, and laughed.

"Perfume?" cried Lena Auffmann, surprised.

Somewhere a phonograph played The Blue Danube faintly.

"Music! I'm dancing!"

"Only thinks she's dancing;" the father confided to the world.

"Amazing!" said the woman.

Leo Auffmann blushed. "What an understanding wife."

And then, inside the Happiness Machine, Lena Auffmann began to weep.

The inventor's smile faded.

"She's crying," said Rebecca.

"She can't be!"

"She is," said Saul.

"She simply can't be crying!" Leo Auffmann, blinking, pressed his ear to the machine. "But — yes, like a baby." He could only open the door.

"Wait." There his wife sat, tears rolling down her cheeks. "Let me finish." She cried some more.

Leo Auffmann turned off the machine, stunned.

"Oh, it's the saddest thing in the world!" she wailed. "I feel awful, terrible!" She climbed out through the door. "First, there was Paris!"

"What's wrong with Paris?"

"I never even thought of being in Paris in my life. But now you got me thinking: Paris! So suddenly I want to be in Paris and I know I'm not!"

"It's almost as good—this machine."

"No. Sitting in there, I knew. I thought, it's not real!"

"Stop crying, mamma."

She looked at him with great, dark, wet eyes. "You had me dancing. We haven't danced in twenty years."

Interval

Before Autumn

By Sara Mudge Henritzy

The sound of the reaper is gone from the field.

The orchard has yielded its ripened fruit.

The cattle drowse by the dwindling brook—

The lead bell mute.

The call of the quail comes up from the brake

Reminding that autumn waits over the hill.

But here on the selva of summertime

The year stands still—

And makes no more sound than the folding of wings—

A respite from movement, slender, brief,

Between the swift time of harvesting

And the scarlet leaf.

"I'll take you dancing tomorrow night!"

"No, no! It's not important. It shouldn't be important. But your machine says it's important! So I believe! It'll be all right, Leo, after I cry some more."

"What else?"

"What else? The machine says, 'You're young.' I'm not. It lies, that Sadness Machine!"

"Sad in what way?"

His wife was quieter now. "Leo, the mistake you made is you forgot that some hour, someday, we all got to climb out of that thing and go back to dirty dishes and the beds not made. While you're in that thing, sure, a sunset lasts forever almost, the air smells good, the temperature is fine. All the things you want to last, last. But outside, the children wait on lunch, the clothes need buttons. And then—let's be frank, Leo—how long can you look at a sunset? Who wants a sunset to last? So, after a while, who would notice? Better, for a minute or two, a sunset. After that, let's have something else. People are like that, Leo. How could you forget?"

"Did I?"

"Sunsets we always liked because they only happen once and go away."

"But, Lena, that's sad."

"No, if the sunset stayed and we got bored, that would be a real sadness. So two things you did you should never have. You made quick things go slow and stay around. You brought things faraway to our back yard, where they don't belong, where they just tell you, 'No, you'll never travel, Lena Auffmann. Paris you'll never see! Rome you'll never visit.' But I always knew that, so why tell me? Better to forget and make do, Leo, make do, eh?"

Leo Auffmann leaned against the machine for support. He snatched his burnt hand away, surprised.

"So now what, Lena?" he said.

"It's not for me to say. I know only so long as this thing is here I'll want to come

out, or Saul will want to come out, and against our judgment sit in it and look at all those places so far away, and every time we will cry and be no fit family for you.”

“I don’t understand,” he said, “how I could be so wrong. Just let me check to see what you say is true.” He sat down inside the machine. “You won’t go away?”

His wife nodded. “We’ll wait, Leo.”

He shut the door. In the warm darkness he hesitated, pressed the button, and was just relaxing back in color and music,

when he heard someone screaming, “Fire, papa! The machine’s on fire!”

Someone hammered the door. He leaped up, bumped his head and fell as the door gave way and the boys dragged him out. Behind him he heard a muffled explosion. The entire family was running now. Leo Auffmann turned and gasped, “Saul, call the Fire Department!”

Lena Auffmann caught Saul as he ran. “Saul,” she said, “wait.”

There was a gush of flames and another muffled explosion. When the machine was

burning very well indeed, Lena Auffmann nodded.

“All right, Saul,” she said. “Run call the Fire Department.”

Everybody who was anybody came to the fire. There were Grandpa Spaulding and Douglas and Tom and most of the boarders and some of the old men from across the ravine and all the children from six blocks around. And Leo Auffmann’s children stood out front, proud of how fine the flames looked jumping from the garage roof.

Grandfather Spaulding studied the smoke ball in the sky and said quietly, “Leo, was that it? Your Happiness Machine?”

“Some year,” said Leo Auffmann, “I’ll figure it and tell you.”

Lena Auffmann, standing in the dark now, watched as the firemen ran in and out of the yard, and the garage, roaring, settled upon itself.

“Leo,” she said, “it won’t take a year to figure. Look around. Think. Keep quiet a little bit. Then come tell me. I’ll be in the house, putting books back on shelves and clothes back in closets, fixing supper. Supper’s late; look how dark. . . Come, children, help mamma.”

When the firemen and the neighbors were gone, Leo Auffmann was left with Grandfather Spaulding and Douglas and Tom, brooding over the smoldering ruin. He stirred his foot in the wet ashes and slowly said what he had to say:

“The first thing you learn in life is you’re a fool. The last thing you learn in life is you’re the same fool. In one hour I’ve done a lot of thinking. I thought, Leo Auffmann is blind! You want to see the real Happiness Machine? The one they patented a couple thousand years ago. It still runs; not good all the time, no! but it runs. It’s been here all along.”

“But the fire —” said Douglas.

“Sure, the fire, the garage! But, like Lena said, it don’t take a year to fig-

ure. What burned in the garage don’t count!”

They followed him up the front porch steps.

“Here,” whispered Leo Auffmann, “the front window. Quiet, and you’ll see it.”

Hesitantly, Grandfather, Douglas and Tom peered through the large window-pane.

And there, in small warm pools of lamplight, you could see what Leo Auffmann wanted you to see. There sat Saul and Marshall, playing chess on the coffee table. In the dining room Rebecca was laying out the silver. Naomi was cutting paper-doll dresses. Ruth was painting water colors. Joseph was running his electric train. Through the kitchen door, Lena Auffmann was sliding a pot roast from the steaming oven. Every hand, every head, every mouth made a big or little motion. You could hear their faraway voices under glass. You could hear someone singing in a high, sweet voice. You could smell bread baking, too, and you knew it was real bread that would soon be covered with real butter. Everything was there, and it was working.

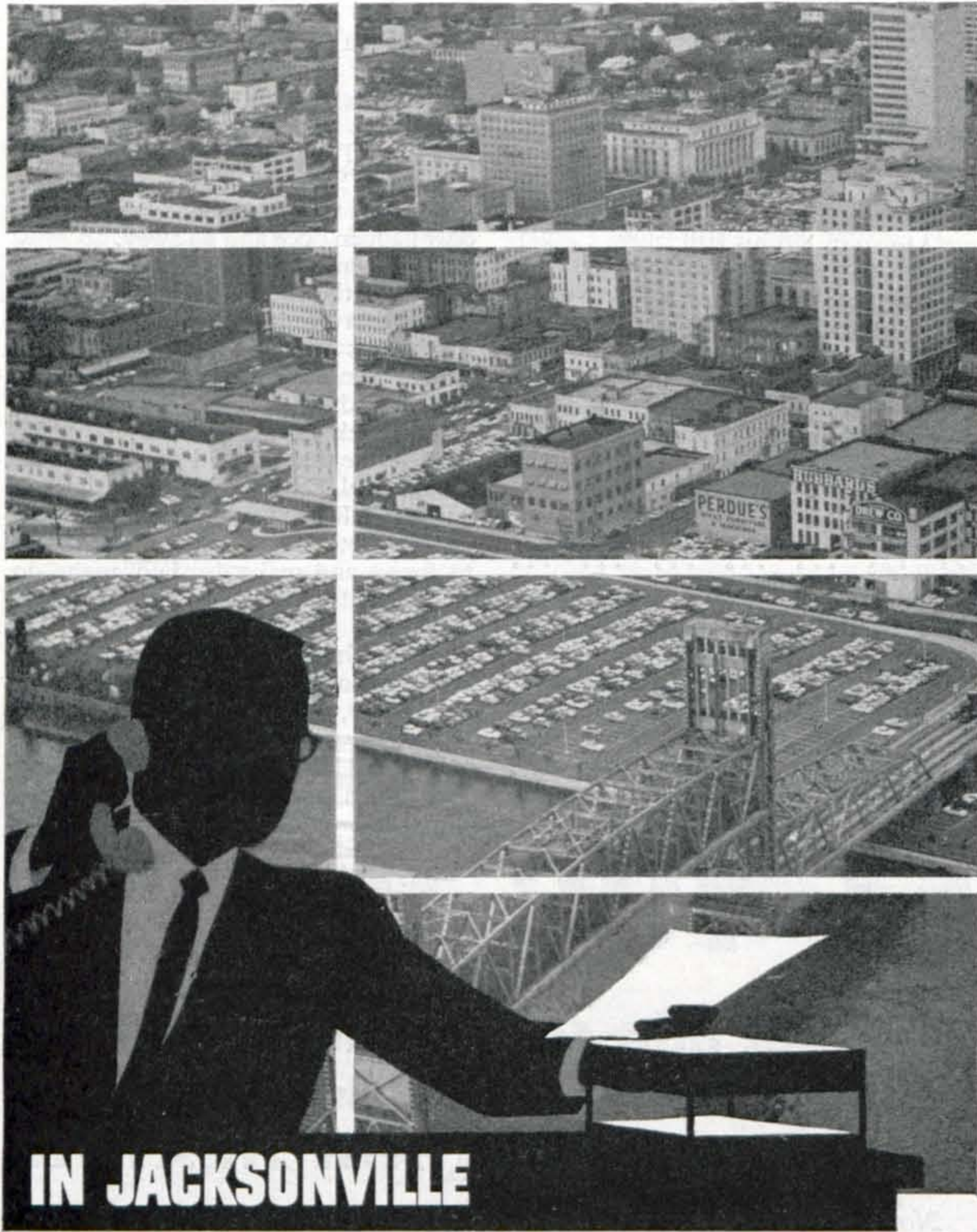
Grandfather, Douglas and Tom turned to look at Leo Auffmann, who gazed serenely through the window, the pink light on his cheeks.

“Sure,” he murmured, “there it is.” And he watched with now gentle sorrow and now quick delight, and at last quiet acceptance as all the bits, the pieces of this house mixed, stirred, settled, poised and ran steadily again. “The Happiness Machine,” he said. “The Happiness Machine.” A moment later he was gone.

Inside, Grandfather, Douglas and Tom saw him tinkering, make a minor adjustment here, eliminate friction there, busy among all those warm, wonderful, infinitely delicate, forever mysterious and ever-moving parts.

Then, smiling, they went down the steps into the fresh summer night.

THE END



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