

MORRISANIA

by James Collins.

It was a hot and muggy Thursday evening in the Bronx. I was catching up on some sleep in the bedroom after a hard day at college, and a few hours at my evening job. It was about eight o'clock in the evening and I was due to wake up at 11 to study until two. My mother rushed into the bedroom grabbed my shirt by the collar and my belt at my waist pressed me down in the bed pulled me up and threw me on the floor. I awoke with a start to the screams of my hysterical mother,

"Your father just cut his hand off."

I rushed out to the living room to find my massive father holding a Turkish towel covered with blood over his right arm and hand. I immediately pulled the towel off his arm and using my belt, made a tourniquet around his wrist. Apparently, he had been trying to open the window to allow in some air. The heat and humidity had swollen the wooden window and it would not respond to his ministrations. Maurice was a bull of a man and not very patient. He slammed the heel of his right hand into the wooden frame trying to make it move up. The glass shattered and opened his hand on the base of his thumb down to the edge of his wrist. The wound was serious but I managed to stop the flow of blood. The family car was parked in front of the apartment house and I took him down, put him in the front seat and drove to Morrisania hospital known in the district, for good reason, as 'The Bucket of Blood'. I parked in a space at the emergency room entrance and walked my father into hospital. We went to the desk, filled out all the necessary medical paperwork and sat on a bench. Alongside us was a pedestrian who had been hit by a car, a man who had been mugged, a child who had broken his arm on roller-skates and, by the smell, an inebriated homeless drunk. Keeping order in this pitiful room was a large Irish cop who was obviously bored out of his mind. My father recognized the cop as a kinsman and chatted with him for a couple of minutes.

We sat as directed and my father held his arm out over his pants so that the blood dripped on the floor. A pool was forming. My father turned to me and said, "Go inside and find out what's happening."

I followed orders, went through swinging doors and found two resident immigrant doctors sitting at a blue gray, beat up desk. One was sitting on the surface of the desk and the other was on the chair behind the desk. Both were drinking coffee and smoking, oblivious to everything else around them.

I said, "My father is cut pretty bad and he's bleeding. Can one of you come out and take a look at him, please."

The doctor sitting on the desk turned around to me and in a heavy Eastern European accent said, "We're on our coffee break. We cannot be bothered right now. We'll be out in about 10 or 15 min."

I returned to my father and related what happened. His face darkened, his muscles bulged, he started talking through his teeth and I began to be afraid. He said, "Come with me we're going to teach them a lesson."

I opened the swinging doors, and my father, pushed past me. Maurice walked directly up to the doctor sitting on the desk. Then using his left hand, Maurice grabbed the doctor by the neck of his shirt and medical gown pulled him off the desk dragged him over to the nearest wall and lifted him 12 inches off the floor. He then proceeded to bounce the doctor's head off the plaster wall while intoning the phrase, "you will fix my hand now, you will fix my hand now, you will fix my hand now." He emphasized 'you' and 'hand' each time, by slapping the doctors head against the wall. The doctor was crying and screaming, with both hands frantically tearing at Maurice's left hand. His friend was hiding behind the chair trying to get out the door and the big Irish cop pushed his way through the swinging door. The cop took one look at the two of us, noted Maurice holding the doctor 12 inches off the floor, turned around and left the room. The swinging door vibrated twice and stopped.

The doctor through his tears agreed to fix my father's hand. I watched the doctor wash off dad's hand, and with a needle, apply about 20 stitches. The doctor poured peroxide on Maurice's hand wrapped the wound in gauze and bandages and we left.

As I was pulling the car out of the emergency area, I turned to my father and said, "I notice you didn't get any Novocain, did it hurt? "

"Oh, it hurt like hell, but I didn't let on, I wouldn't give him the satisfaction. That probably scared him even more. He will not treat any more patients with that arrogant attitude. He's got to know he is working on people who live in the Bronx and we won't put up with that crap."

THE END