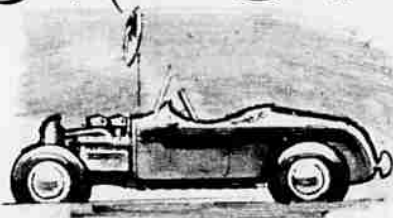


A Young Man Comes to Call



by Jim Bosworth

IT SEEMED LIKE all the years were coming to an end when the knock rattled the screen door.

Yesterday, a small girl's piping chatter. Today, smooth and quiet and nearly a woman's. Yesterday, the loving sprite skimming the walk beneath the maples, catching for one breathless moment a thread-

darkness at the boy he could not quite see. "You must be—come in."

The first boy, he thought. The first date. The drifting away from female chums and Saturday's giggling matinees, and pajama parties and blue jeans to go forth most regally with the first flower, nervous and

at a sparrow and see an eagle? He turned away, wondering and disappointed.

"So you're Tommy Glass," he said.

"Yes, sir," Tommy croaked and offered his hand.

David pretended not to see it and hastily pointed to a chair.

"Shirley isn't ready yet."

The boy perched nervously on the seat and David leaned forward and stared at the rug.

Olivia came in then, wiping her hands on her apron. "Hello, Tommy. Glad to see you again. Shirley will be down shortly."

"You've met before?" David looked up.

"Parent's day at school. The one you missed."

Olivia was always chiding him about civic duty when those affairs came up. It seemed the paper-manufacturing business should be interrupted to go hear students sing and recite.

Olivia went back to the kitchen, and David heard the cracking of an ice tray. He drummed his fingers while Tommy stared at the floor.

"How old are you?"

AT LAST! A PEN THAT POSITIVELY WON'T SKIP! NEW PAPER MATE CAPRI MARK III*

line of sun to turn her fingers golden. Now, tall, full of grace, and nearly ripe like Summer fruit.

David Forrester stirred in his chair when the knock came again. He stood up and walked slowly to the door, thinking how it was; dream happily in the beginning, watch a child grow, and delight in it; then the time of the first step is past, and the first word becomes an uncertain memory; the first thrill of school becomes routine and the first boy touches your door as he does now; then you suddenly regret the time that is gone.

He opened the screen door and peered into the

breathless, as if to a coronation, in a boy's first car.

David Forrester led the way into the living room, and Olivia called from the kitchen: "Who is it, dear?"

David turned and faced him, and went cold inside. He had heard, for a week, glowing terms that called forth a ruddy, sharp-eyed young animal, dressed like a magazine ad and gifted with the tongue of a Wolfe or a Faulkner—not a pale, bad-skinned boy whose eyes seemed pinkish dry, dressed in a blue suit too small and too sharply pressed; who stood with his mouth open, seemingly on the verge of a stuttered greeting.

What was it in a young girl's eyes that could look

"Seventeen—17 next month, I mean."

"What does your father do?"

"He's a bartender."

"Oh?"

"Yes, sir. Down at the Fireplace."

It seemed to end there again. Talk coming fitfully, dying, leaving David to study objects in the room as if they were brand new.

A bartender—what kind of background could the boy have had? He thumped his fist into his palm again. No, most bartenders were a sober lot and nothing more than businessmen. But there was something about the boy—the way he wouldn't look

