

# The Night People

by JEAN SHEPHERD

## The Arena

"Now look, Charlie, if they start talking 'exclusivity,' put 'em off, but for God's sake don't sign anything without calling the office," the short middle-aged blonde woman whispered in a husky voice to Charlie. He crossed his legs carefully so as to protect his crease and picked up a copy of U. S. News & World Report from the blond-oak coffee table in front of him. The woman arose from the leather-covered couch and walked over to the elevator doors. She casually glanced at the ten or twelve young men seated around the room, greeted a couple of them in an off-hand way, and departed on the first down car.

### Built for Waiting

The room seemed to be a place built for waiting. The walls were covered with two enormous photographs; one an aerial shot of New York, the other of Chicago. Facing the elevators in the center of the room was a desk. A receptionist worked here and was the first thing that anyone encountered upon alighting on the 10th floor. She was not outwardly bored and didn't talk at all like Judy Holliday. In fact, she sounded more like Radcliffe than anything else. Occasionally the phone on her desk would flicker, and after listening briefly she would call out a name to the young men seated around the room. One of them would put down his magazine or stop talking to the others and would walk to a door at the far end of the room. They usually made a few comments to the others before leaving. These were mostly about nothing and seemed to be largely unheard even by those to whom they were directed. There was a kind of jovial, tense

Ivy League style and Madison Ave. A nice blend.

Someone asked Charlie who the woman was, since she seemed familiar to him. Charlie answered: "My agent; she has a place over at 1650 Broadway." The other guy nodded and said that he knew he'd seen her somewhere. The talk went on. Charlie picked up his script and went over it again, saying quietly aloud to himself: "So friends, try Vicks Cough Syrup with exclusive meditating action and the new magic ingredient, Cetamium. Try it to-night!" He paused at the word "Cetamium," repeated it and went on. His voice was rich and deep. It was obvious he enjoyed using and hearing it.

The phone flickered again, and this time it was Charlie's turn. He walked to the door and turned left down a long corridor. He was greeted by a stocky tanned man who seemed to know him, or at least used his first name. They went together into a small room outfitted to resemble a TV studio with bright lights, microphones, and the works. Behind some glass windows sat a couple of men in semi-darkness. They said nothing. The man placed Charlie before a battery of lights and in front



JEAN SHEPHERD (L) AND FRIEND

"There was a kind of jovial, tense nervousness in the room that gave everyone a sort of super-charged charm . . ."

of a microphone. Charlie began to recite the copy from memory as best he could. Every so often he would glance at the sheet and go on. He smiled and pretended to hold up a bottle of cough syrup. The finger of his right hand pointed to an imaginary label. The tan man stepped out of the darkness when Charlie finished, and waved toward the door. "We've got the number, Charlie. You'll probably hear from us." Ten minutes later Charlie was in Schrafft's, downing a glass of iced coffee. A resting warrior. A warrior in the roughest arena this side of Rome. "Yes, friends, remember it's the friendly laxative . . . Try it soon!"



## THE OUTSIDER

By Colin Wilson. Houghton Mifflin, \$4.

by John Barkley Hart

The best practicing psychoanalysts do not try to superimpose a scheme of values upon a patient, but encourage washing the senses clean by a personal struggle for the meaning of existence. The sharpest criticism of this method is in Sartre and the French Existentialists who have worked within a great French culture facing the problem of death. The most brilliant people in the literary areas of involvement tested the limits of their perception only to discover that the dreams of France and her extant institutional forms remained split off from objective reality. French culture had become a mental case with no means of implementation of its identity in a world of great technological power, moving onward toward something, no one could be sure quite what, in spite of and beyond any statements of destiny from the East or West.

### Not Enough

Sartre's answer was to refuse delusion. Man was somehow outside of the movement of history, he had no part of it, only existence. Existentialism is dissatisfaction, refusal of life, negation of life—not insanity, but death. In the struggle for meaning the fact that a man is alive, that he exists,

must be enough for him. But it is not enough. Sartre soon realized that personal destiny apart from species-destiny must turn to dust, so he enlisted in the cause of Communism. He did not deceive himself into believing that the goal of Communism was the actual historical destiny of the species, but he could refuse life no longer, he needed action, the sense of moving toward something even when he could not fully believe.

Colin Wilson in writing about the problem of the Outsider in literature begins with France at a low point of alienation. Karl Marx had described man as alienated from God and the five senses alone in a single cell. Existentialism not only accepts this fact but strives to admit it fully—emotionally, intellectually, even physically. Continued on page 11

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by

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nervousness in the room that gave everyone a sort of supercharged charm. Everyone except the receptionist, who was obviously part of the scenery.

### Each Checked Off

From time to time the elevators would discharge another young man who would exchange a few words with the girl at the desk. She would then check his name off on a typed list before her, hand him a couple of sheets of mimeographed paper, and nod him toward the casual-looking seats that ringed the place. Invariably he would spot someone among the others who was known to him, and there would be loud greeting-type talk before and after he settled himself with the others. He would then begin reading the sheets he had been given by the girl. Sometimes they would read them quietly aloud to themselves, but most often silently and very carefully. Once one of them called to the girl: "Hey, is this word supposed to be 'Cetamium' with an 'm' or is it with an 'n'? This doesn't sound right." The girl said: "The copy has it right, I checked it with Steve a couple of minutes ago before Rex went in to audition." Every time one of the men would return through the door someone would ask: "How'd it go?" He would usually shrug and answer "Who knows?" or something that meant the same. They all had an air of nonchalance, as though they really didn't care but were here on a kind of social call. A time taken out of a busy and official day. They wore no hats and were all very well dressed. A cross between