



# Darling Adolf, Ray Bradbury

## Darling Adolf

They were waiting for him to come out. He was sitting inside the little Bavarian café with a view of the mountains, drinking beer, and he had been in there since noon and it was now two-thirty, a long lunch, and much beer, and they could see by the way he held his head and laughed and lifted one more stein with the suds fluffing in the spring breeze that he was in a grand humor now, and at the table with him the two other men were doing their best to keep up, but had fallen long behind.

On occasion their voices drifted on the wind, and then the small crowd waiting out in the parking lot leaned to hear. What was he saying? and now what?

“He just said the shooting was going well.”

“What, where?!”

“Fool. The film, the film is shooting well.”

“Is that the director sitting with him?”

“Yes. And the other unhappy one is the producer.”

“He doesn’t look like a producer.”

“No wonder! He’s had his nose changed.”

“And him, doesn’t he look real?”

“To the hair and the teeth.”

And again everyone leaned to look in at the three men, at the man who didn’t look like a producer, at the sheepish director who kept glancing out at the crowd and slouching down with his head between his shoulders, shutting his eyes, and the man between them, the man in the uniform with the swastika on his arm, and the fine military cap put on the table beside the almost-untouched food, for he was talking, no, making a speech.

“That’s the Führer, all right!”

“God in heaven, it’s as if no time had passed. I don’t believe this is 1973. Suddenly it’s 1934 again, when first I saw him.”

“Where?”

“The Nuremberg Rally, the stadium, that was the autumn, yes, and I was thirteen and part of the Youth and one hundred thousand soldiers and young men in that big place that late afternoon before the torches were lit.

So many bands, so many flags, so much heartbeat, yes, I tell you, I could hear one hundred thousand hearts banging away, we were all so in love, he had come down out of the clouds. The gods had sent him, we knew, and the time of waiting was over, from here on we could act, there was nothing he couldn’t help us to do.”

“I wonder how that actor in there feels, playing him?”

“Sh, he hears you. Look, he waves. Wave back.”

“Shut up,” said someone else. “They’re talking again. I want to hear—”

The crowd shut up. The men and women leaned into the soft spring wind. The voices drifted from the café table.

Beer was being poured by a maiden waitress with flushed cheeks and eyes as bright as fire.

“More beer!” said the man with the toothbrush mustache and the hair combed forward on the left side of his brow.

“No, thanks,” said the director.

“No, no,” said the producer.

“More beer! It’s a splendid day,” said Adolf. “A toast to the film, to us, to me. Drink!”

The other two men put their hands on their glasses of beer.

“To the film,” said the producer.

“To darling Adolf.” The director’s voice was flat.

The man in the uniform stiffened.

“I do not look upon myself—” he hesitated, “upon him as darling.”  
“He was darling, all right, and you’re a doll.” The director gulped his drink. “Does anyone mind if I get drunk?”  
“To be drunk is not permitted,” said Der Führer.

“Where does it say that in the script?”

The producer kicked the director under the table.

“How many more weeks’ work do you figure we have?” asked the producer, with great politeness.

“I figure we should finish the film,” said the director, taking huge swigs, “around about the death of Hindenburg, or the Hindenburg gasbag going down in flames at Lakehurst, New Jersey, whichever comes first.”

Adolf Hitler bent to his plate and began to eat rapidly, snapping at his meat and potatoes in silence.

The producer sighed heavily. The director, nudged by this, calmed the waters. “Another three weeks should see the masterwork in the can, and us sailing home on the Titanic, there to collide with the Jewish critics and go down bravely singing ‘Deutschland Uber Alles.’”

Suddenly all three were voracious and snapping and biting and chewing their food, and the spring breeze blew softly, and the crowd waited outside.

At last, Der Führer stopped, had another sip of beer, and lay back in his chair, touching his mustache with his little finger.

“Nothing can provoke me on a day like this. The rushes last night were so beautiful. The casting for this film, ah! I find Göring to be incredible. Goebbels? Perfection!” Sunlight dazzled out of Der Führer’s face. “So. So, I was thinking just last night, here I am in Bavaria, me, a pure Aryan—”

Both men flinched slightly, and waited.

“—making a film,” Hitler went on, laughing softly, “with a Jew from New York and a Jew from Hollywood. So amusing.”

“I am not amused,” said the director, lightly.

The producer shot him a glance which said: the film is not finished yet. Careful.

“And I was thinking, wouldn’t it be fun . . .” Here Der Führer stopped to take a big drink, “. . . to have another . . . ah . . . Nuremberg Rally?”

“You mean for the film, of course?”

The director stared at Hitler. Hitler examined the texture of the suds in his beer.

“My God,” said the producer, “do you know how much it would cost to reproduce the Nuremberg Rally? How much did it cost Hitler for the original, Marc?”

He blinked at his director, who said, “A bundle. But he had a lot of free extras, of course.”

“Of course! The Army, the Hitler Youth.”

“Yes, yes,” said Hitler. “But think of the publicity, all over the world? Let us go to Nuremberg, eh, and film my plane, eh, and me coming down out of the clouds? I heard those people out there, just now: Nuremberg and plane and torches. They remember. I remember. I held a torch in that stadium. My God, it was beautiful. And now, now I am exactly the age Hitler was when he was at his prime.”

“He was never at his prime,” said the director. “Unless you mean hung-meat.”

Hitler put down his glass. His cheeks grew very red. Then he forced a smile to widen his lips and change the color of his face. “That is a joke, of course.”

“A joke,” said the producer, playing ventriloquist to his friend.

“I was thinking,” Hitler went on, his eyes on the clouds again, seeing it all, back in another year. “If we shot it next month, with the weather good. Think of all the tourists who would come to watch the filming!”

“Yeah. Bormann might even come back from Argentina.”

The producer shot his director another glare.

Hitler cleared his throat and forced the words out: “As for expense, if you took one small ad, one mind you! in the Nuremberg papers one week before, why, you would have an army of people there as extras at fifty cents a day, no, a quarter, no, free!”

Der Führer emptied his stein, ordered another. The waitress dashed off to refill. Hitler studied his two friends.

“You know,” said the director, sitting up, his own eyes taking a kind of vicious fire, his teeth showing as he leaned forward, “there is a kind of idiot grace to you, a kind of murderous wit, a sort of half-ass style.

Every once in a while you come dripping up with some sensational slime that gleams and stinks in the sun, buster. Archie, listen to him. Der Führer just had a great bowel movement. Drag in the astrologers! Slit the pigeons and filch their guts. Read me the casting sheets.”

The director leaped to his feet and began to pace.

“That one ad in the paper, and all the trunks in Nuremberg get flung wide! Old uniforms come out to cover fat bellies! Old armbands come out to fit flabby arms! Old military caps with skull-eagles on them fly out to fit on fat-heads!”

“I will not sit here—” cried Hitler.

He started to get up but the producer was tugging his arm and the director had a knife at his heart: his forefinger, stabbing hard.

“Sit.”

The director’s face hovered two inches from Hitler’s nose. Hitler slowly sank back, his cheeks perspiring.

“God, you are a genius,” said the director. “Jesus, your people would show up. Not the young, no, but the old. All the Hitler Youth, your age now, those senile bags of tripe yelling ‘Sieg Heil,’ saluting, lighting torches at sunset, marching around the stadium crying themselves blind.”

The director swerved to his producer.

“I tell you, Arch, this Hitler here has bilge for brains but this time he’s on target! If we don’t shove the Nuremberg Rally up this film, I quit. I mean it. I will simply walk out and let Adolf here take over and direct the damned thing himself! Speech over.”

He sat down.

Both the producer and Der Führer appeared to be in a state of shock.

“Order me another goddamn beer,” snapped the director.

Hitler gasped in a huge breath, tossed down his knife and fork, and shoved back his chair.

“I do not break bread with such as you!”

“Why, you bootlicking lapdog son of a bitch,” said the director. “I’ll hold the mug and you’ll do the licking. Here.” The director grabbed the beer and shoved it under Der Führer’s nose. The crowd, out beyond, gasped and almost surged. Hitler’s eyes rolled, for the director had seized him by the front of his tunic and was yanking him forward.

“Lick! Drink the German filth! Drink, you scum!”

“Boys, boys,” said the producer.

“Boys, crud! You know what this swill-hole, this chamberpot Nazi, has been thinking, sitting here, Archibald, and drinking your beer? Today Europe, tomorrow the world!”

“No, no, Marc!”

“No, no,” said Hitler, staring down at the fist which clenched the material of his uniform. “The buttons, the buttons—”

“Are loose on your tunic and inside your head, worm. Arch, look at him pour! Look at the grease roll off his forehead, look at his stinking armpits. He’s a sea of sweat because I’ve read his mind! Tomorrow the world! Get this film set up, him cast in the lead. Bring him down out of the clouds, a month from now. Brass bands. Torchlight. Bring back Leni Riefenstahl to show us how she shot the Rally in ’34.

Hitler’s lady-director friend. Fifty cameras she used, fifty she used, by God, to get all the German crumbs lined up and vomiting lies, and Hitler

in his creaking leather and Göring awash in his blubber, and Goebbels doing his wounded-monkey walk, the three superfags of history aswank in the stadium at dusk, make it all happen again, with this bastard up front, and do you know what's going through his little graveyard mind behind his bloater eyes at this very moment?"

"Marc, Marc," whispered the producer, eyes shut, grinding his teeth. "Sit down. Everyone sees."

"Let them see! Wake up, you! Don't you shut your eyes on me, too! I've shut my eyes on you for days, filth. Now I want some attention. Here." He sloshed beer on Hitler's face, which caused his eyes to snap wide and his eyes to roll yet again, as apoplexy burned his cheeks.

The crowd, out beyond, hissed in their breath.

The director, hearing, leered at them.

"Boy, is this funny. They don't know whether to come in or not, don't know if you're real or not, and neither do I. Tomorrow, you bilgy bastard, you really dream of becoming Der Führer."

He bathed the man's face with more beer.

The producer had turned away in his chair now and was frantically dabbing at some imaginary breadcrumbs on his tie. "Marc, for God's sake—"

"No, no, seriously, Archibald. This guy thinks because he puts on a ten-cent uniform and plays Hitler for four weeks at good pay that if we actually put together the Rally, why Christ, History would turn back, oh turn back, Time, Time in thy flight, make me a stupid Jew-baking Nazi again for tonight.

Can you see it, Arch, this lice walking up to the microphones and shouting, and the crowd shouting back, and him really trying to take over, as if Roosevelt still lived and Churchill wasn't six feet deep, and it was all to be lost or won again, but mainly won, because this time they wouldn't stop at the Channel but just cross on over, give or take a million German boys dead, and stomp England and stomp America, isn't that what's going on inside your little Aryan skull, Adolf? Isn't it!"



Hitler gagged and hissed. His tongue stuck out. At last he jerked free and exploded:

“Yes! Yes, goddamn you! Damn and bake and burn you! You dare to lay hands on Der Führer! The Rally! Yes! It must be in the film! We must make it again! The plane! The landing! The long drive through streets.

The blond girls. The lovely blond boys. The stadium. Leni Riefenstahl! And from all the trunks, in all the attics, a black plague of armbands winging on the dusk, flying to assault, battering to take the victory. Yes, yes, I, Der Führer, I will stand at that Rally and dictate terms! I—I—”

He was on his feet now.

The crowd, out beyond in the parking lot, shouted.

Hitler turned and gave them a salute.

The director took careful aim and shot a blow of his fist to the German’s nose.

After that the crowd arrived, shrieking, yelling, pushing, shoving, falling. They drove to the hospital at four the next afternoon.

Slumped, the old producer sighed, his hands over his eyes. “Why, why, why are we going to the hospital? To visit that—monster?”

The director nodded.

The old man groaned. “Crazy world. Mad people. I never saw such biting, kicking, biting. That mob almost killed you.”

The director licked his swollen lips and touched his half-shut left eye with a probing finger. “I’m okay. The important thing is I hit Adolf, oh, how I hit him. And now—” He stared calmly ahead, “I think I am going to the hospital to finish the job.”

“Finish, finish?” The old man stared at him.

“Finish.” The director wheeled the car slowly around a corner.

“Remember the twenties, Arch, when Hitler got shot at in the street and not hit, or beaten in the streets, and nobody socked him away forever, or he left a beer hall ten minutes before a bomb went off, or

was in that officers' hut in 1944 and the briefcase bomb exploded and that didn't get him.

Always the charmed life. Always he got out from under the rock. Well, Archie, no more charms, no more escapes. I'm walking in that hospital to make sure that when that half-ass extra comes out and there's a mob of krauts to greet him, he's walking wounded, a permanent soprano. Don't try to stop me, Arch."

"Who's stopping? Belt him one for me."

They stopped in front of the hospital just in time to see one of the studio production assistants run down the steps, his hair wild, his eyes wilder, shouting.

"Christ," said the director. "Bet you forty to one, our luck's run out again. Bet you that guy running toward us says—"

"Kidnaped! Gone!" the man cried. "Adolf's been taken away!"

"Son of a bitch."

They circled the empty hospital bed; they touched it.

A nurse stood in one corner wringing her hands. The production assistant babbled.

"Three men it was, three men, three men."

"Shut up." The director was snowblind from simply looking at the white sheets. "Did they force him or did he go along quietly?"

"I don't know, I can't say, yes, he was making speeches, making speeches as they took him out."

"Making speeches?" cried the old producer, slapping his bald pate.

"Christ, with the restaurant suing us for broken tables, and Hitler maybe suing us for—"

"Hold on." The director stepped over and fixed the production assistant with a steady gaze. "Three men, you say?"

"Three, yes, three, three, three, oh, three men."

A small forty-watt lightbulb flashed on in the director's head.

“Did, ah, did one man have a square face, a good jaw, bushy eyebrows?”

“Why . . . yes!”

“Was one man short and skinny like a chimpanzee?”

“Yes!”

“Was one man big, I mean, slobby fat?”

“How did you know?”

The producer blinked at both of them. “What goes on? What—”  
“Stupid attracts stupid. Animal cunning calls to laughing jackass cunning. Come on, Arch!”

“Where?” The old man stared at the empty bed as if Adolf might materialize there any moment now.

“The back of my car, quick!”

From the back of the car, on the street, the director pulled a German cinema directory. He leafed through the character actors. “Here.” The old man looked. A forty-watt bulb went on in his head.

The director riffled more pages. “And here. And, finally, here.” They stood now in the cold wind outside the hospital and let the breeze turn the pages as they read the captions under the photographs. “Goebbels,” whispered the old man.

“An actor named Rudy Steihl.”

“Göring.”

“A hambone named Grofe.”

“Hess.”

“Fritz Dingle.”

The old man shut the book and cried to the echoes.

“Son of a bitch!”

“Louder and funnier, Arch. Funnier and louder.”

“You mean right now out there somewhere in the city three dumbkopf out-of-work actors have Adolf in hiding, held maybe for ransom? and do we pay it?”

“Do we want to finish the film, Arch?”

“God, I don’t know, so much money already, time, and—” The old man shivered and rolled his eyes. “What if—I mean—what if they don’t want ransom?”

The director nodded and grinned. “You mean, what if this is the true start of the Fourth Reich?”

“All the peanut brittle in Germany might put itself in sacks and show up if they knew that—”

“Steihl, Grofe, and Dingle, which is to say, Goebbels, Göring, and Hess, were back in the saddle with dumbass Adolf?”

“Crazy, awful, mad! It couldn’t happen!”

“Nobody was ever going to clog the Suez Canal. Nobody was ever going to land on the Moon. Nobody.”

“What do we do? This waiting is horrible. Think of something, Marc, think, think!”

“I’m thinking.”

“And—”

This time a hundred-watt bulb flashed on in the director’s face. He sucked air and let out a great braying laugh.

“I’m going to help them organize and speak up, Arch! I’m a genius. Shake my hand!”

He seized the old man’s hand and pumped it, crying with hilarity, tears running down his cheeks.

“You, Marc, on their side, helping form the Fourth Reich!?”

The old man backed away.

“Don’t hit me, help me. Think, Arch, think. What was it Darling Adolf said at lunch, and damn the expense! What, what?”

The old man took a breath, held it, exploded it out, with a final light blazing in his face.

“Nuremberg?” he asked.

“Nuremberg! What month is this, Arch?”

“October!”

“October! October, forty years ago, October, the big, big Nuremberg Rally. And this coming Friday, Arch, an Anniversary Rally. We shove an ad in the international edition of Variety: RALLY AT NUREMBERG.

TORCHES. BANDS. FLAGS. Christ, he won’t be able to stay away. He’d shoot his kidnapers to be there and play the greatest role in his life!”

“Marc, we can’t afford—”

“Five hundred and forty-eight bucks? For the ad plus the torches plus a full military band on a phonograph record? Hell, Arch, hand me that phone.”

The old man pulled a telephone out of the front seat of his limousine.

“Son of a bitch,” he whispered.

“Yeah.” The director grinned, and ticked the phone. “Son of a bitch.”

The sun was going down beyond the rim of Nuremberg Stadium. The sky was bloodied all across the western horizon. In another half-hour it would be completely dark and you wouldn’t be able to see the small platform down in the center of the arena, or the few dark flags with the swastikas put up on temporary poles here or there making a path from one side of the stadium to the other. There was a sound of a crowd gathering, but the place was empty. There was a faint drum of band music but there was no band.

Sitting in the front row on the eastern side of the stadium, the director waited, his hands on the controls of a sound unit. He had been waiting for two hours and was getting tired and feeling foolish. He could hear the old man saying:

“Let’s go home. Idiotic. He won’t come.”

And himself saying, “He will. He must,” but not believing it.

He had the records waiting on his lap. Now and again he tested one, quietly, on the turntable, and then the crowd noises came from lilyhorns stuck up at both ends of the arena, murmuring, or the band played, not loudly, no, that would be later, but very softly. Then he waited again.

The sun sank lower. Blood ran crimson in the clouds. The director tried not to notice. He hated nature's blatant ironies.

The old man stirred feebly at last and looked around.

"So this was the place. It was really it, back in 1934."

"This was it. Yeah."

"I remember the films. Yes, yes. Hitler stood—what? Over there?"

"That was it."

"And all the kids and men down there and the girls there, and fifty cameras."

"Fifty, count 'em, fifty. Jesus, I would have liked to have been here with the torches and flags and people and cameras."

"Marc, Marc, you don't mean it?"

"Yes, Arch, sure! So I could have run up to Darling Adolf and done what I did to that pig-swine half-ass actor. Hit him in the nose, then hit him in the teeth, then hit him in the blinis! You got it, Leni? Action! Swot! Camera! Bam! Here's one for Izzie. Here's one for Ike. Cameras running, Leni? Okay. Zot! Print!"

They stood looking down into the empty stadium where the wind prowled a few newspapers like ghosts on the vast concrete floor. Then, suddenly, they gasped.

Far up at the very top of the stadium a small figure had appeared. The director quickened, half rose, then forced himself to sit back down. The small figure, against the last light of the day, seemed to be having difficulty walking. It leaned to one side, and held one arm up against its side, like a wounded bird.

The figure hesitated, waited.

"Come on," whispered the director.

The figure turned and was about to flee.  
“Adolf, no!” hissed the director.

Instinctively, he snapped one of his hands to the sound-effects tape deck, his other hand to the music.  
The military band began to play softly.  
The “crowd” began to murmur and stir.  
Adolf, far above, froze.

The music played higher. The director touched a control knob. The crowd mumbled louder.  
Adolf turned back to squint down into the half-seen stadium. Now he must be seeing the flags. And now the few torches. And now the waiting platform with the microphones, two dozen of them! one of them real.

The band came up in full brass.  
Adolf took one step forward.  
The crowd roared.

Christ, thought the director, looking at his hands, which were now suddenly hard fists and now again just fingers leaping on the controls, all to themselves. Christ, what do I do with him when I get him down here? What, what?

And then, just as insanely, the thought came. Crud. You’re a director. And that’s him. And this is Nuremberg.  
So . . .?  
Adolf took a second step down. Slowly his hand came up in a stiff salute.  
The crowd went wild.

Adolf never stopped after that. He limped, he tried to march with pomp, but the fact was he limped down the hundreds of steps until he reached the floor of the stadium. There he straightened his cap, brushed his tunic, resaluted the roaring emptiness, and came gimping

across two hundred yards of empty ground toward the waiting platform.

The crowd kept up its tumult. The band responded with a vast heartbeat of brass and drum.

Darling Adolf passed within twenty feet of the lower stands where the director sat fiddling with the tape-deck dials. The director crouched down. But there was no need. Summoned by the “Sieg Heils” and the fanfare of trumpets and brass, Der Führer was drawn inevitably toward that dais where destiny awaited him. He was walking taller now and though his uniform was rumpled and the swastika emblem torn, and his mustache moth-eaten and his hair wild, it was the old Leader all right, it was him.

The old producer sat up straight and watched. He whispered. He pointed.

Far above, at the top of the stadium, three more men had stepped into view.

My God, thought the director, that’s the team. The men who grabbed Adolf.

A man with bushy eyebrows, a fat man, and a man like a wounded chimpanzee.

Jesus. The director blinked. Goebbels. Göring. Hess. Three actors at liberty. Three half-ass kidnapers staring down at . . .

Adolf Hitler climbing up on the small podium by the fake microphones and the real one under the blowing torches which bloomed and blossomed and guttered and smoked on the cold October wind under the sprig of lily-horns which lifted in four directions.

Adolf lifted his chin. That did it. The crowd went absolutely mad. Which is to say, the director’s hand, sensing the hunger, went mad, twitched the volume high so the air was riven and torn and shattered again and again and again with “Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!”



Above, high on the stadium rim, the three watching figures lifted their arms in salute to their Führer.

Adolf lowered his chin. The sounds of the crowd faded. Only the torch flames whispered.

Adolf made his speech.

He must have yelled and chanted and brayed and sputtered and whispered hoarsely and wrung his hands and beat the podium with his fist and plunged his fist at the sky and shut his eyes and shrieked like a disemboweled trumpet for ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour as the sun vanished beyond the earth and the three other men up on the stadium rim watched and listened and the producer and the director waited and watched.

He shouted things about the whole world and he yelled things about Germany and he shrieked things about himself and he dammed this and blamed that and praised yet a third, until at last he began to repeat, and repeat the same words over and over as if he had reached the end of a record inside himself and the needle was fastened to a circle track which hissed and hiccuped, hiccuped and hissed, and then faded away at last into a silence where you could only hear his heavy breathing, which broke at last into a sob and he stood with his head bent while the others now could not look at him but looked only at their shoes or the sky or the way the wind blew dust across the field. The flags fluttered. The single torch bent and lifted and twisted itself again and talked under its breath.

At last, Adolf raised his head to finish his speech.

“Now I must speak of them.”

He nodded up to the top of the stadium where the three men stood against the sky.

“They are nuts. I am nuts, too. But at least I know I am nuts. I told them: crazy, you are crazy. Mad, you are mad. And now, my own craziness, my own madness, well, it has run itself down. I am tired.

“So now, what? I give the world back to you. I had it for a small while here today. But now you must keep it and keep it better than I would.

To each of you I give the world, but you must promise, each of you to keep your own part and work with it. So there. Take it.”

He made a motion with his free hand to the empty seats, as if all the world were in his fingers and at last he were letting it go. The crowd murmured, stirred, but said nothing loud.

The flags softly tongued the air. The flames squatted on themselves and smoked.

Adolf pressed his fingers onto his eyeballs as if suddenly seized with a blinding headache. Without looking over at the director or the producer, he said, quietly:

“Time to go?”

The director nodded.

Adolf limped off the podium and came to stand below where the old man and the younger director sat.

“Go ahead, if you want, again, hit me.”

The director sat and looked at him. At last he shook his head.

“Do we finish the film?” asked Adolf.

The director looked at the producer. The old man shrugged and could find nothing to say.

“Ah, well,” said the actor. “Anyway, the madness is over, the fever has dropped. I have made my speech at Nuremberg. God, look at those idiots up there. Idiots!” he called suddenly at the stands. Then back to the director, “Can you think? They wanted to hold me for ransom. I told them what fools they were. Now I’ll go tell them again. I had to get away from them. I couldn’t stand their stupid talk. I had to come here and be my own fool in my own way for the last time. Well . . .”

He limped off across the empty field, calling back quietly:

“I’ll be in your car outside, waiting. If you want, I am yours for the final scenes. If not, no, and that ends it.”

The director and the producer waited until Adolf had climbed to the top of the stadium. They could hear his voice drift down, cursing those other three, the man with the bushy eyebrows, the fat man, and the ugly chimpanzee, calling them many things, waving his hands. The three backed off and went away, gone.

Adolf stood alone high in the cold October air.

The director gave him a final lift of the sound volume. The crowd, obedient, banged out a last "Sieg Heil."

Adolf lifted his free hand, not into a salute, but some sort of old, easy, half-collapsed mid-Atlantic wave. Then he was gone, too.

The sunlight went with him. The sky was no longer blood-colored. The wind blew dust and want ads from a German paper across the stadium floor.

"Son of a bitch," muttered the old man. "Let's get out of here."

They left the torches to burn and the flags to blow, but shut off the sound equipment.

"Wish I'd brought a record of 'Yankee Doodle' to march us out of here," said the director.

"Who needs records. We'll whistle. Why not?"

"Why not!"

He held the old man's elbow going up the stairs in the dusk, but it was only halfway up, they had the guts to try to whistle.

And then it was suddenly so funny they couldn't finish the tune.

The end