

Sunday afternoon  
at the Retreat gardening  
colony. D is setting himself  
about uncorking a bottle of  
wine.





C: You're not waiting till A is here?

D: For once I'd just as well start without him.

C: It doesn't bother you I invited him to come over? I find him a jolly good sport.



D: A jolly good sport? All he can muster is to have fun at others' expense. Just recall his sending up this poor old guy the last time out.

D: I'd have thought we'd be up to something more sophisticated, socially.

C knew exactly what D was talking about. He recalled their lofty plans, and he felt ashamed.

However, he just adored the moments when A was at the centre of attention. He imagined himself stage-directing the whole scene.



A: Good afternoon, gentlemen.  
I've brought along  
a particularly remarkable guest  
today. His name is B.

The previous night A and B  
took part in an exciting game.

Then, on the following  
morning, they talked about  
how everything might have  
turned out had they played  
the game in a more  
conservatively-set society.



A: But no!  
I'd have expected  
a warmer welcome!  
I've in stock for you a little...

C knew that A was going to say  
"Distraction."

A: ...distraction.



**"Every field has to be plowed first," thought A, and he tried to save the situation.**

**D: I hope it doesn't offend you, but there are times I find this insistence of yours on distraction just a bit, how to put it..., destructive.**

**A: This time out you're wrong. I'm convinced you'll love this afternoon.**

**A knew he had to wait before proceeding in their game, so he tried hard to think out something D would appreciate.**

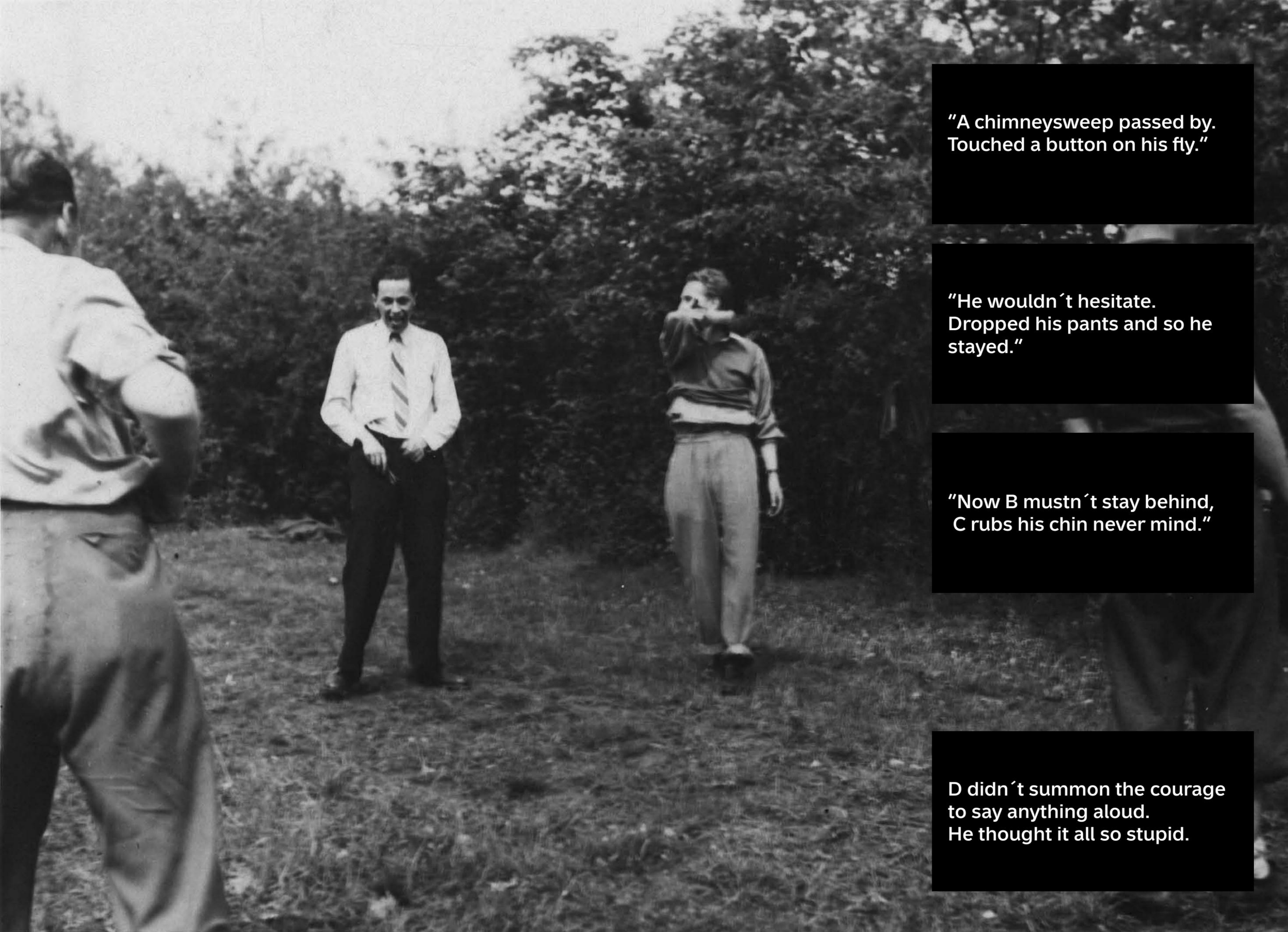
A asked B to pass him yesterday's paper. He laid it on the table and drew a circle around the title-page photograph.

A: Each of us will devise a rhyme as fast as he can, describing the situation in the photo. At the end of one minute, we'll take turns in reading out our rhymes.



D glanced at the tabletop, and froze. It's as though I saw the picture somewhere before, he thought, but he had no time to ponder it at length. He knew he had to invent something fast.





"A chimneysweep passed by.  
Touched a button on his fly."

"He wouldn't hesitate.  
Dropped his pants and so he  
stayed."

"Now B mustn't stay behind,  
C rubs his chin never mind."

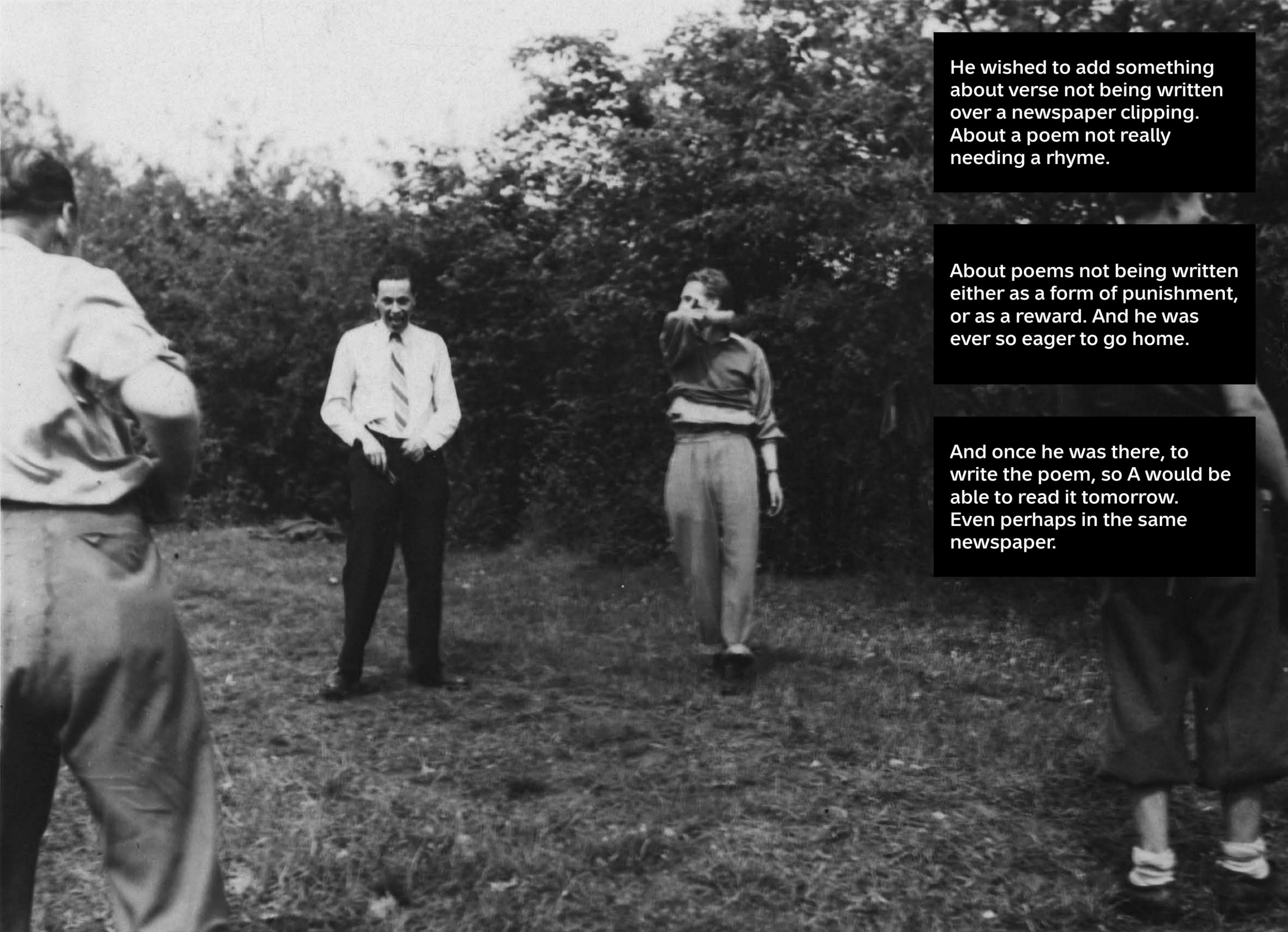
D didn't summon the courage  
to say anything aloud.  
He thought it all so stupid.



A: Did you perhaps find it less than constructive?

D: Let's stop it. We'll achieve nothing meaningful anyway.

D: Are you making a fool of me? I guess I should go now. You'll most certainly do without me.



He wished to add something about verse not being written over a newspaper clipping. About a poem not really needing a rhyme.

About poems not being written either as a form of punishment, or as a reward. And he was ever so eager to go home.

And once he was there, to write the poem, so A would be able to read it tomorrow. Even perhaps in the same newspaper.

**B: Won't you change your mind yet? Just yesterday we played a game...**

**B set out to recite in haste the rules of the new game. He was hoping D would be impressed.**

**B: One of us will act out the start of a situation. The other will follow up with a mime act, developing the plot.**





C: You see, it's almost like at theatre!

C called out at D who was on his way out.

D: The only thing that's missing is an audience.

**B: Wait a minute... Didn't you mention a birthday party to take place here a fortnight from now?**

**B: Why not turn it to a little stage show? To rehearse the whole thing, and to act it out as a drama. Nobody's going to see through it.**



Dear B,

Please read this without getting scared. I'll presently explain why it's you I'm writing to, even though we've known each other only such a short time, or to be precise, since last Sunday when you came over to the Retreat.

I am so sorry I let myself be pushed so easily into leaving too early, and may I assure you that had I had the slightest idea of who I had the honour to be meeting there, I would have taken good care of that whole afternoon taking a gentler course.

Be it as it may, I shall now try and proceed to a subject of substance. It's been several years now that I've been a regular visitor of performances at the local theatre, without ever having the slightest inkling about it being you to whom I am indebted for moments of such delight. Words of gratitude, however, are not the main reason underlying my present urge to address you. Much rather, I would like to share with you an experience I had less than a year ago, during the last performance of a play of which you were the author. Its title was Sunday Afternoon.

In the course of the show, as you will doubtless also recall, the theatre's electricity supply was cut off due to an unknown cause. It happened at a point where there were several young men on stage, in an extremely charged situation. The lights in the theatre went out, and someone on stage - it's just occurred to me it might actually have been you - called on us to stay in our places and keep calm. Fortunately no panic ensued, only the audience conversed in hushed voices wondering about the reason for the blackout. More likely than not I was not the only one just to sit back wordless, killing the time by musing over the various alternatives of the further development of the stage plot. I started to imagine different scenarios...

And then I experienced that feeling which I probably needn't explain to you: namely, the feeling when your mind is visited by the thought of something which transcends you as an individual. That night's performance stayed unfinished, and I was leaving for home with my head troubled. It was on that night I started to toy with the idea of trying to act your play up to its ending, starting there where your show was cut short.

Nonetheless, I've found myself incapable of putting my concepts down on paper. Each new sentence brings forth at least another ten which seem to be supposed to follow, generating a multitude of options that virtually drives me crazy. This has been going on for almost a year now, and I'm still unable to put an end to my plight.

This morning, though, I had a phone call from B, a close friend of mine who'd seen your photograph in the Theatre Journal, and now asked me how I was feeling about A's having kept mum to us about who you were. I replied that I did not have a high opinion of A, and that I was not feeling obliged to go into it in one way or another. I hung up and had no other thought than of how to get in touch with you. You will likely have guessed what a relief it will bring me if I get to know the actual ending of your story, and so am absolved of the temptation to write my own version. Therefore, I beseech you to let me take a peek into the manuscript of your play which, to me, has remained unfinished.

Yours respectfully,

D

Dear D,

It was with the utmost interest that I read your letter, and may I assure you I do feel a certain amount of remorse at the hard moments my play has had to cause to you. Therefore, please accept my apologies, along with an invitation to the Retreat garden colony. I will be extremely pleased to have a chance to atone for my misdimeanour by acquainting you with the actual ending of Sunday Afternoon.

With kind regards,

B

Sunday, a fortnight later, at the Retreat gardening colony. Two young men are descending from the porch. The audience fall silent.

