

A CUT FROM *COLLISIONS*  
BY BILL ROGERS

OLY

You know, I don't think people your age realize how lucky you are.

VI

It's hard to feel lucky when nothing in your body works right, everything hurts, and you only read about your friends in the obituaries.

OLY

But you had damn good lives, didn't you? You come along at the luckiest time in history.

VI

Why do you say that?

OLY

You started off in a depression. There's only up from there. Then the war come along.

VI

I don't guess I see what was so lucky about wars and depressions.

OLY

Depends how you look at it. You know, I wish I could'a been in that war instead of the one I got dealt. Vietnam was a real mess, and I pity them kids over there in Iraq. In World War II ever'body knew exactly what they was fightin' for. Ever'thing was black an' white. Ever'thing was black an' white except how it ended.

VI

We won. That's pretty black and white, isn't it?

OLY

It was 'til they dropped them "A" bombs on the Japs.

VI

That saved lots of American lives.

OLY

It's what ended up wreckin' this country, you know. "A" bombs an' all-ya-can-eat restaurants.

VI

All-you-can-eat restaurants? I never heard that one before.

OLY

Atom bombs an' all-ya-can-eat restaurants! The one thing led straight to the other. Your generation got so damned hungry in that depression. Right after they dropped them bombs, ever'thing changed. You got the GI Bill, VA loans, penicillin an' television damn near all at once. You got the whole world right there on your plates. TV Dinners, air-conditioners, tract-houses, college educations, an' eight-cylinder station wagons. By God, you couldn't get enough! That's how they come to open them all-you-can-eat restaurants, so you could just sit back an' shovel it in.

VI

You make it sound like we were pigs.

OLY

Not pigs, just human. Look, I ain't blamin' you. You thought the party would last forever. But, by God, it's come time to pay the piper, an' it ain't you that's gonna pay him. That's why I feel sorry for these kids. They come along just in time to pick up the tab.

VI

I think we paid more than our share of that tab. I wouldn't trade what I lost in the war for air-conditioners, televisions and all the rest of it. My brother Benny died on Iwo Jima. You should have seen the look on my momma's face when she got that telegram.

OLY

I was speakin' more generally.

VI

You don't pay that kind of tab generally, Oly. You nearly went deaf in Viet Nam. What's that worth? And how do you work out what it cost Carl? He sacrificed more than a decade of his life. You know he joined the Marines the day he turned seventeen. Then, two years after we were married, they called him back to fight in Korea. Our little Mike was just two months old when his daddy left. He died of polio a month before his daddy came home. That broke Carl's heart. You know all of this as well as I do, Oly. How much more do you think we owe?

OLY

They shouldn't a called him back when he had a young family like that.

VI

You're old enough to know that people do lots of things they shouldn't.

OLY

I guess I get carried away at the sound of my own voice  
sometimes.

VI

I guess you do. I think our generation paid way more than  
our fair share of the tab.