

Winter 1955

## Hold Hands; Grin; Jump

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### Recommended Citation

Fowler, Giles M. (1955) "Hold Hands; Grin; Jump," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 2 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol2/iss1/2>

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# Hold Hands; Grin; Jump . . .

. . . Giles M. Fowler

The people he knew were pretty much alike; they generally advocated Oxford gray. When a tall mincing feminist in Paris snapped his gloved fingers, the females (who, because of certain mysteries, hormones, and little social graces, were different from the males) took eye pencils. And with studied poise, they drew their eyes big and their lips small. Just as last year they had drawn their lips big and their eyes small.

The men all invested in vests, and this year black was the shade for shoes. Just as last year, cordovan was the color. The casual grin was also a necessary accessory, just as ten years ago it had been the brooding stare, and last year, the big smile.

The decree of the moment insisted on good solid professions. Tycoons and artists were strictly passe. They were old shoe (cordovan). Engineers were priority material, and especially civil engineers. Doctors were also nice so long as they had that casual grin.

Among the females he knew, the revival of the home look, since a fateful day in early September, had taken definite advantage over the career look. Since that date, in fact, looks were everywhere. The blank look, the flat look, the plucked-rose look, the hurt-whore look, the raised-eyebrow look, and the oh-what-the-hell look. But definitely not the baby bearing, hand-red, fan-blown look—or smell.

Smells were passe—unless your perfume was applied from a boulevard bottle, sensually shaped like a human embryo.

This was the situation he was faced with.

Then one day he heard a bunch of the people talking in a long semi-circular corner booth.

“I want to be frank with you. I mean ”

“So do I. Oh hell yes. Where were we ”

“And their dances are so ”

“Remember all the parties we had when ”

“The last I heard from his girl she was in ”

“the bedroom with the lights out, and ”

“Why me? I'm not the only girl in his ”

"Bedroom with the lights out. I tell you "  
 "Those parties were wild. I mean "  
 "Saint Louis was where he saw the "  
 "girlfriend, and she was dancing with "  
 "the lights out, and there was this party "  
 "Wild. I mean wild!"

He thought then that he was going to start getting corny, and start setting himself up as a sage, and start telling them all what was wrong with them.

But it wasn't any use. He couldn't even call them a lost generation because it was corny and Hemingway and Gertrude Stein had exploited that line. This was the fifties, not the twenties, and he was just a kid.

Besides, he thought (as he thumbed the buttons on his vest and grinned casually) we aren't lost. We're anything but lost. We're being funnelled together down one drain, and we'll all hold hands when we go.

And sure enough, off in the distance there was a faint but distinct sound, like water swishing against porcelain.

## Observation . . .

Green wailing wenches  
 Consist in flattened euphoria  
 Amid inverted sequences  
 Of the repugnant mass while

Boiling cross-motif to  
 Unwoven threads and seed  
 A gothic pattern-place  
 Where thick wet sounds

Hot twisting breaths  
 Exchange the reticent word  
 Of a milder melancholia  
 Lost in warm clouds you can

Pervert toy soldiers with  
 Atonal surface harmonies  
 And the warped Aesop  
 Must smell of mildewed flesh

Eat of my thoughts  
 And dine in burned bread  
 While escapist building blocks  
 Tear conversely the frigid

Buried beneath the tertiary  
 Mores of someone's wavering  
 Wallowing think-mist  
 I find myself.

. . . Deane McKercher