

JOSEPH HELLER - CATCH 22

"I wonder what he did to deserve it," the warrant officer with malaria and a mosquito bite on his ass lamented after Nurse Cramer had read her thermometer and discovered that the soldier in white was dead.

"He went to war," the fighter pilot with the golden moustache surmised.

"We all went to war," Dunbar countered.

"That's what I mean," the warrant officer with malaria continued. "Why him? There just doesn't seem to be any logic to this system of rewards and punishment. Look what happened to me. If I had gotten syphilis or a does of clap for my five minutes of passion on the beach instead of this damned mosquito bite, I could see some justice. But malaria? *Malaria?* Who can explain malaria as a consequence of fornication? The warrant officer shook his head in numbed astonishment.

"What about me?" Yossarian said. "I stepped out of my tent in Marrakech one night to get a bar of candy and caught your dose of clap when that Wac I never even saw before hissed me into the bushes. All I really wanted was a bar of candy, but who could turn it down?"

"That sounds like my does of clap, alright," the warrant officer agreed. "But I've still got somebody else's malaria. Just for once I'd like to see all these things sort of straightened out, with each person getting exactly what he deserves. It might give me some confidence in the universe".

"I've got somebody else's three hundred thousand dollars," the dashing young fighter captain with the golden moustache admitted. "I've been goofing off since the day I was born. I cheated my way through prep school and college, and just about all I've been doing ever since is shacking up with pretty girls who think I'd make a good husband. I've got no ambition at all. The only thing I want to do after the war is to marry some girl who's got more money than I have and shack up with lots more pretty girls. The three hundred thousand bucks was left to me before I was born by a grandfather who made a fortune selling hogwash on an international scale. I know I don't deserve it, but I'll be damned if I give it back. I wonder who it really belongs to."

"Maybe it belongs to my father," Dunbar conjectured. "He spent a lifetime at hardwork and could never make enough money to send my sister and me through college. He's dead now, so you might as well keep it."

"Now, if we can just find out who my malaria belongs to, we'd be all set. It's not that I've got anything against malaria. I'd just as soon goldbrick with malaria as with anything else. It's only that I feel an injustice has been committed. Why should I have somebody else's malaria and you have my dose of clap?"

"I've got more than your dose of clap," Yossarian told him. "I've got to keep flying combat missions because of that dose of clap until they kill me."

"That makes it even worse. What's the justice in that?"