A welcome new story from the one-time Sage of Topanga—still (we hasten to say) as sage as ever, but now in New York, where he continues to attack all windmills, no matter how cunningly they may disguise themselves as giants.

REBEL

by Ward Moore

"SERIOUSLY, SON," SAID CALUDO'S father, not quite meeting his eye; "you aren't a child any more. Your mother and I naturally worry. Someday, when you have a family of your own, you'll understand how we—"

"You mustn't think we're narrowminded or bigoted," interrupted his mother gently, shifting her position on the couch slightly, adjusting her silver robe so its folds fell gracefully from shoulder and hip. "Remember when your cousin Tristram took up rhyming and your poor uncle was so dreadfully upset? We were the first to say the boy would pull out of it and settle down."

"And he has, he certainly has. It was just a phase and we knew it. Yes sir. Tristram has good stuff in him—but no better than you Caludo, no better than you." Mr. Smith looked directly at his son for the first time and the affection in his face was unmistakable.

"Not that we're holding Tristram up as a model," said his mother. "If you wanted to, you could easily do much better."

"That's the whole point," exclaimed Caludo earnestly. "As you say, rhyming was just a phase with him. He actually wants to do the acceptable things, while I—"

"Dear," suggested his mother, "why don't you recline comfortably instead of perching on that horrible straightbacked chair?"

"I like to sit up straight," protested Caludo hopelessly. "I don't like lying down except when I'm ready to go to sleep."

The affection in Mr. Smith's face changed to annoyance, the familiar annoyance and impatience Caludo increasingly had grown used to in the past few years. "That's just it. Never mind what anyone else does—think only of what you've decided you like. *You* like to sit up straight. *You* like to wear that outlandish

costume. *You* like your hair—" reflexively he tossed his own shoulder-length curls, dyed a pale blue to match the wig his wife was wearing "—that juvenile way. *You* like—"

"Now Bach," admonished Mrs. Smith. "Your bloodpressure." She rested her face prettily on a smooth-skinned arm, lightly sprinkled with irridescent powder, so that her silver-painted eyelashes just cleared the flesh, "these things are only symptoms, not too important in themselves, but added together they show—"

"They show that everyone is out of step but you," Bach Smith took it up angrily. "Just as your mother says, they're symptoms, and I blame myself for not recognizing them sooner. Why, when you were only a little kid you were outdoors in the fresh air from morning till night, playing games, exercising, trading toys with other maladjusted children instead of lying around all day with your nose in a book like any healthy boy. We only smiled when you prattled of what you wanted to be when you grew up instead of realizing we had a serious problem on our hands. We were too soft with you."

"You never wanted for anything," murmured his mother.

"Good heavens, son—do you want to be a misfit all your life? Don't you want to become a responsible member of society? Don't you think you owe other people something? Honestly, I don't understand you."

"Look, Dad, I'm sorry, truly sorry, if I'm making you and Mom unhappy. If you could only see it from my side. I can't paint or sculpt or compose—"

"You've had every opportunity. The finest teachers, all sorts of help and encouragement. It seems to me you could at least make an attempt. It isn't as if we were asking something outrageous or unheard of. Is all your education to be wasted because you just throw up your hands and say you can't? Where's your gumption? How do you know you can't?"

"Besides," said his mother before he could answer, "we don't expect you to do exactly what we do in the way we do. We're not the kind of people who think we're perfect." She looked complacently toward the wall where her husband's *Sun Otter In Very Yes Yous* hung in all its splendid color, but Caludo knew she was thinking of her own *Novella For Three Harpsichords and 95 Kettledrums* in F sharp major. In all fairness he admitted they had something. Both of them. And he was proud of them in a way. "But we don't understand why you don't want to make something of yourself. Why you can't settle down."

"But Mom, I do. Really I do. Only—"

"Only what?" prodded his father. "Look, we're not callous or hidebound. We know youth has to experiment, yes and even defy convention now and then. It's part of growing up." His carefully made-up face looked very smug under the blue curls. He reached from his couch over to the low table and pressed the button which popped a lighted cigarette between his lips. "One for you?" he offered politely, since there was no dispenser near Caludo.

"No thanks, Dad."

"Don't you ever . . . ?" asked his mother, getting one of her own.

"No he doesn't," burst out Bach Smith. "Not even for courtesy's sake, not even to be sociable. It's the same with liquor. Why, don't you remember? It was his fourteenth or fifteenth birthday party —I forget which—and all the boys and girls were getting pleasant, and he wouldn't touch a drop? Not champagne, not a highball, not a martini—not even a little dry wine or a glass of beer?"

"But Dad, it makes me sick."

"Nonsense. It's all in your mind. Besides, do you think people should do only what they fancy? Never sacrifice their own whims to the prevailing code? Do you think your mother and I always do solely what pleases us rather than what is proper and right? Good heavens, Caludo, do you want anarchy, chaos?"

"Honestly, Dad, I'm not advocating— That is, I'm not the wildeyed dreamer you seem to think. I know most people—all our family, our friends, everyone practically with whom we come in contact—are satisfied to be novelists, poets, sculptors, musicians. I don't want to change them. I appreciate they're necessary—"

"Necessary!" cried Mr. Smith furiously. "Necessary! By—"

"Now, Bach. Please." She turned her head toward Caludo. "I'm sure you don't want to make your father ill, dear. We love you and we're proud of you even though we certainly don't understand your attitude. Don't you truly want to live a useful life?"

"Mother, don't you see? It's all in the definition of what is useful. I've agreed that for the average person, for most people, working in the arts is good enough. I just happen to want something different."

"Suppose everyone felt the way you do," argued his mother reasonably. "What would happen to the world? I can't imagine everyone abandoning commonsense, but suppose they did? What would you do for something to read, something to hear, something to look at? Surely you don't want to be a drone?"

"No, Mom. Believe me, I don't."

"Then—?"

"There are other things beside the aesthetic in life. Human be-

ings aren't condemned only to the prosaic, the inevitable. There's a whole realm beyond the humdrum and the ordinary in which some can work happily for a lifetime."

"That sounds quite mystical, dear. Can't you be a little more specific?"

"You know what I want to do. I've wanted it ever since I was eight."

"A kid's fancy," mumbled his father. "Grow up."

"Honestly," said his mother. "You can't still—at twenty-two—want to be a-a—"

"Businessman," his father spat out. "Buying and selling. Getting rich. An eight-year-old's ambition inside a mature body. Grow up!"

"But Dad, you yourself admire the great businessmen. Everyone does. Why, in school we had hours and hours of tapes about Morgan and Vanderbilt and Wanamaker—"

"Sure. And Ford and Gianinni and Woolworth. I'm no hidebound bourgeois, son—I reverence these great men as much as you do. Maybe more. You talk of school—I never had anything but straight A's in Commerce-Appreciation. Why, I—"

"In Commerce - Appreciation they give you moldy stuff. No wonder you think the only great businessmen are dead. And that commerce is finished and done with just because it's possible to live — and live comfortably enough, I suppose, if you have no soul—without it in our times. But for some of us it isn't possible. Business means too much to us. Not just antique business or immortals like Nuffield or Astor, but living, experimenting, changing, *modern* business. Don't you see: it isn't enough to bow before Daniel Drew or Charles E. Wilson? I want to carry on their tradition."

"Caludo, you insist we are totally insensitive. Yet hardly a Sunday goes by but what I don't look over the financial page of the *Times*. I'm not someone who never gets beyond the art and theater sections or the book review. If you had said you wanted to be an architect, for instance, or anything which could be considered remotely practical, I would have—I don't say I would have been happy about it, but I would have sympathized. But this . . ."

"Dad—"

"Anyway, what makes you think you're a Drew or a Wilson? Or a Carnegie or Doheny? I guess I can throw famous names around myself when I want to."

"I don't think I'm a Carnegie or Doheny. I have no hope of anything like that. But just because I can't be a Rockefeller or a Frick doesn't mean I won't be satisfied to be the best I can. Look, I know it's hard for you to understand—"

"Oh, not as hard as you think, dear," said his mother. "I wanted

to be a mechanic when I was little, and your father wanted to be —you'll never guess—an accountant." She giggled; Bach Smith smiled slightly.

For the first time they were not roadblocks, jailers, enemies, but human beings who had felt, no matter how weakly, his own dominant impulses. "Maybe I came by my queer streak honestly."

His father's smile became a frown. "Perhaps you did. We all have odd ideas. But don't you get the point? We outgrew our infantile silliness before it crystallized into a social behavior and possibly juvenile delinquency—"

"I knew a girl who used to shave mustaches off collages. She had to go to I don't know how many analysts," reminisced Mrs. Smith.

"—to become mature, responsible people, fit to be parents. Perhaps you think I never had a nostalgic thought for double-entry or an adding machine—"

"Or I for a crescent wrench," put in his mother in a gay parenthesis.

"—but we recognized these for the immature daydreams they were and put them behind us. I don't say the mirage of columns of figures hasn't been transmuted into a splash of color here or a bit of draftsmanship there, or that the movement of pistons and wristpins hasn't entered into your mother's symphonies, but so have longings for other solaces we left behind in childhood or adolescence. We grew up, son. We faced the world. Sometimes it isn't easy, but being an adult has its rewards, believe me."

"I do believe you, Dad. My only question is, why should commerce be considered not grown up?"

"We can't all be wrong," said his mother. "Now can we, dear?"

Caludo struggled against the feeling of falling into warm, soft, meek acquiescence. "Of course not. Only I think—and I assure you I'm not trying to set myself against your experience or wisdom —that for some, for someone like myself maybe, it is possible to be adult and a businessman at the same time."

"Maybe it is," granted his father tolerantly. "Maybe it is. But it's a long, hard struggle, and even if you succeed, what have you got? An existence on the fringes of society. No position, no security, no solid respect outside of a circle of crackpots who talk a language no one understands and go into ecstasies over what no one else is interested in. Even putting that aside, how do you justify yourself in the meantime? How can you face the young men and women of your own age who are making names as dramatists or conductors or muralists while you pursue a financial will-of-the-wisp?"

"Maybe I could get a Gainsborough," muttered Caludo weakly compromising.

"Gainsborough?" repeated his father puzzledly.

"You know, Bach," said his mother. "A Gainsborough Fellowship. From the John Henry Gainsborough Memorial Foundation. They give aesthetic-equivalent grants to commercial people."

"Absurd. Carrying water on both shoulders. 'Aesthetic-equivalent grants' indeed! How can we hope to compete with the Martians when our best minds are tempted into romantic pursuits? You don't think *they* have fellowships to encourage dilettantes, do you? Or that *their* young people occupy themselves with trade instead of things that count?"

"How can you be so sure what counts and what doesn't?" asked Caludo, feeling he had been losing ground since he so foolishly brought in Gainsboroughs and trying to get back where they were. "Look at it this way. You say I'm no Hartford or Schwab. Agreed. But with all respect, because you're not Botticelli and Mom isn't Mozart doesn't make either of you stop your work."

For the first time his parents looked shocked. "Caludo," said Mrs. Smith finally. "It isn't the same thing. It isn't the same thing at all. We have our humble place in the world but we fill it to the best of our ability. We don't run away from life, we don't turn our back on what is real and vital and important to pursue grandiose dreams. We do our ordinary, inescapable work (do you think I never feel an impulse to shut the piano and tinker with a jetplane?) and we are respectable members of society instead of brilliant eccentrics. You can sneer at artists—oh yes you do, Caludo; you sneer at us in your heart, I know—and think we're dull and frumpy and outdated because we wear robes instead of that absurd jacket and—what is it called?—trousers you affect. Or because we dye our hair and use wigs like normal people instead of making spectacles of ourselves. Or because we go to bed at a reasonable hour instead of retiring at dark and getting up with the sun as you do—turning night into night. Don't think we haven't noticed and been ashamed lest others would, too. What do you think would happen if everyone thought as you do or acted the way you want to act?"

"I'm not asking them to," he said sullenly, hemmed in. "I find jacket and trousers comfortable. It isn't an affectation. And I like my hair cut short and undyed. It's convenient. And I get up early because—because . . ."

"Because ordinary folk like us don't!" finished his father triumphantly. "Anything to be different."

"Dad, that's not it at all. I get up because there's so much I want to do and the early hours are the best."

"Caludo, we just don't speak the same language," said Bach Smith. "Everyone knows the morning is only fit to sleep through—that no one can possibly be alive, much less alert, before noon. And if you went to bed at a decent hour you *couldn't* get up before twelve or one."

"But . . . Gosh, don't you think there's room in the world for more than one set of values?"

"If there is," said his father, "don't you think it's up to you to show it? You ought to be willing to test your values against ours. You ought to do something better—if you really believe in your 'values' and aren't just bone-lazy and trying to skin out of work—than repeat over and over like a defective child that you want to do this and you like that. You ought to prove your values are real by mastering ours. If you really want to be a businessman you ought to show the world you have the discipline to be an artist first. Serve your apprenticeship. Paint or write or do something socially acceptable for five or ten years. Show the results of your work by the appreciation of critics and reviewers. Then, having acquitted yourself honorably in the real world, it will be time enough to enter this life of fantasy if you still have the taste for it."

"But Dad—"

"I know what you're going to say. That by then you will have lost your zest. Weren't you? That proves my point, doesn't it?"

"Caludo," said his mother, "you know your father is right. No boy so carefully brought up, so well-educated as you could help it. Listen to us who love you, who have watched over you from the moment you were born, who sat up long hours and remember your first tooth, your first step, your first words. Do what your father says. It's for your own good; deep down, you must know it. Don't disgrace us. Don't wreck your own life."

"And don't forget," added his father indulgently, "if you are determined to be a businessman you will be a better one for your experience as a poet or violinist. And if your notion persists, remember you can paint or write all night and still find an hour or two to buy and sell in your spare time. Why, now I come to think of it, I've heard of a number of quite serious people who go into commerce as a hobby. Week-end entrepeneurs you know, and don't think they haven't made good at work while getting the last ounce of recreation out of their diversion."

"You see—we're not trying to thwart you," cried his mother. "I'm sure Bach might even be willing to have a store or office or whatever built onto the studio—"

"If I see some real application," growled his father.

"So that when you're tired out after work you can relax with your money and your inventories and your checkbooks. Oh, Caludo my darling, we're only trying to help you."

"But—" he began hopelessly.

"And we won't insist on a mistress," went on his mother eagerly, "or even smoking or drinking. Except in company, naturally. And you could wear a long wig over that ridiculous haircut. And—"

"Now, now," admonished his father. "Let's not go too far. Certainly the boy can have time to fool around with investments and such. But a respectable appearance I must insist on. No more sitting stiffly in chairs as though there were something wrong with his sacroilliac instead of lounging decently. No more odd hours disrupting any sensible schedule. And a decorous toga or robe. And a little—just a minimum—make-up. After all, you owe us something."

"But Dad . . . Mom . . ."

"Say no more," said his father, pushing the button for a gin and tonic "Say no more. You're a good boy basically and I'm willing to humor you to a certain extent. You'll outgrow your commercial nonsense—you think you won't but you will—and someday you'll look back and be grateful to us for being firm with you. Remember, we love you, Caludo."

"I suppose you do," muttered Caludo bitterly, forseeing the long years of drudgery with mahlstick or baton, typewriter or paintbrush, until the bright vision of dollars and cents faded away into resigned acceptance of their drab, hopeless world. "Yes, I suppose you do. What else would justify you . . . ?"