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Liberty 5¢

El Gilchrist



UNEXPECTED UNCLE A NEW HILARIOUS NOVEL **BY ERIC HATCH**

IS IT GOOD-BY COLLEGE FOOTBALL?

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Just a Song at Twilight

BY
WALTER BROOKS

Illustrated by Charles LaSalle.

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Laughs! . . . A new, hilarious adventure of our ineffable Ed, the talking horse

This Wilbur Pope was an advertising account executive with Ingman Anger Basterson & Klee. Or maybe it was Fenton Finigan Tashman & Clunk. I can't remember except that it was in that meter and anyway it doesn't matter because it has nothing to do with the story. It's just so you'll remember about him being the one that had the talking horse. And the rest of his permanent establishment consisted of a beautiful temperamental wife named Carlotta and an equally temperamental female whom they hired at a star copy writer's salary to live in the kitchen and cook and put nicks in the best Sèvres dinner service. It's this last party the story is mostly about. Her name was Carrie.

The Popes had had new cooks every month or so but Carrie was the first good one they had ever had. Her soups were collectors' items and her soufflés were so light that they would float in the bathtub. But she was not contented. She'd always lived in the city and she was lonesome in Mount Kisco. She had no gentleman callers at all. Though I think the fault was with Carrie rather than with Mount Kisco. The way to a man's heart may be through his stomach but the way to his stomach is through his face and if he won't face you in the first place you haven't much chance of getting him to try your cooking. So Carrie began to talk about leaving.

So Mrs. Pope was talking about it one evening. O dear she said if Carrie leaves I guess we'll just have to give up the house and take an apartment in town. Well Mr. Pope did not want to leave Mount Kisco for many reasons and one of them was that he wouldn't be able to keep his horse Ed in the city. Of course Mrs. Pope didn't know that Ed could talk and she was always at Mr. Pope to get rid of him because he was such an awful looking horse. And indeed Ed was not handsome. But he was darned good company and Mr. Pope was much attached to him. So he began to depict the advantages of Mount Kisco and being an advertising man he ranged freely among the adjectives and he was just getting going good when somewhere out in the night a hoarse voice began to sing:

“O my darling Carrie!
The girl I'm going to marry!
Every evening just at eight,
Standing by the garden gate—”

Good heavens said Mrs. Pope is that Carrie singing? Not unless her voice is changing said Mr. Pope. I've heard her singing at her work.

“O what bliss
For just one kiss
From Ca-a-arrie!”

The voice ended with a roar. Good Lord! said Mr. Pope I'd better go see.

The kitchen was dark and he went through it and out into the garden. There seemed to be nobody there. Then a voice from an upper window said That was right pretty Mr.—I guess I don't know your name. Mr. Pope looked up. Is that you Carrie? he said. O excuse me Mr. Pope said Carrie with a heavy giggle. I thought you was him. Him? said Mr. Pope. Who? I don't know said Carrie.

We don't seem to be getting anywhere said Mr. Pope. That wasn't you singing was it? Me? said Carrie Lord no sir I can't even carry a tune. This fellow could carry one all right said Mr. Pope though I don't know where he carried it to. He seems to have disappeared. Yes sir said the cook I guess he heard you come out. She giggled again. I kind of thought she said that he was—well kind of serenading me like. I see said Mr. Pope. An anonymous admirer.

Look Ed said Mr. Pope
let's not go into what
I think of your voice.

BY WALTER BROOKS

Look Ed said Mr. Pope let's not go into what I think of your voice.

So he went in and told Mrs. Pope. Heavens! she said do you think this is to be a regular feature? I don't think so said Mr. Pope. No human throat could stand the strain. But if it makes Carrie happy! O if it makes her contented said Mrs. Pope I'd accept a fife and drum corps.

Well before going to bed Mr. Pope went out to say good night to Ed. He kept a bottle in the barn and he and Ed usually had a nightcap together. Well Wilb said the horse how did you enjoy the concert? O so you listened to that too? said Mr. Pope. Listened to it! said Ed Hell I gave it! You *what?* said Mr. Pope. Gave it said Ed. You see Wilbur that Carrie—she's kind of starved for romance the way I figure it. And when I see somebody that's unhappy—well I have to try to make things a little easier for them. You take a funny way to do it said Mr. Pope. I suppose it seems funny to you said Ed seeing you ain't got a fine natural baritone like I have. Never had a lesson in my life—would you believe it?

Look Ed said Mr. Pope let's not go into what I think of your voice. What surprises me is the age of your repertoire. That Carrie song is a moss-back. When you've lived around stables as long as I have said Ed you'll know a lot of songs. Some of 'em ain't exactly the kind you sing to ladies though. Listen Wilb—jever hear this one? It goes Stampee stam-poodle stianti go foodle—Yes interrupted Mr. Pope I know it and I'm surprised at you Ed. I'm going to bed. And no lullabies please.

Well the next evening Ed serenaded Carrie again. *Stars of the summer night* crashed in a blitzkrieg on the eardrums of the Popes as they sat at bridge with the Hoveys. Really we can't have this said Mrs. Pope. Wilbur go send that person away. So Mr. Pope went out and found Ed among the syringas under Carrie's window. She sleeps! Ed roared. My lady sleeps! Like hell she does said Mr. Pope. Through that hullabaloo! Well said Ed the guy that wrote the song didn't really expect her to sleep or he wouldn't have sung it. Psst! There she is!

A wide shape appeared at the window and something was tossed out and fell on the grass. It's a rose whispered Ed. Pick it up for me will you? Mr. Pope hesitated but Carrie could not possibly recognize him in the darkness so he stepped out from the bushes and retrieved the rose. My beloved! said Ed tenderly. I shall always cherish this flower next my heart. Carrie giggled. O *you* she said. Wait she said. I'll be down. No no said Ed I cannot reveal myself to you. Not yet. O I guess you can said Carrie. I've got half of a nice cherry pie for you. Wait. She vanished.

I've got to go back in Mr. Pope said to Ed. Now be careful. We don't want to lose Carrie. Neither do I want to lose her said Ed. Anybody that passes out pies.

Well the next day was Saturday and Ed and Mr. Pope went for a ride. They never rode very far. Today as usual they got as far as the nearest tavern where they had some beer and then they found a shady place and sat down and talked. How did you come out with Carrie? asked Mr. Pope. O I got the pie said Ed. Yeah. She came out on the back porch with it and I says Hey don't come any farther. I don't want you to recognize me. I've got a special reason I says and if you'll sit down I'll tell you about it. So she sat down in her rocker and I come up closer to her behind all that woodbine and then I told her that I was a friend of yours that came to the house regular and that I had sort of fallen for her but I didn't want her to know who I was yet because it would be embarrassing for both of us—her waiting on me and us pretending not to know each other and so on. But I said I'd like to serenade her and talk to her and then I said when the time was ripe I'd disclose myself. And I left it sort of vague what would happen after that. I should think so! said Mr. Pope.

Well I don't know said Ed. You see how it'll work don't you? I'll come around and give her a sort of romantic interest in life and she won't talk any more about leaving. And when you have company she'll make a special effort because she'll think maybe it's me. I expect she'll pick on Bill Wesson said Mr. Pope. He's got a voice something like yours. She left the pie out for me when she went in said Ed. 'Twasn't exactly a balanced meal with your Bourbon she poured out for me to wash it down with but it set like a feather.

Well I guess it was the next Sunday the Wessons came to dinner. They all had a few drinks and then Mr. Wesson went in to the piano. He had kind of a bass voice. His low notes sounded like a bus going over a bridge. He struck a chord and rumbled into *Asleep in the Deep*.

O Judas! said Mr. Pope and he pulled his chair around so that he could see into the living-room window. After a minute Carrie came and stood in the doorway gazing at the singer with heavy rapture. Beware! So beware! thundered Mr. Wesson. It was a better voice than Ed's but had the same quality. That was lovely Mr. Wesson said Carrie. Why thank you Carrie I'm glad you liked it said Mr. Wesson. Carrie came closer. Look Mr. Wesson she said the folks are all outside. Aren't you—well honest now aren't you the one? The *one*? said Mr. Wesson. I don't get you Carrie. Well you—you *could* Mr. Wesson said Carrie coyly. Then she said Shucks you don't have to be afraid of me. I won't give you away.

Well I don't know what Mr. Wesson had been up to but he turned pale. I—I don't know what you mean he said. And then Mr. Pope who had been practically cataleptic with amusement and horror came and stuck his head in the window. Oughtn't you to be looking after the dinner Carrie? he said. And Carrie squawked and left.

So they had dinner and nothing happened except that everybody noticed the sheep's eyes that Carrie served with every dish to Mr. Wesson and Mrs. Wesson said Bill seems to have been turning the old charm on again. But after the Wessons had gone Mrs. Pope told Mr. Pope that Carrie had given notice. Notice! said Mr. Pope why I thought she just decided that she wasn't lonesome any more. Well she's changed again said Mrs. Pope.

Well that's a fine thing! said Mr. Pope. But later he got the explanation from Ed. She thinks I'm that Wesson guy said the horse. And she thinks if she gets another job with people who don't know me I won't be afraid to come around and see her.

So Ed's scheme to keep Carrie had backfired. He felt pretty low. But there was one thing about Ed—he never gave up hope and the day Carrie left he overheard her give the expressman the address to which she wanted her trunk sent. Ed knew the house for the Witherspoons who were friends of the Popes had lived there. The present tenant was a Mr. O'Malley. So the next night which was a Wednesday he slipped his halter and at 3 A. M. he was in the O'Malleys' back garden and at 3.02 he burst into *O my darling Carrie*.

But instead of singing *Every evening just at eight* he changed the lines and sang—

Monday evening just at nine
Meet me where the grapevines twine.

For there was a grape arbor at the lower end of the garden. He sang those lines twice over and then he trotted off home. Over his shoulder he could see lights springing up in the house.

So Friday morning at two he sang *O Promise Me* in the O'Malleys' garden and Saturday morning at four he sang *In the Gloaming* and Sunday at 1.45 he sang *Juanita* and was struck on the rump by a brick thrown by the enraged O'Malley. And on Monday evening at nine he

was concealed behind the grape arbor. Presently through the glimmering scented dusk came Carrie. Psst! Mr. Wesson! Carrie whispered. I'm behind the arbor said Ed. Well come out where I can see you said Carrie. I want to talk to you. She didn't seem in a very good humor. Listen said Ed I'm not coming out because I don't want you to know who I am yet. You see I know the O'Malleys just as well as I do the Popes. But I know who you are said Carrie You're —No interrupted Ed I'm not Wesson and how you could ever mistake his voice for mine I don't know.

Look here said Carrie you've got to stop this singing. Waking everybody up like you've been doing! Why I'm sorry if I've bothered the folks said Ed. But you know how it is—when I get feeling romantic it don't matter what time of night it is. I just have to pour my soul out in song. Well you'd better pour it out somewhere else said Carrie. Land sakes! When I come here I thought you'd quit being afraid to show yourself. But all you want to do is sit out and sing like a bird in a bush. O I like your singing all right but I like my job better and this O'Malley ain't a softy like that Mr. Pope. He come out in the kitchen this morning and he said if it happened again out I go.

Ed gave a snort. The man's dead to romance he said. Glorious summer night and a full moon and a mysterious singer in the garden. What more could the guy want? He could maybe want to sleep said Carrie. Anyway like it is now all I know about you is you got a voice and an appetite. Now I want you to promise me you won't do any more serenading.

There isn't hardly anything I wouldn't promise you Carrie said Ed but that's the one thing I can't. The song is in my heart and when it seeks expression I cannot deny it. It just comes bubbling out of me like beer out of a bottle. You just want to lose me my job then said Carrie. Well said Ed you can always go back to the Popes. I heard them talking about you only the other day, and wishing you'd come back.

Well Ed was so pleased with himself that he told Mr. Pope all about it. O'Malley's sore all right he said and I think a couple more good rousing serenades will do the trick and he'll fire her. Then she won't dast go anywhere else, and she'll have to come back here. But Mr. Pope said No. You've done enough Ed he said. You're pointed for trouble. This O'Malley is president of some municipal board or other. He's in politics. You know what that means. Tough guy eh? said Ed. You mean he might plant somebody in the rhododendrons with a cannon? You can't knock off a guy just because you don't like his voice. But to make things certain Mr. Pope bought a new halter Ed couldn't slip out of and tied him securely in his stall.

At least he thought he tied him securely. But about two next morning something awoke him. He went to the window and saw movement in the shadows by the stable. Mr. Pope dressed and went out. Ed's stall was empty and the halter rope gnawed in two. He got in his car and drove over towards the O'Malleys'. The darned old fool he said if I don't round him up he'll get his silly hide full of buckshot. He was really worried.

Mr. Pope knew the layout of the O'Malley grounds. He drove down a back road and stopped and got out. When he had stumbled across two fields he was behind the hedge at the foot of the O'Malley garden. And just too late. A hoarse voice blasted the night. *She was only a bird in a gilded cage . . .*

Mr. Pope swore and scrambled through the hedge. Ed! he said. Come out of there you fool! The song broke off and Ed came trotting up. Hi Wilb he whispered. Glad you came. This is better with two voices. Suppose you could take the tenor? But before Mr. Pope could

answer flashlights flickered through the leaves and a voice said You take the other side Joe. We got him cornered.

Quick Wilb! said Ed. Back through the hedge and lie low. I'll fox 'em. And as Mr. Pope obeyed he moved down along the hedge making a good deal of noise. Mr. Pope saw the flashlights converge to his right and then there was an exclamation and another voice said Hey O'Malley we caught a horse. Got a broken halter. Well I don't know how he got here said O'Malley but that wasn't any horse singing. The fellow must be right here. He can't get away except across the field. Go outside Canby and watch if he breaks through the hedge.

Ed had wandered off with the intention of creating a diversion by bursting into song on the other side of the house. But Mr. Pope didn't know that and fearing to be cut off he bolted. In the open field the flashlights picked him up. He stopped running and walked slowly back.

You can take those lights out of my eyes he said. I'm only looking for my horse. All right boys said O'Malley. I know him. You're Wilbur Pope aren't you? And may I ask what the hell you are doing serenading my cook? I don't know anything about your cook said Mr. Pope. My horse got away tonight and a fellow told me he saw him up in this field so I came up after him. So *you* say said O'Malley. But I guess we've got you Mr. Pope. We were laying for you tonight. If you hear some one singing and you go out and catch a man running away and there isn't anybody else in the garden you're pretty sure you've got the right man.

At that moment another man came up leading Ed. Here's my horse now said Mr. Pope. You can see he's not saddled for riding. You could ride him bareback said O'Malley. I guess you'd better come in the house Mr. Pope and we'll have a talk with the cops. Canby give Lieutenant Payson a ring will you?

The interrogation that followed was minute. Mrs. O'Malley who was a pretty dark-eyed girl was present and seemed to find it amusing but O'Malley was dead serious. Finally Carrie was brought down. She admitted that she had worked for the Popes—that she had been serenaded while there. Did it ever occur to you said O'Malley that it might be Mr. Pope who was doing the so-called singing? I protest against these idiotic questions O'Malley said Mr. Pope. You're making a fool of yourself. Somebody's making a fool of himself said O'Malley but it's not me. Answer please Carrie. Why no sir Carrie said but—But what? said O'Malley You say you never saw the singer? Well sir I did once said Carrie and giggled. Just sort of faintly when he—when he picked up a rose I threw him. A rose! murmured Mrs. O'Malley. Did he look like Mr. Pope? asked O'Malley. Why sir now you speak of it said Carrie he did—sort of. Yes sir it could have been him. Only—Only what? said O'Malley. Well said Carrie it wasn't his voice. Disguised said O'Malley I thought that all the time. No human could have a natural voice like that.

The bell rang at this point and two state troopers were shown in. Following them came Joe rubbing his arm. The horse got away Mr. O'Malley he said. He bit me in the arm. Well he'll find his way home I daresay said O'Malley. Sit down boys he said to the troopers. Then he turned to Mr. Pope. I don't want to be too hard on you he said. Maybe we haven't a charge strong enough to hold you on but I'm convinced you're the man and whether we can hold you or not the newspapers—well you know what they'd do to you. So I'm giving you a choice. Either I turn you over to these boys here or you'll write out a full statement admitting the singing and all the rest of it and—

Just a minute! said Mr. Pope jumping up. I've told you the exact truth O'Malley. I came after my horse. I haven't been singing to your cook or in your garden. You've called me a liar and tried to make me out a lunatic. I know you're sore and I don't blame you. But I think you are a vindictive rat and before I'd sign—

Suddenly through the window came a dreadful raucous voice.

“Pale hands I loved
Beside the Shalimar-har . . .”

For a moment they sat paralyzed. Then the entire room rose and flung itself at the door.

Mr. Pope had waited on the porch and presently they trooped back to him. With the help of the state police they had combed the garden but had found nothing—nothing but a flock of mosquitoes and Ed who was peacefully cropping the grass beside the drive. I apologize Pope said O'Malley heavily. I—what can I say? This thing has got me nuts. It certainly has said Mr. Pope. I just hope the newspapers you mentioned don't get hold of it. They'll ride me plenty said O'Malley. I'll do anything Pope—Then keep your mouth shut about it said Mr. Pope. I don't want anything.—Yes what is it Carrie? he said as the cook came up to him.

Well Mr. Pope said Carrie I guess I'd like to come back if you and Mrs. Pope'll have me. She turned to O'Malley. You'll excuse me sir but I have to say it. Mr. Pope's a nice man. And you ain't treated him like a gentleman. I don't like to stay in a house where folks act that way. O'Malley shrugged and walked away. Mr. Pope grinned. Why Carrie he said we'll be glad to have you. You call up Mrs. Pope tomorrow. He went down the steps and catching hold of Ed's halter jumped on his back and trotted off down the drive. They sang part songs all the way home.

THE END

[The end of *Just a Song at Twilight* by Walter Rollin Brooks]