"No, that's four, right here. See?"

"That's only three."

Allan showed Allan the clover.

"Let's see. Allan Shimpman said."

"Got one. Allan Gold said."

This head, and let it fall to the ground.

would bend forward, pick a clover, examine it, shake

intend to make the best of it. Now and then one of us

during recess we were the only company we had, so we

mon. In fact, we could barely stand one another. Still,

baby fat the two Allens and I had very little in com-

aside from having a little more than our share of

other higher and higher on the swings.

classmates played tag and kickball and pushed each

and Allan Shimpman. We done while the rest of our

and Allan Gold and my equally unpopular acquaintance, Allan Gold

and I treed in search of four-leaf clovers. Still, that's who I

were not supposed to spend their recess climbing oak

me I knew that ten-year-old boys

By Allan Bagdasarian

Popularity
yards began to recede from view, and I knew that  
Owens could run the fifty-yard dash in six seconds, hit  
with God ever placed on the face of the earth. Sean  
Journel, bestest, most clear-thinking ten-year-olds  
was also one of the timidest handsomest.  
Swan Owens was the best student in the Fourth  
grade. The leader: Swan Owens.  

The other Popular boys, and in the center of this group stood  
us on the playground. There were more than  
making more noise and seemed to be having more fun  
black top and asphalt at a crowd of boys who were  
looked across the  

Before ren years old. I did not question this ambition.  
I had been raised to my rank. For many months,  
I had been raised to the noise and the  

laughter! wanted. I needed to be popular. 
the Popular—wanted to be a part of the noise and the  
suddenly knew that I could not stand another day at  
the same three-kid cluster, then at the Popular boys, I  
but now, looking at the two Allans (still arguing over  
the two Allans faced off. I looked across the  

Where the two Allans faced off. I looked across the  

There was four there. That was a four-kid cluster.  
there. He said, throwing it to the ground.  
Allen Gold snarled the closer from him. One, two.  
I got one. Allen Shimpman said.  

spend time was so popular that he would never have to  
the lucky closer fight in his hand. Those eyes, and  
what he would do if he ever found out if he would hold  
school day for six months. And each and every exactly  
We had been looking for four-kid clusters every  

There's not a whole lot. Allen Shimpman said.  

Tears are not a whole lot. Allen Shimpman said. 

Tears are not a whole lot. Allen Shimpman said. 

There's one left. Three heads. 

Tears are not a whole lot. Allen Shimpman said. 

There's one left. Three heads. 

Tears are not a whole lot. Allen Shimpman said.

Tears are not a whole lot. Allen Shimpman said.
myself standing in the center of the popular boys' calling
cease. Their voices, both that night, just before I fell asleep, I saw
thoughts went on in his because the ball ending to
be the second-highest boy in the fourth grade. Why

I certainly was a great athlete, student, or better
I wondered what my position in the group might be.

could make Sean laugh, he was assured a prominent

I noticed that every time Nurse made some

He was. Silently. His mouth was open, but I was the

Funny, he waved Sean Owens to see if he was laughing.

I noticed that every time Nurse made some

English and innuendo, all of which the crowd seemed

But since I do with Tyria and a weather mobile, I wasn't fighting

and I had to wave, but there was a lot of body

But even the hangers on the fourth grade, was the

Which Brookman, a Lean, young-faced comic, consisted

and weathered and bisected.

my head a little, so not to draw attention to myself.

For my part, I hoped was my destiny. I lowered

my life and found myself standing a few feet from the

crossed the twenty longest yards I had ever walked in

I took a deep breath, and then, with great resolution,

Life of other companions and three last, dances,

must other stop forward now, or repeat forever to a


I did not know that popularity has a life span,

I felt another day in the dark.

And the moment passed, and I had to raise myself

mouth to speak, Nurse would launch into another tale

out of service. Nurse opened my

and then went forward, on the verge


Willie Brown and his friends, and so, with the single

be sent back to the tables, and so with the single.

When Nurse, instead of the one joke or wisecrack that

a chance to prove myself, and that I failed, I would

would make me popular. I knew that I would only

for my moment, for the one joke or wisecrack that

stood, announced, just outside the other circle, whence

I returned to the group every recess, for three days, I

waving. Nurse doubled up with laughter. I saw myself in

The dullest stories anyone had ever heard. I saw Sean

It is a sad fact of life the clothes a child wears

and that Nurse's time was about to run out.

that and Nurse's time was about to run out.

I did not know that popularity has a life span,
two Alhams were still looking for four-leaf clovers.

And I did not trust them, because I knew them then. I knew what to do with new friends then. I knew how to do with
games and bowling parties. And bicycle races and more weekends were filled with sleep-overs and baseball.

school parties, or another State, or another country. I

Finally, the following year. We were gone—to another


To Which tell another version of this story. About the

would ever get a chance to prove myself—and listened

place a fold from the popular boys (wondering if I

in some courses that only one of us would survive.

be the two of us were on a call—

that one folded cuff of my jeans was noticeably lower.