

## Answer two questions.

- 1 In the passage below the writer takes a comic look at how a man whom he would expect to be ashamed of his situation appears to prosper and grow in status.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) The writer publishes a further portrait of another type of character who provokes strong feelings in him. Basing your answer closely on the style of the extract, write the opening (between 120-150 words) of his description. [10]

The bankrupt man dances. Perhaps, on other occasions, he sings. Certainly he spends money in restaurants and tips generously. In what sense, then, is he bankrupt?

He has been declared so. He has declared himself so. He returns from the city agitated and pale, complaining of hours spent with the lawyers. Then he pours himself a drink. How does he pay for the liquor inside the drink, if he is bankrupt? 5

He is dancing at the Chilblains Relief Association Fund Ball. His heels kick high. The mauve spotlight caresses his shoulders, then the gold. His wife's hair glistens like a beehive of tinsel above her bare shoulders and dulcet neck. Where does she get the money, to pay the hairdresser to tease and singe and set her so dazzlingly? 10  
We are afraid to ask but cannot tear our eyes from the dancing couple.

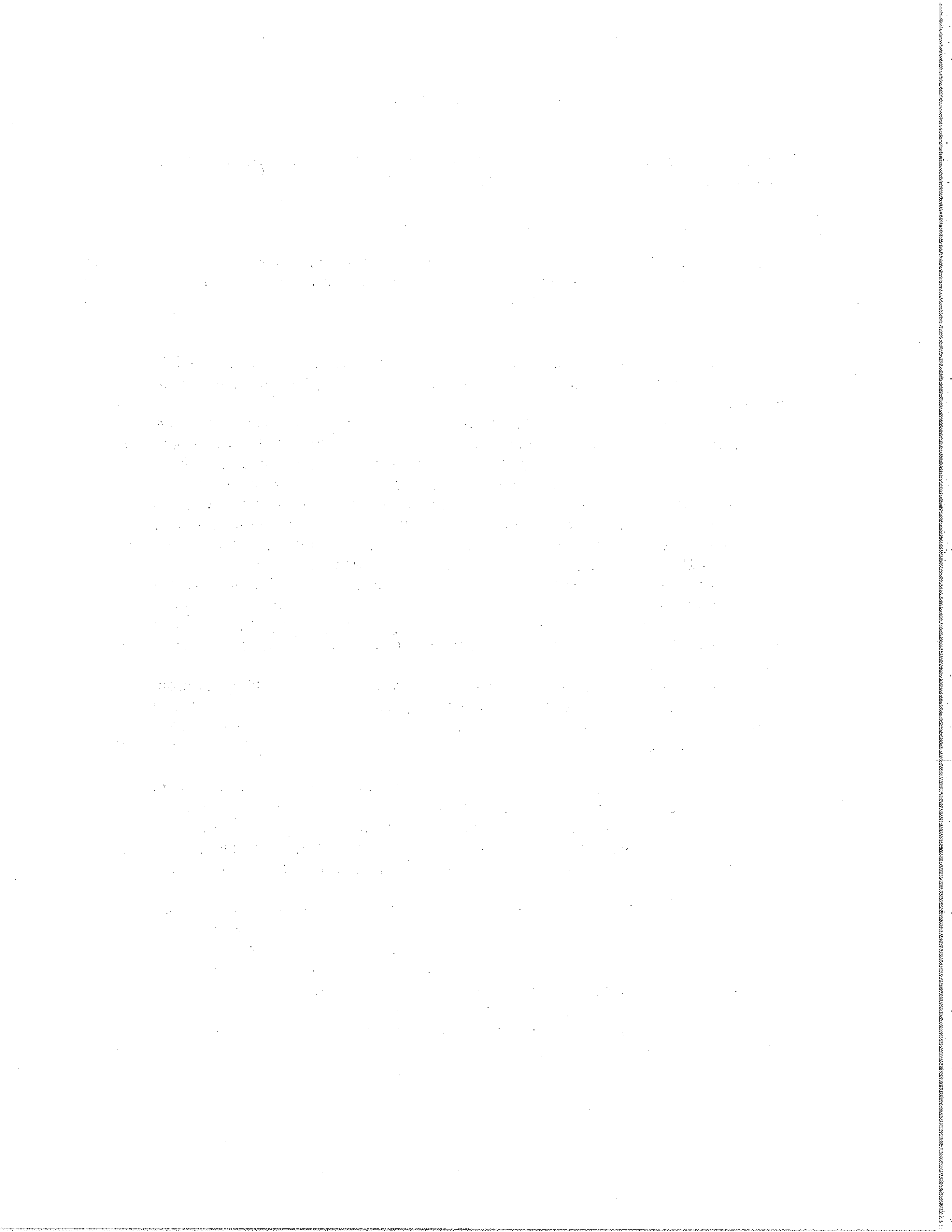
The bankrupt man buys himself a motorcycle. He is going to hotdog it all the way to Santa Barbara and back. He has a bankrupt sister in Santa Barbara. Also, there are business details to be cleared up along the way, in Pittsburgh, South Bend, Dodge City, Santa Fe, and Palm Springs. Being bankrupt is an expansionist process; it generates ever new horizons. 15

We all want to dance with the bankrupt man's wife. Sexual health swirls from her like meadow mist, she sparkles head to toe, her feet are shod in slippers of crystal. 'How do you manage to keep up ap -?' We drown our presumptuous question murmuringly in her corsage; her breasts billow, violet and gold, about our necktie. 20

The bankrupt man is elected to high civic office and declines, due to press of business. He can be seen on the streets, rushing everywhere, important-looking papers flying from his hands. He is being sued for astronomical amounts. He wears now only the trendiest clothes – unisex jumpsuits, detachable porcelain collars, coat sleeves that really unbutton. He goes to the same hairdresser as his wife. His children are all fat. 25

This galls us. We wish to destroy him, this clown of legerity<sup>1</sup>, who bounces higher and higher off the net of laws that would enmesh us, who weightlessly spiders up the rigging to the dizzying spotlit tip of the tent-space and stands there in a glittering trapeze suit. We spread ugly rumors, we mutter that he is not bankrupt at all, that he is as sound as the pound, as the dollar, that his bankruptcy is a sham. He hears of the rumour and in a note, with embossed letterhead, he challenges us to meet him on West Main Street, by the corner of the Corn Exchange, under the iron statue of Cyrus Shenanigan, the great Civil War profiteer. We accept the challenge. 30  
We experience butterflies in the stomach. We go look at our face in the mirror. It is craven and shrivelled, embittered by ungenerous thoughts. 35

Comes the dawn. Without parked cars, West Main Street seems immensely wide. The bankrupt man's shoulders eclipse the sun. He takes his paces, turns, swiftly reaches down and pulls out the lining of both pants pockets. Verily, they are empty. We fumble at our own, and the rattle of silver is drowned in the triumphant roar of the witnessing mob. We would have been torn limb from limb had not the bankrupt man with characteristic magnanimity extended to us a protective embrace 40

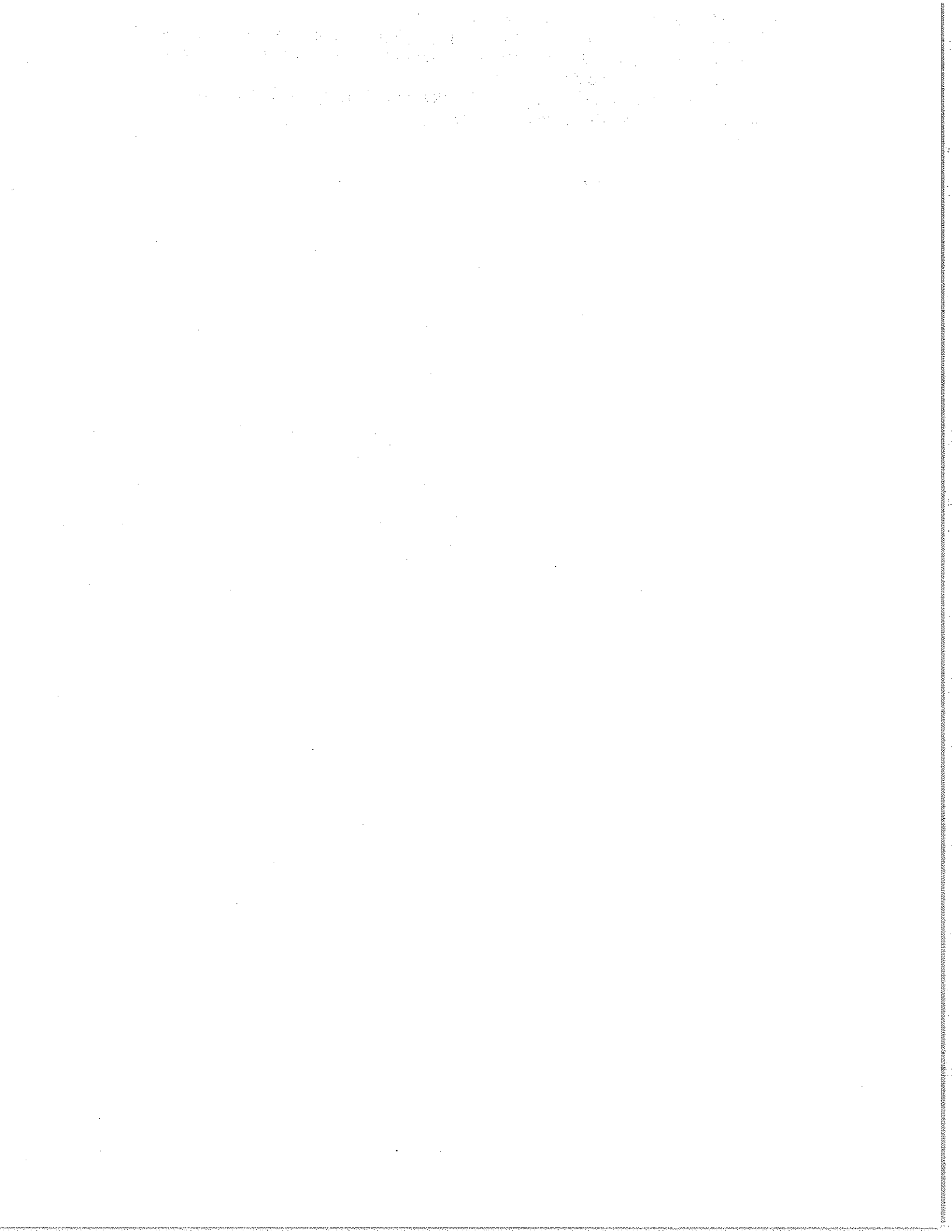


redolent of cologne and smoking turf and wood violets.

In the locker room, we hear the bankrupt singing. His baritone strips the tiles 45  
from the walls like cascading dominoes. He has just shot a minus sixty-seven,  
turning the old course record inside out.

He ascends because he transcends. He deals from the bottom of the deck. He  
builds castles in air. He makes America grow.

<sup>1</sup>legerity – cunning, trickery



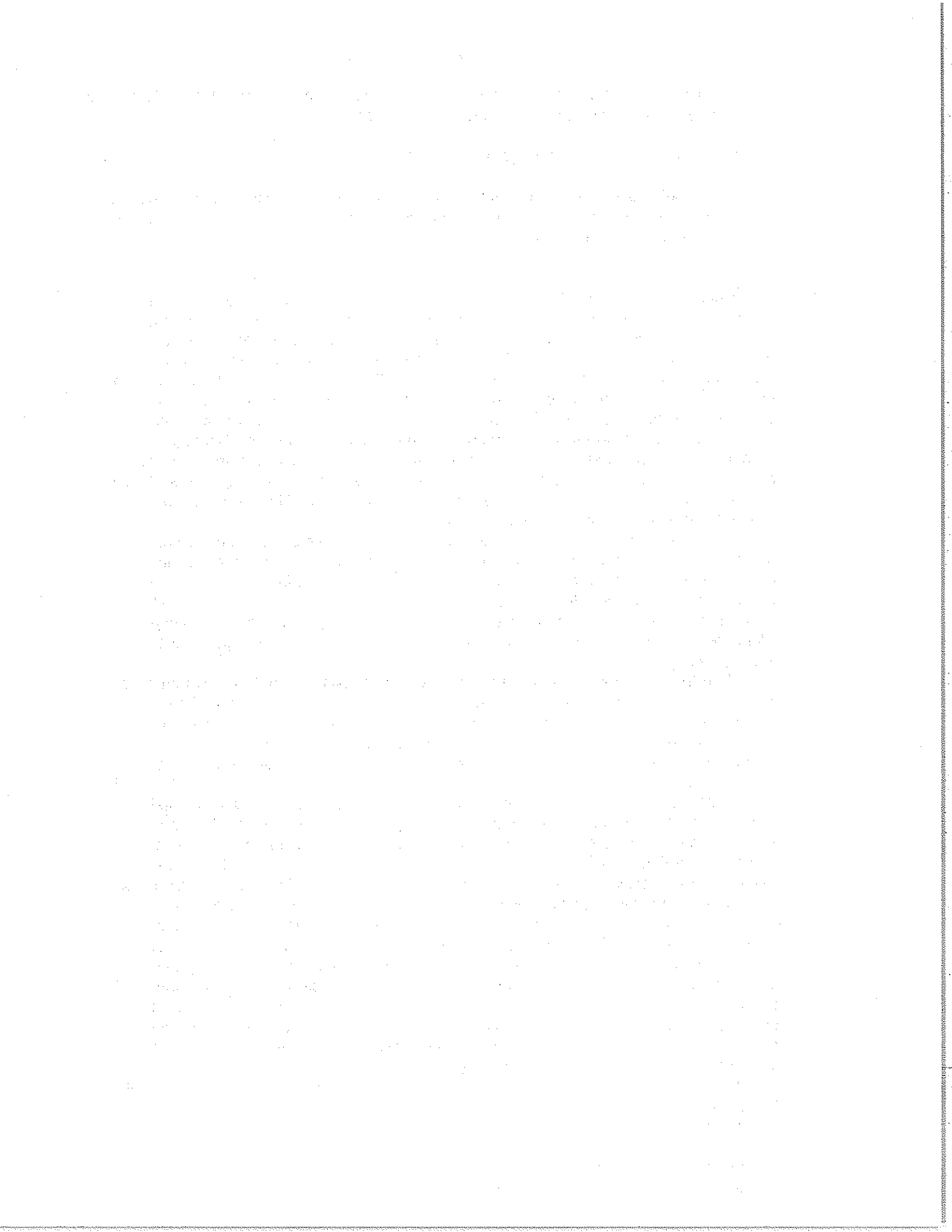
- 2 The extract below is taken from an autobiography and describes the narrator's first visit to a circus. He is accompanied by his less than enthusiastic older brother.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) In his own autobiography the narrator's brother describes his memory of this experience. Basing your answer closely on the original extract, write the opening section (between 120-150 words) of his version of events. [10]

When the day came for the early-evening first show, my mother had not changed her mind and my brother had not been able to talk his way out of taking me. His two friends had loyally agreed to suffer the boredom and indignity with him and all four of us made our way to the field where the Big Top had been put up. As we passed through the gate into the playing-field, the mingled scents of crushed grass and canvas gave an extra tingle of excitement. There was a pleasurable agony of waiting in the queue to get in before we finally entered the tent where the air was thick with the smell of sawdust and animals. My brother and his friends draped themselves languidly along the bench and discussed their foreign trip with an air of ostentatious indifference to the ring before them and the trapeze above. I sat alongside my brother with my jacket rolled up beside me so I'd have more room to see if someone big sat down in front of me. 5 10

The show began when a tall, handsome Ringmaster with moustaches and whip and top hat announced the first act and the clowns came on. They fell over, they burst balloons, they poured buckets of water over themselves and each other; they threatened the audience, fell over, threw pies at each other and their trousers fell down. They were outrageous, hilarious, anarchic, entrancing. I loved them. I roared and I hooted and I guffawed and shrieked. My brother and his friends watched with a stony and cynical aloofness. 15

Then the acrobats performed dizzy deeds of daredevilment that put my heart in my mouth and my mouth into a state of fixed openness. The lissom-limbed lovelies and the lean-thighed men swooped and spun and clasped and swung until my chest ached with holding my breath. There were other acts too, and a shrewd observer might have noticed that the clowns and acrobats and animal-trainers all bore a curiously shared identity, but I was not a shrewd observer. The best act of all was the last one, and it had me enthralled. The Ringmaster announced Chief Cochise, the Apache warrior, the bare-back riding lethal expert with the bow and arrow. As his words died away there came thundering into the ring a magnificent figure, resplendent in head-dress and leggings, his face savagely streaked with war-paint and his muscular, froned legs gripping the sides of a noble, piebald stallion. He whooped and war-cried his way round the ring and my whole heart went out to him. He was fierce and bronzed; he was frightening and exciting: I had never seen anything so stirring before. With a yell and a flourish he began to circle the central pole, loosing arrow after arrow into the balloons suspended there. Horse-sweat and sawdust, hoof-beats and balloon-bursts filled the next magical minutes until, with a wave and a blood-curdling, triumphant yell he vanished on his valiant steed. I cheered myself hoarse and I clapped until it hurt, hoping the heroic Cochise would appear once more, but he didn't. It was the last act and the audience was leaving and I had to scramble to keep up with my brother and his friends. As I worked my way through the jostle of the crowd, my head was full of Chief Cochise. Gone were the dreams of being sheriff or homesteader – gone were the dreams of being lone shotgun on the rickety stage. From now on and forever, it was Chief Cochise and the bareback archer who was the idol of my dreams. 20 25 30 35 40

My brother and his friends, having waited long enough for me to catch up, moved ahead again slowly. They had just shared a light from my brother's cupped hands around his new gas lighter when I reached them. breathless with my efforts 45



and my memory. I adjusted my pace and fell in behind them. My brother was talking between drags on the cigarette which he held between his thumb and his third finger.

'What a washout,' he was saying. 'What a pathetic washout. Did you see that phoney Indian at the end? He hardly hit any of the balloons and you could hear someone bursting them behind the flap to make it sound as if he hit them. And he wasn't riding bareback – you could see the saddle if you looked.'

'Yes,' said one of his friends. 'And he wasn't a real Indian anyway. I reckon he was that first clown with make-up on.'

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