FIVE STORIES, A FEW QUESTIONS, AND SOME CONCLUSIONS
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Each of the following stories has to do with the Army system and alcoholism or compulsive behavior. In the sense that no one is to be blamed, the people of the stories are innocent. But in each of these stories there is no effective intervention—no one accepts the responsibility.

These events occur in the future. But they are written in the hope that our “knowledge” of the future will change our reaction to the present.

The stories are, of course, fiction.

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It’s the morning of February 3, 1977. One hour from now, Mrs. Louise Jackson is supposed to drive down the hill to the split-level home of her neighbor and best friend, Charlotte Miller. Louise is to deliver the coffee cake for the monthly meeting of “Great Books.” But Mrs. Jackson’s 16-year-old son, Mike, makes a telephone call.

“Hello, Mrs. Miller? This is Mike. I’m sorry, but Mother won’t be able to make it this morning. And I hope you can get along without the cake.”

Two hours before that call, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Jackson, Louise’s husband, left for his office on post as she awoke with a splitting headache and no memory of the “Hail and Farewell” party the night before. She stumbled to the kitchen, closed the back door, and, unable to hold a coffee cup, finished a fifth of bourbon to steady her nerves.

By the time her son made the telephone call, Louise Jackson had passed out in the shower. Mike had covered for her. But because he’s already late for school, he will leave her there.

For twelve hours that day, who cares about Louise Jackson? Who will care what she feels? Who will care what she says? Who will care what she does?

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