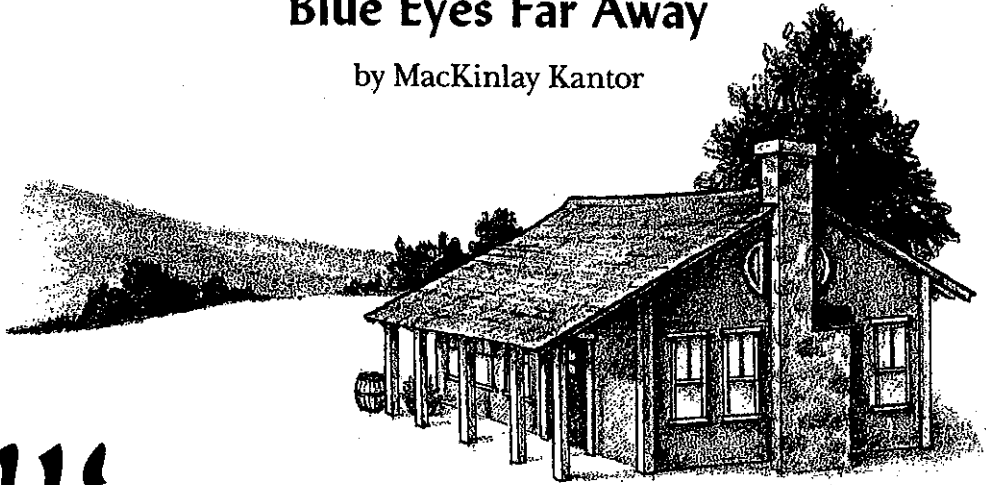


Blue Eyes Far Away

by MacKinlay Kantor



When neighbors climbed the steep hill road to bring Esther Lee the news they did not want to bring, they found their task easier than they had expected.

She was sitting on a bench under the old cedar tree. Her blue eyes seemed very empty and blank behind her glasses.

"Mrs. Lee," said George Dutton uneasily, "we came to tell you—there's been an accident and your husband was—. They took him to the hospital. I think you'd better come, right away."

Joseph Lee's wife didn't say anything. Slowly she rose to her feet. The wide black purse on her lap slid to the ground.

George Dutton turned away while his wife put her arm around Esther Lee's shoulders. "Now, Mrs. Lee—he's hurt bad, but maybe he'll be all right."

"It was an automobile accident," the farmer said. "The highway police have got the fellow that hit him, too. If it's possible to convict him, we're going to do it."

Convict him, thought Esther Lee. That meant, then, that Joseph was—
"Can we go now?" she asked.

"Yes. Our car's right out here at the gate. Don't you want to lock your house? And what about your purse?"

"Leave them be," the woman said quietly.

It was a **flimsy** case, a weak case at best. It was really no case at all—except that a man had been killed when his car was struck by the powerful, bright red automobile of a young man.

The curve in the road had been deserted at the time of the accident. The two men were the only ones there. But noise of the crash had drawn people from all directions.

The police checked the record of Archie Stolt, the man who drove the red automobile. It was found that he had been involved in several other accidents. His reputation for wild and **reckless** driving was known. But you can't convict a man on his reputation, said the young fellow's lawyers.

The young man was charged with manslaughter. But after that things moved slowly.

Interest in the case was not great. Joseph Lee was neither a wealthy nor a well-known man. The courtroom was not crowded. The defense knew that in the case of the *State of New Jersey versus Archie Stolt*, matters would be simple, routine. The case would cost Archie Stolt money. But he could well afford it. The defense did not know, however, that the night before the trial began, a small, elderly woman in a shabby cloth dress and old black hat went to see the **prosecutor**.

The defense lawyers for Mr. Stolt shrugged when they saw her sitting in court. A weak attempt, they whispered, to get sympathy from the jury.

Esther Lee was the last witness called by the State. Earlier they had tried to put in the record Archie Stolt's other accidents and his bad reputation. But these were not allowed. Mr. Stolt watched comfortably, unworried, as the frail woman said she was Esther Lee, widow of Joseph Lee who had been killed.

"Where do you live, Mrs. Lee?" came the prosecutor's question.

"On Watchung Mountain."

"Were you home on the afternoon of June 20th, at about 5:30 P.M.?"

"Yes, sir," said Esther Lee.

The lawyer cleared his throat. "Mrs. Lee, how long have you lived there?"

"Well," she said in her mild voice, "quite a while. See, when Joseph and I were first married, we lived down at Barnegat. He fished. We lived there for thirty-one years. And then his nephew left him this place up on Watchung Mountain. We were getting older, so we moved up there. We lived there for nearly eleven years. We—"

"Your Honor," said Archie Stolt's lawyer, "I object. The answers by the witness have nothing to do with the case and are beside the point. They are only intended to gain sympathy for—"

The judge rapped. "Objection sustained."

The next question came like an explosion through the close air of the courtroom. "Mrs. Lee, did you see the accident in which your husband met his death?"

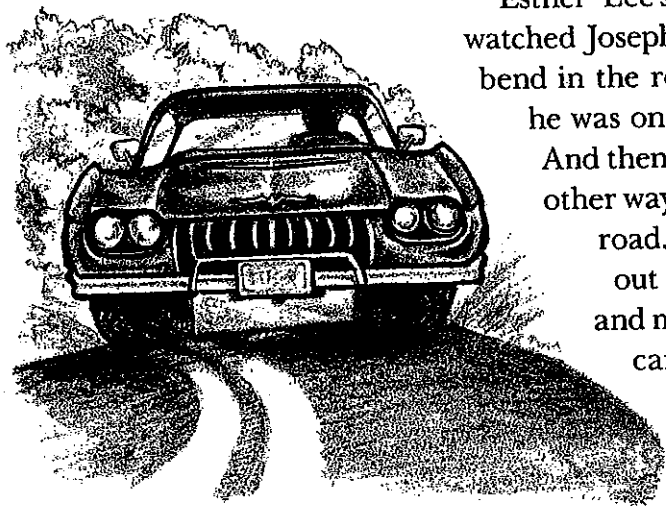
The woman nodded yes. Her reply was lost in the sudden stir and scuffling as people moved forward.

"Tell the court what you saw."

"Well," said Esther Lee, "Joseph had gone to Union. He drove there every day because he had good customers there. I sat out in front, always, to watch for him. I always used to do that, when he fished at Barnegat—"

Archie Stolt's lawyer was on his feet, but the prosecutor motioned him into his chair. "Tell only about the accident, please," he said to Esther Lee.

Esther Lee's blue eyes were wet. "I watched Joseph's old car come around a bend in the road," she said slowly, "and he was on the right side of the road. And then the red car came from the other way—on the wrong side of the road. And—Joseph's car swung out toward the middle—to try and miss it, I guess. But the other car swung out, too. . . . They hit. That's all, sir. But the red car was on the wrong side of—"



"Your Honor!" cried the lawyer for the defense.

Archie Stolt settled back into his chair with a scornful smile on his face. They couldn't pull anything like that and get away with it.

"I object!" said the lawyer for the defense. "It was not possible for Esther Lee to have seen the accident from so far away! Not possible! The scene of the accident is miles from her home. I—"

The judge turned and looked solemnly at the old woman. "I must remind you," he said, "that telling a lie here is a very serious **offense**. You have sworn to tell nothing but the truth. How far is it from your home to the scene of the accident?"

"Must be a good three miles," whispered Esther Lee.

Three miles. . . . People in the courtroom shook their heads.

The woman's rough fingers fumbled as she opened the black purse on her lap. "I always watched for Joseph, though," she said. "Just like I used to do when he'd come in with his fish at Barnegat."

She held up a shiny brass telescope. "This was his," she explained. "I always watched for Joseph, when he came home."

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY. Each of the following sentences helps you understand the story. Complete each sentence below by putting an x in the box next to the correct answer.

- The neighbors told Esther Lee that
 a. she had to appear in court.
 b. the police wanted to speak to her.
 c. her husband had been badly hurt.
- The police learned that Archie Stolt
 a. had been in several other accidents.
 b. had never been in an accident before.
 c. could not afford a lawyer.
- When Archie Stolt's lawyers saw Mrs. Lee sitting in court, they
 a. shrugged and were not worried.
 b. were very concerned about what she might say.
 c. asked the judge to prevent her from giving evidence.
- Esther Lee witnessed the accident because she
 a. was in the automobile at the time of the accident.
 b. was standing on the road when the accident took place.
 c. saw the accident through a telescope.

× 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS. Each of the following questions reviews your understanding of story elements. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer to each question.

- What happened first in the *plot* of the story?
 a. Esther Lee described how the accident took place.
 b. The neighbors brought Mrs. Lee the bad news.
 c. The police checked the record of Archie Stolt.
- Which pair of words best *characterizes* Esther Lee?
 a. young; wealthy
 b. small; elderly
 c. tall; rugged
- The ending of "Blue Eyes Far Away" is *set*
 a. in a courtroom.
 b. in a police station.
 c. on a deserted country road.
- Which sentence best describes the *theme* of the story?
 a. A man is killed when he is struck by a powerful, bright red automobile.
 b. It is not possible to convict a man on his poor reputation.
 c. The widow of a man killed in an accident proves to be a witness to the event.

× 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS.
 Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. If you wish, look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. It was a flimsy case, a weak case at best. What is the meaning of the word *flimsy*?
 a. strong
 b. delightful
 c. shaky
2. The judge reminded Mrs. Lee that telling a lie in court is a very serious offense. As used here, the word *offense* means
 a. idea.
 b. crime.
 c. joke.
3. Archie Stolt had a reputation for wild and reckless driving. The word *reckless* means
 a. slow or unhurried.
 b. careful or thoughtful.
 c. careless or risky.
4. The night before the trial began, Mrs. Lee went to see the prosecutor. A *prosecutor* is a person who
 a. accuses, or brings charges against, another person.
 b. is a witness at an accident.
 c. is one of the members of a jury.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE. Complete the following paragraph by filling in each blank with one of the words listed in the box below. Each of the words appears in the story. Since there are five words and four blanks, one word in the group will not be used.

Most people _____ that it
 is unsafe to drink and drive. But here
 are some other _____ tips
 all drivers should follow. Don't
 _____ if you are ill—or if
 you are taking medicine that makes you
 feel sleepy. On long trips, plan to rest every
 few hours. You are more likely to have a(n)
 _____ when you are tired.

accident simple
 reputation
 know drive

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY. Each of the following questions will help you to think critically about the selection. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer.

1. Which statement is true?
 - a. Joseph Lee had been driving on the wrong side of the road.
 - b. Archie Stolt had been driving on the wrong side of the road.
 - c. Both men had been driving on the wrong side of the road.

2. When Archie Stolt entered the courtroom, he
 - a. did not appear worried.
 - b. was afraid that he was going to be convicted of the crime.
 - c. was wondering if he should confess.

3. At first, it appeared that Archie Stolt would be found innocent because
 - a. he had done nothing wrong.
 - b. no one, apparently, had seen the accident.
 - c. he could prove that he was an excellent driver.

4. When the neighbors told Mrs. Lee the bad news, they found their task easier than they had expected. Why?
 - a. She didn't really care about her husband.
 - b. She didn't fully understand what they were telling her.
 - c. She had already seen the accident through the telescope.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

Questions for Writing and Discussion

- The judge warned Esther Lee about telling a lie in court. Why did it appear, at first, that Mrs. Lee was lying? What reason might she have had for telling a lie?
- Mrs. Lee loved her husband very much. Find evidence from the story to support that statement.
- What, do you think, will happen as a result of what Mrs. Lee told the jury? Give reasons for your answer.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 150 and 151.

	+		+		+		+		+		▼	
												Score Total: Story 8