**TICKITS by Paul Milenski**

Toby Heckler placed the slip of yellow paper under the windshield wiper of the black car that straddled two parking spaces. On the yellow paper Toby had printed in red ink "PRAKING MISTEAK" and signed his name "TOBY" in a childish-looking hand. He moved down Main Street, his chin held high, his sneakers spanking white.

As Toby passed Thom McAn, he looked in the window, caught the reflection of his sneakers, looked down at them, moved his toes inside, then moved along. People stared at Toby; he kept his chin high.

Near the First National Bank two elderly ladies waited for the bus. They stood in the middle of the sidewalk away from the curb. Toby pulled out his pad, held the cap with his teeth. He printed slowly, meticulously, then handed one of the ladies the slip, "TO MUSH IN WAY" signed "TOBY." The two ladies examined the slip of paper, moved closer to the curb.

At the intersection of Main and South the pedestrian crossing light shone bright orange, "Don’t walk." A man stepped off the curb. Toby began to reach for his pad. The cars closed together; the man stepped back to the curb. Toby brought his hand back. When the green light read "Walk," Toby and the man crossed. The man went into a shop. Toby waited for him, handed him a slip as he came out, "ALLMOST WALKD."

Patrolman McVee stood in front of Charlie's Tobacco Shop.

"How's it going, Toby?" McVee said.

Toby pulled out his pad, showed it to McVee.

"Lots of business, eh Toby?"

Toby put his pad back, nodded.

Toby looked at McVee's shoes. They were shiny, black.

Toby caught McVee's eye, looked down at his own sneakers.

"Very nice, Toby. Spiffy," McVee said.

Toby raised his chin again, moved along.

On a Park Square bench a man ate a candy bar; he threw his wrapper down. Toby handed him the wrapper and a slip, "PAPUR ON GARSS." The man walked away throwing both papers down. Toby caught up to him, gave him all the papers and another slip "NOT LISSENING." The man said "Christ," put all the papers in his pocket.

The rain began to wet Toby's slips. He put everything away.

By the time he got back to Main and South it was raining hard. Toby walked quickly down South, avoided puddles on Mill, moved along River, came to his bungalow, entered.

Inside there were smells of cabbage, cigarette smoke, alcohol. He knew his mother lay on the sofa, smoking, drinking, surrounded by TV magazines.

Toby took off his sneakers, carried them up the stairs.

His mother turned her head, "Toby, is that you?" Her voice was raspy, tired. But Toby was already in his room, the door closed.

His mother moved to the bottom of the stairs. She yelled, "Toby!"

Toby opened the door, showed himself to his mother.

She held a cigarette and a drink. "Toby, you could've been a goddamn burglar sneaking around me like that!" Toby closed the door, reached under his bed.

"Toby, you goddamn nut!"

Toby pulled out a shoebox. On the cover it read, "MUTHERS TICKITS."

Toby wrote three slips: "TO MUSH SOMKING," "TO MUSH DIRNKING," "TO MUSH YELING." He placed the slips in the box. Then, before he put the box away, he wrote one more slip in his largest letters: "ERVYTHING WORNG!"

With the box safely under his bed, Toby sat on the floor, bit his tongue, started polishing his sneakers spanking white.