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Urban (Woodcut)

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Four small boys came running down the street, their sneakered feet flashing along the cracked sidewalk. Four t-shirts and dungarees bobbed up and down, four faces; two were white now pink, and two were brown. Noisily they came along the littered sidewalks, dodging garbage cans and bicycles, and bounded up old wooden steps and stopped on a porch, wooden also with gray paint peeling. One of the boys opened a screen door and disappeared inside the frame house, door banging behind him. The others stood cracking bubble gum and arguing back and forth, panting from the two-block run. The one reappeared with an armful of comic books, set them down on the porch, and said,

"Okay, now we'll see who's lyin'."

They started into the pile, soon littering the entire porch with the brightly colored comics and arguing all the while, the whites against the black this time, though only that morning the colors had been mixed in a heated discussion over the property rights to a stray cat they had found.

"Here it is! I told ya, I told ya," cried Tony of the curly dark hair. He held up a comic book and the others grabbed at it.

"He ain't a nigger, see," said ten-year-old Joey, waving the book in the faces of the colored boys.

"Lemme see." And the book moved from white to brown hands. It was a Superman comic featuring a cover picture of that man of steel in combat with an assortment of evil-doers. Two fuzzy heads studied this intently, staring at it with big saucer eyes.

"Can't ya see he's a white guy? Can't ya even see?" Snatching the book again changing hands and again waved in Negro faces.

"Looks kinda orange t'me," in the softer voice of Spits Brown. The colored boys were brothers, sort of, although the exact parentage